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Shared Trauma: A Phenomenological Investigation of African American Teachers

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Abstract

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MSW, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1995

BA, Douglass College, 1983

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

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Abstract

In the wake of increasing community disasters such as hurricanes, neighborhood violence, and terrorist attacks, schools are usually deemed places where youth can find safety and stability. Research about community trauma related to the role of teachers and schools has predominantly focused on younger populations, concerned about disturbances in their developmental processes. School teachers' responsibilities related to these community disasters have also increased and now include supporting their traumatized students. However, there has been limited attention on the direct effect of community traumas on the teachers who work and live in affected districts. The construct of s*hared trauma* describes this duality of roles. For African American teachers, racial trauma plays a role in their everyday lives and might affect their behaviors and responses to tragic events. Critical race theory and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory formed the framework for this phenomenological study, which explored the experiences of 6 female African American teachers who had experienced community disasters. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews, which were transcribed and analyzed using an enhanced version of the Colaizzi 7-step analysis method. Key findings were that race played only a limited role for the teachers when significant traumas occurred in their communities. Also, the experiences they described were indicative of vicarious trauma, which is inconsistent with the construct of shared trauma. This study contributes to social change by informing educational, political, and social institutions about the needs of teachers in the wake of community disasters and how those needs could be conceptualized as vicarious trauma for purposes of planning preventive and concurrent interventions for teachers.

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Dedication

I was born Juanita. I am not sure if my birth parents or the State of New Jersey gave me that name. I can only hope that it came from those responsible for my birth. I dedicate my dissertation to those who stepped in and loved an orphan, nurtured a stranger, and cared about a baby who was abandoned when her life began. Someone I will never know and may never know me, cared about Juanita. They fed me, changed my diapers, cuddled me, and gave me a sense of security that allowed me to walk through this life able to love and truly care for others in the face of enormous obstacles. Because of this unknown person(s), I have overcome and achieved far beyond what is expected of an orphan, foster child, adopted child, abused child, and adult survivor. These labels formerly came after my name, now Ph.D. follows. For that, I am eternally grateful to them and God who knew and attended to my needs. God has truly ordered my steps and I hope that He will delight in my way (Psalm 37:23, King James Version).

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the Excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed (2 Corinthians 4:7-9, King James Version).

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I acknowledge my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, without whom none of this is possible. I never would have made it without you.

George (Lambent-quiet, genius) lover of my heart, keeper of my soul, words cannot relay the depth of gratitude or the realm of emotions I feel for you. Above all of the myriad of reasons I love you, is your willingness to sacrifice for me, for us, for this… Your unselfish, unwavering love, support, tolerance, patience, and gentle understanding were the essential ingredients to our success. This belongs to both of us and we will spend the rest of our lives sharing this accomplishment. I thank God for your mother and father, who gave you life, so you could give love to me.

My Dad, you have been a lighthouse. Beaming the path, asking the all the right questions and being the exemplification of what I wanted to achieve and become. I feel blessed to have had you in my corner.

My Dream Team, Drs. Tina Jaeckle, and Barbara Benoliel, a student could not have a better combination. I am eternally grateful to have had the benefit of your diverse knowledge and dichotomous experiences. Your support, nurturing, and encouragement were beyond anything I could have expected. You will be a part of my life for eternity.

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always willing to listen and then give direction and advice. It was priceless and I thank you.

To my life-long friends Melinda, Lisa, Diana, and Myra, you know me so well and love me anyway. I thank you for your support and encouragement. I also appreciate having a new Walden family, Avon who led the way, Shannon, Tierra, and Sharon who will follow.

I am also grateful for my mother, and the women of the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc. who taught me to love learning. May those whose lives I am honored to touch, as all of you have, also enjoy exploring and experiencing the world around them. It has so much to share and the possibilities are endless.

I pray my life will be reflected in the generations that follow me, my children, Lawrence, Juan, and Max, my grandchildren, Alexandria, Samiyah, Jordan, Julian, Jaila, and all that follow. Know that you are capable of attaining any goal you desire, no matter how small or how unreachable it may seem. My Mom Sarah taught me to, "Always look to the hills, from whence cometh your help."

"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48, King James Version).

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Beginning with African Americans' emergence from enslavement in 1862, African American teachers have played a significant role in their communities (Coates, 2010; Teal, 2013). African Americans educated during the forties, fifties, and sixties recall that teachers were caring, qualified, and committed to educating African American youth (Coates, 2010; Preston-Grimes, 2010). Leading by example, African American teachers were able to instill a sense of self-worth and cultural pride in their students (Coates, 2010; Kelly, 2010).

Following the historic Brown vs. Board of Education ruling in 1954, there was turbulence in America's educational system. African American teachers, viewed as the backbone of their communities, taught the next generation of students (Coates, 2010; Kelly, 2010; Preston-Grimes, 2010). Referred to as Jim Crow teachers, they were able to prepare students to achieve educational goals, while experiencing economic, social, and political barriers (Kelly, 2010). Throughout their assimilation into Euro-centric educational environments, African American teachers, predominantly female, have endured discriminatory behaviors and professional disrespect (Coates, 2010).

The indignities perpetrated against African Americans in multiple aspects of their lives have evolved over time (Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009; Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011). In the late 1990s, researchers began identifying very specific characteristics of discriminatory behaviors (Sue et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2011).

Investigators began using the label *microaggression* to describe how the daily racially charged conduct affected People of Color (Sue et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2011). The term *racial trauma*, the focus of this study, describes the cumulative outcomes of absorbing microaggressions and other discriminatory behavior perpetrated by the dominant culture (Ponds, 2013). While the studies investigating microaggression and racial trauma, referred to as *racial battle fatigue*, continued to emerge, researchers noted that further inquiry into gender, and profession was needed (Milner, 2012; Rollack, 2012; Smith et al., 2011). I found little information about the experiences of female African American teachers with racial trauma (Alisic, 2012; Baum, 2012).

African American teachers live in communities traumatized by unexpected calamities such as school shootings, terrorist attacks, and natural disasters (Aten, Bennett, Hill, Davis, & Hook, 2012; Stein et al., 2013; Vivolo, Matjasko, & Massetti, 2011). The frequency of community traumas is increasing, which include assaults against teachers and rising incidents of bullying that result in suicide (Brock, Nickerson, Reeves, Savage, & Woitaszewski, 2011; Gomez, Miranda, & Polanco, 2011). When large populations experience adverse circumstances, communities look for sources of support and stability (Alisic, 2012; Baum, Rotter, Reidler, & Brom, 2009; Buchanan, Casbergue, & Baumgartner, 2010). Over the past few years, teachers are increasingly taking on additional responsibilities to support recovery efforts of residents in neighborhoods where they work, including caring for traumatized students (Alisic, 2012; Buchanan et al., 2010; Kilmer, Gil-Rivas, & MacDonald, 2010). However, I was unable to find information

about how teachers cope with these challenging circumstances. The gap in the literature suggests the need for further investigation into the nature and kinds of lived experiences of teachers who live and work in communities that are struggling with turbulent and distressful events.

Theoretical constructs, such as shared trauma, provide insight into the nature of the experiences of mental health professionals who live and work in communities following disastrous events (Baum, 2010; Tosone, Nuttman-Shwartz, & Stephens, 2012). The literature search did not reveal research investigating paralleling facets of teachers' exposures to community traumas. Interweaving issues related to racially discriminatory practices on African American teachers further complicates the potential application of shared trauma to the teaching profession. This investigation explored the nature and meaning of dual traumatic exposure (shared and racial) from the perspective of female African American teachers in the context of traumatizing events in the community.

Background

People exposed to traumatic events are susceptible to adverse psychological outcomes (Kilmer et al., 2010; Moore & Varela, 2010; Morgan, Wisneski, & Skitka, 2011). Immediately following terror attacks or natural disasters, the rates of acute stress, depression, and anxiety increase in affected communities (Baum et al., 2009; Biggs et al., 2010; Pandya, 2013; Yan et al., 2013). Based on the frequency and duration of the traumatic experience, victims are also susceptible to developing PTSD and other long-term trauma disorders (Bonanno & Mancini, 2012; Davis et al., 2012; Kilmer et al., 2010;

Yan et al., 2013). For example, although there were no clinical assessments to make diagnoses, over 160,000 residents in Mississippi reported symptoms consistent with PTSD in the wake of Hurricane Katrina (McLaughlin et al., 2011).

Interventions, such as psychological first aid (PFA), have proven successful in addressing acute symptomology, thereby averting the need for long-term treatment (Allen et al., 2010; Pandya, 2013). Bonanno and Mancini (2012) discussed the need to identify markers—from mild to severe—when clinically assessing affected populations because the majority of symptoms dissipate within 2–3 years, according to post-disaster related PTSD studies (McLaughlin et al., 2011; Pietrzak et al.,2012). According to Bonanno and Mancini (2012), the diagnoses should be on a continuum, allowing movement between interventions to match the severity levels throughout the course of treatment and documented the need to increase the intensity of interventions for victims continuing to be significantly impaired months after the traumatic event.

Williams et al. (2014) concluded African Americans' continuous confrontation with challenges—such as lack of food or money—decreases their propensity to develop PTSD. A constant experience of racial discrimination, coupled with the inability to attain life goals, created feelings of mistrust and skepticism that act as protective factors. Because Europeans have fewer daily struggles, they are prone to more extreme reactions in the face of traumatic events.

Davis et al. (2012), writing about African American survivors of Hurricane Katrina, found that they fared worse than their European counterparts. Among veteran

populations, PTSD was 13% higher in African Americans than Europeans (Davis et al., 2012). According to Ai et al. (2011), higher rates of PTSD in volunteer populations (5.6% African American versus 1.9% European) were attributed to factors such as being economically disadvantaged, less educated, and having previous exposure to trauma. However, in a recent study, Joseph, Matthews, and Myers (2014) reported that previous exposure to trauma was not as significant as economic status—and specifically job loss—in predicting PTSD outcomes for African Americans 10 years after the event.

Shared Trauma

Shared trauma refers to the symptomology discovered in mental health professionals following the events of 9/11 (Baum, 2012; Dekel & Baum, 2010; Tosone et al., 2012). Researchers had documented mental health professionals and first responders who treated traumatized patients faced an elevated risk of developing negative psychological symptomology, for example, PTSD, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma (Bell & Robinson, 2013; Branson, Weigand, & Keller, 2013; Dekel & Baum, 2010; Haugen Splaun, Evces, & Weiss, 2013). Biggs et al. (2012) noted prevalence rates of 26% for depression and 15% for acute stress disorder in 90 emergency responders following the events of 9/11. In an investigation of over 750 rescue workers, Argentero and Setti (2011) found organizational support and consistent interaction with peers as mitigating the onset and decreasing the severity of acute and long-term psychological disturbances.

Tosone et al. (2012) revealed detrimental outcomes for workers supporting traumatized populations while also living in the area where the disastrous event occurred. The authors used the term*, shared trauma*, to describe the duality of experiences of professionals confronted by these factors (Tosone et al., 2012). Baum (2012) suggested workers experience a range of responses including internalized fear, increased sense of the fragile nature of their mortality, and disconnection from their emotions. Researchers have noted concern regarding the lack of recognition for workers' personal plights, as these difficulties lead to decreases in professional efficacy (Baum, 2012; Dekel & Baum, 2010).

Teachers

Educational settings provide a neutral site for investigating the aftermath of chaotic events on children (Alisic, 2012; DeVaney, Carr, & Allen, 2009; Kilmer et al., 2010). Researchers rely on teachers to report students who demonstrate changes in behaviors, academic achievement, and social relationships (Alisic, 2012; Baum et al., 2009; Buchanan et al., 2010; Kilmer et al., 2010). Qualitative studies, collected responses from teachers concerning training modules offered to guide interactions with students affected by Hurricane Katrina. The data collected informed school psychologists how to better support teachers (). To address the concerns revealed by the study, Alisic suggested psychologists and school counselors offer teachers additional resources, including time to talk and process their feelings. The author documented the emotional toll teachers reported when they needed to provide support for traumatized students, while

simultaneously dealing with challenges in their personal lives (). Alisic (2012) suggested additional research could determine whether teachers should be considered as first responders based on the caretaking role they assumed with their students. Baum et al. (2009) also noted a lack of attention focused on vulnerabilities teachers demonstrated during their investigation of schoolchildren following Hurricane Katrina. While there is an emerging recognition of the dual affects of working and living in traumatized communities for mental health professionals and first responders, teachers facing similar challenges remain outside the focus of the research community (Alisic, 2012; Baum et al., 2009; Tosone et al., 2010).

Islahi and Nasreen (2011) noted variations in student achievement based upon the gender of the classroom instructor. Female teachers had greater tendencies towards providing nurturing, interactive classroom environments (). Male counterparts were dominating and structured in their approach to offering instruction (). However, both genders reported experiencing increased demands and responsibilities following traumatic occurrences affecting their neighborhoods (Alisic, 2012; Buchanan et al., 2010; Kilmer et al., 2010). The focus of this study is on female teachers, as they represent over 70% of professionals in the occupation (Jay, 2009).

Hurricane Katrina offered researchers an opportunity to investigate the impact of natural disasters in various demographics, including gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Ai et al., 2011; Ladfitka, Murray, & Laditka., 2010; Lee, Shen, & Tran, 2009). In respect to African American women, studies revealed discrepant outcomes. Consistent

with previous historical accounts, many of the women demonstrated inherent resilient tendencies (Ai et al., 2011; Ladfitka et al., 2010). However, disconnection from family and community support systems created feelings of hopeless and powerlessness for others (Ai et al., 2011; Ladfitka et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2009). When coupled with the loss of cultural memories, this group of African American women exhibited exacerbated mental health symptomology (Ai et al., 2011; Ladfitka et al., 2010). Chapter 2 will further explore these concepts.

The adverse effects of natural disasters and human-made traumas increase when adding the outcomes of their experiences with racial injustices (Alisic, 2012; Jay, 2009; Sue et al., 2009). Overt discrimination continues to influence the lives of African Americans across our nation (Bindas, 2010; Hardy, 2013; Hinds, 2010; Smith et al., 2011). Current research reveals the evolution of these actions into covert racist behaviors or microaggressions (Jay, 2009; Smith et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2009). Ponds (2013) termed these everyday experiences of microaggressions, coupled with long-term exposure to racially discriminatory behaviors, *racial trauma.* Similar to other trauma-related disorders, racial trauma can result in mental impairment while also affecting the physical and emotion well-being of African Americans (Hardy, 2013; Hinds, 2010; Jernigan & Daniel, 2011; Ponds, 2013). Although there are several studies regarding the influence of racial trauma in broader populations of African Americans, there is a dearth of knowledge concerning experiences of racial trauma based on profession (Ponds, 2013; Smith et al., 2011). The gap in current literature widens exponentially when considering

female African American teachers' experiences of racial and shared trauma (Jay, 2009; Ponds, 2013, Smith et al., 2011; Tosone et al., 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers employed in communities with escalating violence—and those supporting students in the wake of naturally occurring catastrophes (Alisic, 2012; Kilmer et al., 2010)—may be at increased risk of developing symptoms of posttraumatic stress, secondary trauma stress, and other trauma diagnoses (Milner, 2012; Salter-Jones, 2012). Researchers have validated the existence of shared trauma in helping professionals who assist victims of traumatizing events when these professionals live in the same community where the trauma occurred (Baum, 2012; Tosone et al., 2012). There is a need to understand the parallels between mental health professionals and teachers in the face of community traumas.

African American teachers represent an overwhelmingly marginalized and understudied cultural group (Jay, 2009; Kohli, 2012; Milner, 2012). Exploration concerning this group offers a unique view of how African American women have emerged in the professional ranks over the last century (Lee et al., 2009). From a historical perspective, the women are replete with cultural information that could help explain their coping strategies (Lee et al., 2009). It is important to understand how culture, collectivism, and professionalism influence how African American women experience traumatic events (Ladfitka et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2009).

The study of microaggressions is expanding (Jay, 2009; Ponds, 2013). Researchers have defined the specific, pervasive behaviors that confront African Americans and other People of Color as *microinsults, microinvalidations,* and *microassaults* (Jay, 2009; Smith et al., 2011; Sue, et al., 2009). While the nature, context, and outcomes of the experiences of microagressions unfold in the academic community, researchers highlighted a need for further analysis of variations between the various types of conduct based upon professional affiliation (Baum, 2012; Tosone et al., 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of female African American teachers following a community trauma, including the duality of their professional and personal responsibilities. This includes the role racial trauma plays in their everyday lives and how it influences their behaviors when faced with unexpected, chaotic events. Teachers play a significant role in our society and in the lives of our children (Alisic, 2012). When entire communities experience violence, terrorist attacks, or natural disasters, schools can offer solace; they represent a constant, stable resource (Alisic, 2012, Baum et al., 2009; Jaycox et al., 2010). In the wake of a traumatic event, teachers' responsibilities in the classroom increase: They must now provide a consistent, stable environment for students (Alisic, 2012; Kilmer et al., 2010). Female African American teachers must take on these responsibilities while enduring constant exposure to microaggressions inside and outside of the classroom (Jay, 2009; Ponds, 2013; Smith et al., 2011).

Research Questions

In this research study, I sought to explore how African American teachers who experience racial traumas perceive living and working in communities traumatized by natural and man-made disasters. It was guided by the following questions and sub questions:

RQ1: How do African American teachers understand and perceive shared trauma, based on living and working in traumatized communities?

SQ1-1: What approaches do African American teachers employ in supporting students after a community trauma occurs?

SQ1-2: What supports, if any, do African American teachers believe are helpful in assisting them with dealing with students after a community trauma?

RQ2: How do African American teachers understand and perceive the nature of racial traumas' presence their personal and professional lives?

SQ2-1: How do African American teachers explain resiliency in relationship to traumatic experiences?

SQ2-2: What are the shared psychosocial impacts of microaggressions on African American teachers?

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) expresses the historical influence discriminatory practices contribute to continued social injustices (Aguirre, 2010; Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010; Kohli, 2012: Smith et al., 2011). Delgado and Stefanicic (2000) articulated the need to understand the affect of racism throughout any discourse related to African Americans' and other oppressed minority groups' experiences in the context of societal institutions (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Pellar, & Thomas, 1995; Kohli, 2012). The application of CRT has evolved from its original legal perspective, to incorporate acknowledging the effect of unjustly subjecting people of color to subordinate positions in multiple settings (Aguirre, 2010; Cain, Plummer, Fisher, & Bankston, 2010; Kohli, 2012).

CRT undergirded the lenses needed to explore the experiences of African American teachers (Aguirre, 2010; Burton et al., 2010; Jay, 2009). The theoretical framework also supports embracing the narratives of People of Color (Kohli, 2012). Transformative in its approach, CRT assists in interpreting the obstacles and barriers faced by African American teachers within educational institutions (Aguirre, 2010; Kohli, 2012; Patton & Catching, 2009). Jay (2009) demonstrated the intersectionality of African American teachers' experiences when placed in the context of racially discriminatory practices. The work steeped in CRT exposed the depth of understanding CRT offered when considering the teachers' plight (Jay, 2009). A critical lens offers

opportunities to inquire about African American teachers' experiences of social and economic marginalization (Gove, Volk, Still, K., Huang, & Thomas-Alexander, 2011; Milner, 2012). I explore these issues further in Chapter 2.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural models suggest a nonpathological basis for how African Americans' cope with stress and trauma (Hunter & Schmidt, 2010). Dating back to the late 1930's, Meredith (1938) used the word nonpathological to describe 'normal' growth and development patterns in children. Hood (1974) offered nonpathological reasoning to explain bizarre behaviors in people having religious experiences. Eyre, Flythe, Hoffman, and Fraser (2012) attributed the lack of pathology in young African American adolescents' relationship patterns to living in low socioeconomic environments. However, the researchers noted the effect of African Americans' dependence on church, family, and social supports in identity development (Eyre et al., 2012). Similar patterns emerged in the context of help seeking, when the youth confronted difficult life stressors (Eyre et al., 2012). Eyre et al. (2013) noted the correlations between these tendencies and nonpathological responses to traumatic events. Recently, Diamond, Lipsitz, and Hoffman (2013) described behavioral patterns of people living in nations where continuous violence occurred as ongoing traumatic stress response. The researchers challenged the pathological orientation attributed to people diagnosed with PTSD (Diamond et al., 2013). Sociocultural theory places study populations in the context of the entire human

experience and provides a conceptual framework to assist in understanding the experiences of African Americans (Hunter & Schmidt, 2010).

Steeped in the work of Vygotsky (1978) the sociocultural framework includes the process of internalization and how human interaction with their environments influences their identity formation and patterns of behavior (Vygotsky, 1978 as cited by Pamental, 2010). Vygotsky suggested the educational system was an important contributor to how people developed their beliefs regarding "self" (Agbatogun, 2012; Smagorinsky, 2012). The theorist suggested young people internalize false concepts regarding their identity based on perceptions of teachers throughout their developmental years (Agbatogun, 2012; Smagorinsky, 2012). Aligning it with deficit based orientations, for example, using language to describe others as mentally retarded or handicapped, Vygotsky's theoretical framework also underscored how identifying people as being "different" than mainstream society begets psychological harm (Agbatogun, 2012; Smagorinsky, 2012).

Sociocultural theory incorporates the social and environmental influences on African American teachers, providing a foundation to understand how racial traumas interplay with shared traumas. Researchers have explored shared trauma as it relates to helping professionals who experience difficulties based on their work with traumatized populations while concurrently coping with similar circumstances based on where they live. While teachers represent a population who also cares for traumatized students and often live in the same community traumatized by the event(s), I was unable identify salient literature regarding the primary and secondary nature of their experiences. The use

of sociocultural theory infuses Vygotsky's conceptualization of how teachers' worldviews reflect their physiological, psychological, and sociological experiences (Pamental, 2010). I infused Vygotsky's theory, as it allows for a holistic, interpretative approach consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of the study.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I explored important facets of racial trauma in the experiences of African American teachers living and working in traumatized communities, and generated a critical, hermeneutic, phenomenological study (Heidegger, 1962; Ponds, 2013; Tuohy Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixsmith, 2013; Van Manen, 1990). I examined the essence of racial trauma and African Americans teachers' shared traumatic experiences from a critical, sociocultural perspective (Burton et al., 2010; Hunter & Schmidt, 2010; Jay, 2009). Sociocultural theory undergirded the interpretive analysis of the teacher's expressions while also being inclusive of understanding the role and perspective of the researcher (Pamental, 2010; Valandra, 2012).

Through the use of a critical phenomenological investigation I illuminate female African American teachers' lived experiences when shared and racial trauma co-occurred in their lives. Phenomenological research aims to describe the 'lived experiences' of individuals who share a common set of circumstances (Converse, 2012; Flood, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013). I describe how African American teachers make meaning of the duality of their roles following a community tragedy.

Phenomenological investigations, a category of qualitative research design, provide insight into lived experiences of populations, which heretofore, have been overlooked or underreported (Flood, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013). Entwining racial and shared traumatic ”daesin” or experiences, interpretative analysis of the teachers' expressions provided insight into how they make meaning of the duality of their encounters (Heidegger, 1962 as cited by Flood, 2010). Using their authentic voices illuminates their strengths and struggles (Flood, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013).

For the purpose of this investigation, community traumas include natural and human-made disasters, for example, hurricanes, school shootings, or terrorist attacks. The study sampled a group of six female, African American teachers who have lived and worked in traumatized communities. Exploration of their shared experiences of critical events also focused on the role that racial trauma, including microaggressions, play in their subjective reports.

Based on Colaizzi's analytical processes (Edward & Welch, 2011), I asked the teachers to bring artifacts to the semi-structured interviews that represented their feelings of shared and racial trauma, including photographs, mementos, or narratives. Their explanations about the meaning of the items to them provided insight into the dual phenomena under investigation (Edward & Welch, 2011). Chapter 3 will provide a detailed account of the process and procedures I used.

Definition of Terms

Etic: Describing a cultural experience from an outsider's perspective (Zhu & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2013).

Emic: Describing a cultural experience from an insider's perspective (Zhu & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2013).

Microaggressions: Constant subtle demeaning behaviors demonstrated against a person because of their race or minority status (Mercer et al., 2011)

Microassaults: The use of disparaging language to refer to African Americans (Henfield, 2011; Mercer et al., 2011; Torres-Harding, Andrade, & Romero Diaz, 2012).

Microinsults: Treating African Americans in a manner inconsistent with the treatment of Europeans (Henfield, 2011; Mercer et al., 2011).

Microinvalidations: Assuming all African Americans are the same (Henfield, 2011; Mercer et al., 2011).

Racial Trauma: The result of frequent experiences of microaggressions or living in communities where people of color endure continued exposure to racially discriminatory behaviors from the dominant culture (Ponds, 2013).

Resiliency: Bonanno and Mancini (2012) defined resiliency as the ability of adults to maintain normal functioning during traumatizing circumstances, such as a natural disaster or events that are life-threatening.

Shared trauma: Tosone et al. (2012) offered shared trauma results when mental health providers share in the collective experiences of their clients, following of a

massive traumatic event. Detrimental outcomes are reflective of living and working in the affected community.

Assumptions

I assumed that participants' responses to questions were truthful and that they represented their beliefs in an honest manner. Second, I assumed that teachers who represented themselves as having experienced shared and racial trauma fully understood the concepts. The final assumption was they met the study criteria of being a classroom teacher of students' grades kindergarten through high school,

Limitations

A non-probability, qualitative examination, presents several limitations to generalizability and transferability (Pearson, Parkin, & Coomber, 2011; Suri, 2011). The homogenous, purposeful sample is not necessarily reflective of a broader population of African American females or teachers (Pearson et al., 2011; Suri, 2011). The lack of deviation in terms of gender and race of the participants also constrains transferability to males and other ethnicities (Pearson et al., 2011; Suri, 2011). Previous or cumulative traumatic experiences were the biggest potential impediment to teachers accurately reporting data (Ai et al., 2011; Galea, Tracy, Norris, & Coffey, 2008). The historic nature of the information was a threat, as traumas occurred more than a year prior to the conducting the investigation (Creswell, 2013; Williams & Morrow, 2009). In order to describe the lived experiences of those whom I share a gender and cultural identity, I was

aware and attempted to remove my biases and remain open to their beliefs concerning the information they share.

Scope and Delimitations

I did not request disclosure of previous mental health concerns of the participants as verification would require medical releases. Reports of pre-existing mental illnesses or traumatic exposures are reliant on the factual conveyance of the information from the respondent. Given the stigma attached to mental illness in the African American community, additional verification could have potentially interfered with collecting candidate responses (Knifton, 2012; Murry, Heflinger, Suiter, & Brody, 2011). I considered that a request for personal information could detrimentally influence the ability to establish and build rapport during the interview (Constantine, 2013; Elmir, Schmied, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2011). Introductory statements in the interview narrowed the focus to the shared nature of their experiences, avoiding confusion regarding their mental status.

Significance

Islahi and Nasreen (2011) emphasized the contributions teachers make to society. Research on understanding teachers' abilities and limitations helps make the most of their potential to benefit students and thus every community in which they work (Islahi & Nasreen, 2011). A recent reported noted 33% of new teachers leave the profession within the first 3 years of classroom exposure (Perry & Hayes, 2011). Increased demands by administrators, expectations to supervise afterschool activities, and limited classroom

supplies, are among the myriad reasons offered by teachers who decide to change professions (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012; Kaspereen, 2012; Perry & Hayes, 2011). Changes in national policies, such as common core state standards, require re-training and adaptation to new rules and expectations for student achievement (Partnership for 21st Century, 2011). Frustrations from outside constituencies, for example, administrators or politicians, and lack of parental and social supports for students, challenge teachers' mental and physical health (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012; Kaspereen, 2012; Perry & Hayes, 2011).

Today, the dearth of African American teachers creates an enormous void for African American students, who miss the leadership, mentorship, and kinship enjoyed by their predecessors (Coates, 2010; Perry & Hayes, 2011). Racial injustices continue to dissuade African Americans from joining the profession (Kohli, 2012). Studies indicated school districts across the country are unable to attract and retain what they have recognized as valuable and needed contributions African American teachers make to the educational systems (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012; Kohli, 2012; Perry & Hayes, 2011).

The needs of students often overshadow vulnerabilities and achievements of teachers (Jay, 2009). The current study seeks to provide pertinent information filling the gap of knowledge, specifically as it pertains to the experiences of African American teachers living and working in traumatized communities. Teachers are an essential part of our society and our children’s developmental processes (Islahi & Nasreen, 2011). I describe both their strengths and struggles to assist those outside of the educational

system in understanding their experiences when faced with traumatic occurrences. In focusing narrowly on female African American teachers, I illuminated how they make meaning of both environmentally based traumas (shared) and psychologically based traumas (racial) in the context of community trauma. Empirical evidence will assist both academia and policy makers in developing and instituting appropriate responses. Documentation of the experiences of African American teachers presented an opportunity to inform other professionals and those within the educational system who may face similar experiences (Bauwens & Tosone, 2010; Bridwell, 2012; Jay, 2009; Milner, 2012).

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the purpose of this interpretative, phenomenological study. I presented background on the relevance of investigating the lived experiences of African American teachers following a traumatic event that affects the entire community, such as a school shooting or natural disaster. African American teachers who live and work in traumatized communities, also grapple with racial inequities and injustices. This study addresses the lack of empirical evidence of the effect of shared and racial traumas in this unique population. Using critical race and sociocultural theories as a backdrop, a framework for understanding the African American teachers' experiences emerged from an interpretive, phenomenological perspective.

Chapter 2 reviews salient literature related to shared and racial trauma, in the context of educational and community settings. The next chapter also presents critical race and sociocultural theoretical constructs as they contribute to a holistic understanding

of the intersectionality of these complex issues, in relationship to African American teachers. I present the methods, theory, and design used to conduct the study in chapter three. The fourth chapter reveals the data collected, how I inductively analyzed the data using an enhanced version of the Colaizzi 7-step, and the emergent themes. In the final chapter, I offer my findings and recommendations. I also review the constraints of the study and describe the implications for social change on various levels of our society.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In order to understand the nature and context of the female African American teachers' experience, chapter 2 focuses on three trauma categories, community, shared, and racial, delving into current research in the emerging fields. I reviewed the literature examining critical race and sociocultural theoretical frameworks, along with related historical and philosophical underpinnings. Finally, I conclude the chapter by presenting the intersectionality of the constructs within the study population, African American teachers.

Literature Review Strategy

I used two search engines EBSCO and Google Scholar to search the literature for relevant information. Databases used in the initial searches included PsycINFO, Academic Search Complete, SocIndex with Full Text, PsycARTICLES, PsychNet, Political Science Complete, ProQuest Central, Education Research Complete, Dissertations & Theses, Education Research Complete, Eric, and Taylor and Francis Social Science and Humanities Library. I used scholarly, peer-reviewed articles, published within the last five years, or the latest available on the topic. In mining the literature, I excluded publications based on lack of relevance to the study topics. and the following four search engines, ERIC,

Two seminal books, including, *In Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes (*Vygotsky, 1978*)* and *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1962). provided historic information on theoretical and conceptual topics.

I used the following keywords to identify salient literature on my topics of interest: *shared trauma, collective trauma, secondary trauma, vicarious trauma, natural disasters, community violence, school violence, school shootings, racial trauma, microaggression, African American, teachers, trauma, PTSD, first responders, natural disasters, schools, non-pathological, resilience, resiliency, terror management, grounded theory, critical race theory,* and *sociocultural theory*. Results yielded seven unrelated articles using keywords, *shared, racial, and trauma*. Using keywords, *racial trauma and shared trauma* in full range, selected database searches, with open date fields, produced no results, indicated a gap in the literature.

Shared Trauma

Tosone et al. (2012) offered shared trauma to define mental health practitioners who have experienced a primary trauma, such as a natural disaster, and secondary trauma based on professional roles with affected populations. Shared trauma refers to mental health professionals who live and work in traumatized communities (Tosone et al., 2012). Workers in countries where terrorism is rampant, along with those who live in communities struck by natural disasters, can experience dual results of the traumatic event (Baum, 2010; Tosone et al., 2012). For example, there were mental health workers responding to the 9/11 terrorist attack who lived in the New York metropolitan area

(Tosone et al., 2012). Professionally, work focused on assisting survivors and families of survivors in mentally coping with the overwhelming tragedy (Tosone et al., 2012). Simultaneously, the practitioners strived to cope with similar challenges in their private lives (Tosone et al., 2012). Assumptions related to posttraumatic stress (PTSD) and secondary traumatic Stress (STS) did not effectively capture this little known population's struggles (Tosone et al., 2012).

Schmideberg (1942) articulated the first noted references to a shared trauma experience, followed by Killian (1952) who discussed the conflictual nature of decision making following a disastrous event (Baum, 2010; Bell & Robinson III, 2013). Killian observed the choices made by workers when family and employment demands competed. The author also recognized the conflict from a group membership orientation, when devastated community members needed to prioritize decisions based upon social or economic factors (Killian, 1952).

Issues related to psychological status of mental health practitioners involved in the Gulf War, presented the next phase of investigations into the deleterious effects of living and working in traumatized communities (Dekel, 2010). In 1997, the term *shared reality* surfaced as researchers identified parallel processes of mental health and social workers living in Israel during the bombings (Ktretch, 1997 as cited by Baum, 2012). Keinan-Kon (1998) preferred the term shared traumatic reality to describe alterations in clinician’s perspective evolving from exposure to warfare. The author posed the use of the terminology from a sociopolitical standpoint (Keinan-Kon, 1998). From a non-

clinical perspective, Laor et al. (1999) suggested shared traumatic reality as appropriately describing distressing experiences among groups of veterans who served the same locations in Vietnam. Studies to ascertain why service personnel responded differently when faced with similar circumstances concluded biological and physiological factors contributed to the divergent outcomes (Laor et al., 1999). The investigators measured physiological reactions to visual stimulus, representing one of the earliest studies to query the biological and neurological aspects of PTSD (Laor et al., 1999). Brown-Bowers, Fredman, Wanklyn, and Monson (2012) used the term shared traumatic experience to describe variant psychological outcomes of couples who delivered stillborn babies. The authors reflected upon how two people who suffer the same loss, cope with the traumatic event differently (Brown-Bowers et al., 2012). The reference is comparative to the studies of war veterans, highlighting similarities and conflicting psychological outcomes when they witness the same trauma(s) (Laor et al., 1999).

In comparing and contrasting the various references to shared reality, shared traumatic experience, and shared trauma, subtle nuances differentiate the foci of their definitions. As interest in the aspect of trauma response unfolded in the wake of 9/11, numerous researchers began to identify features of the mental health professionals' reactions that did not meet criteria for previously defined maladies (Baum, 2010, Baum, 2012; Tosone et al., 2012). Baum (2010) initially identified four criteria as necessary to meet standards for shared traumatic reality, but two years later found two salient features adequately captured the malady (Baum, 2012). The researcher determined 1) the clinician

and client had a communal experience of a large-scale traumatic event and 2) the clinician had both primary and secondary exposure (Baum, 2012). While Baum (2012) removed the current nature of the crisis as pinnacle, Tosone et al. (2012) continued to include it in the broad definition of the term, *shared trauma*. Tosone et al.'s (2012) terminology describes similar circumstances as shared traumatic reality. However, Baum (2012) controverted the external focus of Tosone et al.'s (2012) definition. Baum (2012) theorized the effects of increased guilt and shame felt by mental health providers, negatively influenced their ability to be empathic. Researchers also noted changes in the relationship between therapist and client (Baum, 2012). The helpers broke pre-crisis boundaries of non-disclosure of personal information and physical boundaries, for example, hugging their clients (Baum, 2012). Practitioners reported responding to questions about their families and openly sharing personal stories concerning their experiences (Baum, 2012).

A year after 9/11, Altman and Davies (2002) issued a request for mental health providers who treated survivors of the attacks to record their experiences for further analysis. After personally attesting to psychological manifestations that did not fit within transference or countertransference parameters, the investigators wanted to identify whether their colleagues concurred (Altman & Davies, 2002). During the same year, Saakvitne, (2002) authored an article conveying the shared nature of experiences with victims of the 9/11 attack. In describing the emotional upheaval, Saakvitne (2002) noted conflicts of mental health providers wanting to attend to family and personal matters

while client's need for support and contact increased. The conflict of choices between professional and personal demands was also the focal point of Tosone et al.'s (2012) research. Similar to the conflictual decision-making patterns found in Killian's (1952) earlier doctrine, Tosone et al. (2012) expressed the turmoil created when practitioners' desire to assure the safety of family and loved ones, superseded assisting in resolving clients' tumultuous issues. During therapeutic sessions, distracting thoughts, and concerns about personal matters interfered with therapists' ability to concentrate and focus on assisting their patients (Baum, 2012; Tosone et al., 2012).

Baum (2012) went further to investigate the inter-psyche clash, in developing a framework to understand the origin and nature of the process of shared experiences within the clinical relationship. While Baum (2012) articulated the lack of comparability to secondary or vicarious trauma, Tosone et al. (2012), similar to Altman and Davies (2002) identified its disconnection to transference and counter-transference in respect to the clinicians' vulnerabilities. Each agreed there were qualities that required additional research in order to convey the variant needs of mental health workers with dual exposure to community traumas (Baum, 2012; Tosone et al., 2012). Baum (2012) identified other professionals such as medical personnel, emergency responders, and teachers as potentially facing similar dilemmas. The author suggested the need for additional studies to identify outcomes of shared traumatic experiences in the other service populations (Baum, 2012). A review of literature related to community traumas follows an analysis of

the linkage between African American teachers and their possible connection to shared trauma.

Teachers

One population noted by Baum (2012), are teachers, the foci of this study. Specifically, the investigation targets outcomes for African American teachers who have paralleling experiences with mental health professionals following community traumas. Following events that affect entire communities, teachers become resources for traumatized students, similar to the role mental health practitioners in relationship to their clients (Alisic, 2012; Baum, 2012). Researchers recognized the pivotal role teachers play in providing a stable, nurturing environment for children in the face of chaos and confusion in their local neighborhoods and towns (Alisic, 2012; Moore & Varela, 2010). Studies following hurricanes over the last decade documented that secure relationships with teachers reduces the chances of long-term psychological distress in children (Alisic, 2012; Jaycox et al., 2010; Kilmer et al., 2010; Moore & Varela, 2010).

Coupled with other job stressors, for example, increased demands for documentation of student progress, pressures related to student testing results, and lack of parental involvement, additional responsibilities of caretaking emotionally imbalanced children can become overwhelming (Alisic, 2012). Alisic (2012) conducted interviews with teachers regarding their role with students who had experienced a trauma, including sudden deaths of loved ones, car accidents, and physical or sexual abuse. The author

noted the teacher's apprehensions based on lack of familiarity, knowledge, and comfort in dealing with sensitive issues.

When community traumas occur, teachers' are identified sources for reporting behavioral and educational concerns with students in their classrooms (Alisic, 2012; Kilmer et al., 2010). In the wake of the mass dislocation caused by Hurricane Katrina, students without proper documentation of their educational history and status inundated surrounding school districts unaffected by the storm (Kilmer et al., 2010). Lack of knowledge and familiarity with the new students disrupted normal practices in outer lying educational settings (Kilmer et al., 2010). A few teachers were able to embrace the challenges with the assistance of administrators and principles; others struggled to maintain classroom decorum and stability (Kilmer et al., 2010). Understanding the reasons for the variant responses is an area researchers have yet to identify, but suggest the need for further analysis (Alisic, 2012; Kilmer et al., 2010). Alisic (2012) reported on teachers' uneasiness with embracing individual student's challenges based on traumatic encounters. This study focused on events, which disrupt entire regions, such as natural disasters or school shootings. An understanding of *community trauma* and its effects on neighborhoods and schools support the analysis of how shared and racial traumas potentially co-occur in African American teachers.

Community Trauma

Shared traumas take place in the context of a communal disaster (Baum, 2012; Dekel, 2010; Tosone et al., 2012). Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and community

violence have the commonality of affecting large populations in a specific geographic location, creating chaotic and tumultuous atmospheres (Baum, 2012, Tosone et al., 2012). Community trauma in its broadest definition refers to these occurrences as it affects the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of the populace exposed to the event (Aten et al., 2012; Stein et al., 2013; Vivolo et al., 2011). People living in cities in Israel, for example, are under the constant threat of unexpected bombings (Stein et al., 2013). Hurricanes, tornados, mudslides, and other natural disasters wreak havoc and create chaotic conditions for local citizens when they strike neighborhoods and towns (Aten et al., 2012; Houston, Pfefferbaum, &Murphy, 2012). Tosone et al. (2012) used the term to describe Manhattan and the surrounding communities following the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Other researchers have referred to community trauma when discussing gun and gang violence and its proliferation in urban centers across the United States (Copeland-Linder, Lambert, & Ialongo, 2010; Walling, Eriksson, Putman, & Foy, 2011). School shootings also represent incidences whereby a collective groups of students, teachers, and neighboring residents become responsive to horrifying loss of life (Haan & Mays, 2013; Haravuori, Suomalainen, Berg, Kiviruusu, & Marttunen, 2011).

Harmful and deleterious consequences of these events include the destruction of property, in the case of terrorist attacks and natural disasters, but also the employment of maladaptive coping strategies and psychological impairment for people exposed to these tragedies (Aten et al., 2012; Bernard, Rittle, & Roberts, 2011; Tosone, McTighe, Bauwens, & Naturale, 2011). Researchers have also noted positive outcomes resulting

from community disruptions (Morgan et al., 2011). For example, Morgan et al. (2011) noted changes in behaviors of New York residents following the terrorist attack on 9/11. The researchers observed community residents being helpful and polite, offering assistance and support to virtual strangers (Morgan et al., 2011). Bauwens and Tosone (2010) reported on mental health workers who indicated their role in supporting traumatized residents assisted in their professional growth. Communities have also banded together to thwart violent behaviors, decreasing their vulnerability to the potential ill effects of long-term exposure (Vivolo et al., 2011).

Understanding the nature and outcomes for communities who endure difficult circumstances and challenging events provides an orientation to investigate finite populations, such as African American teachers. The paper will now focus attention on the literature related to the various ways traumatic events affect communities as a backdrop to reviewing needs and strengths of African American teachers following these dreadful occurrences.

Human-made Disasters

On September 11, 2001, the first foreign terrorist attack on American soil occurred when three highjacked airplanes caused inconceivable death and destruction (Aiello, 2012; Guenthner, 2012; Morgan et al., 2011). It offered academia an opportunity to investigate the myriad of traumatic outcomes on multiple populations (Guenthner, 2012; Haugen et al., 2013; Tosone et al., 2011). Haugen et al. (2013) and Biggs et al. (2011) focused on outcomes with first responders, including police, firefighters, and

medical personnel. They found evidence of continued psychological impairment based upon their interactions with traumatized populations (Haugen et al., 2013; Biggs et al., 2011). Outcomes included reported increased smoking and alcohol consumption in these populations, depression, anxiety, and development of PTSD (Haugen et al., 2013; Biggs et al., 2011). Analysis of data led researchers to conclude the need to deploy additional resources to address the negative manifestations (Biggs et al., 2011; Haugen et al., 2013; Pandya, 2013).

In a study of the impact of 9/11 on the business community, Guenthner (2012) found evidence for the need of critical incident stress management (CISM) to reduce the overwhelming losses employers suffered. Following the attacks, researchers found high rates of absenteeism, loss of income, and psychological stress among business owners and their employees. These impediments are causal factors, which reduce employees' ability to perform job tasks. The researcher revealed local entrepreneurs reported mental health symptomology comparable to first responders. Findings suggested supporting the use of CISM to reduce negative economic and psychological outcomes for business communities affected by traumatic occurrences.

Other countries around the world have suffered after terrorists deployed bombs, chemical weapons, and committed mass murders to carry out political agendas (Diamond et al., 2013; Millett, 2010; Stein et al., 2013). Several areas in Israel have received the attention of the academia based on the frequency and duration of their exposure to terrorist attacks (Diamond et al. 2013; Stein et al., 2013). Researchers discovered

although the overwhelming number of residents in the village of Sderot, Israel reported symptomology consistent with PTSD, the long-term nature of the exposure contributed to a nonpathological-based malady (Diamond et al., 2013). Diamond et al. (2013) coined *ongoing trauma stress response* (OTSR) to describe the behaviors of peoples that resemble PTSD, but are primary the result of a reality-based expectation of harm or death. The authors noted a reduction of symptoms when residents relocated to safer, stable environments (Diamond et al., 2013).

Stein et al. (2013) compared the same village to a similar area, Otef Aza, Israel. The researchers concluded dynamics, such as collective orientation, supportive neighbors and families, and economic stability were protective factors for those living in villages of Otef Aza (Stein et al., 2013). Coupled with other cultural variations, researchers attributed lower rates of PTSD to these factors (Stein et al., 2013). While the research community has reached consensus regarding the increased risk of PTSD and other psychological impairments based on exposure to terrorist activities, other outcomes and protective mechanisms, for example, posttraumatic growth, are also under investigation (Bauwens & Tosone, 2010; Diamond et al., 2013; McIntosh, Poulin, Silver, & Holman, 2011; Stein et al., 2013).

As exemplified after the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma in 1995, schools become the site of recovery activities (Felix et al., 2010). Researchers have emphasized the need to offer post-terror interventions in the school setting (Felix et al., 2010; Jaycox et al., 2010; Watson, Brymer, & Bonanno, 2011). Following 9/11, multiple

mental health service providers implemented the Child and Adolescent Trauma Treatments and Services in schools in New York City and Long Island to address the needs of children adversely affected by the attacks (Watson et al., 2011). When narrowing the focus of terrorism to schools, empirical evidence of the role of teachers following these disastrous events highlighted the essential contributions, they make towards traumatized students (Bilal, Farooq, R. & Tabbssum, 2012; Felix et al., 2010; Watson et al., 2011). However, studies have also uncovered a lack of preparedness and comfort teachers have when they become responsible for identifying students at-risk of long-term maladaptive behavioral and psychological consequences (Alisic, 2012; Felix et al., 2010). Teachers reported feeling overwhelmed by their own emotions after terrorizing attacks (Felix et al., 2010). A quantitative study of over 850 teachers documented continued fear and anxiety seven weeks after the Oklahoma City bombing (Felix et al., 2010). One-year post 9/11, a sample of teachers related persistent negative emotional responses and an inability to function in aspects of their personal lives (Felix et al., 2010).

Natural Disasters

Climate changes and environmental factors have caused over 350 natural disasters to strike since the turn of the century (Hernández, 2013; Julca, 2012). Causing untold death and destruction, tsunamis, floods, hurricanes, and other turbulent storms have wreaked havoc globally, and scientists estimate the frequency and intensity will continue to rise (Hernández, 2013; Julca, 2012). For example, in 2008 an earthquake in Japan killed over 88,000 people, and another 400,000 suffered injuries (Long & Wong, 2012).

Pyari, Kutty, and Sarma (2012) reported 300,000 deaths related to the tsunami in Southeast Asia in 2004. The number of natural disasters in the United States has steadily increased over the last decade (Houston et al., 2012). In a 12-month period, three hurricanes, Charley, Frances, and Ivan struck the state of Florida (Houston et al., 2012). In 2011, federal and state governments expended billions of dollars on reparations of damages to local communities that included wildfires, tornados, blizzards, windstorms, hurricanes, and floods (Julca, 2012). Another historic storm, Hurricane Katrina, caused the displacement of nearly half of million people because of damage and destruction to over 217,000 homes and 985 schools (McLaughlin et al., 2011). A little over a year ago, Hurricane Sandy took a 900-mile path of destruction from the Caribbean Islands up through the northeastern United States (Piotrowski, 2012). Also referred to as a 'superstorm,' Sandy dislocated over 20,000 people and close to 8 million residents lost electrical power (Deaths associated, 2013).

Because of the massive amounts of people affected by these disasters, survivors have garnered national and international attention (Julca, 2012; Nolz, Semet, & Doerner, 2011; Pyari et al., 2012). Disaster relief efforts have supported recovery from infrastructural damages and restoration of communities affected by these unpredictable occurrences (Julca, 2012; Nolz et al., 2011). The mental health community's primary focus has been on PTSD (Bonanno & Mancini, 2012; Long & Wong, 2012; McLaughlin et al., 2011). However, empirical evidence exists highlighting the acute nature of the majority of disaster related mental impairments (Bonanno & Mancini, 2012; McLaughlin

et al., 2011; Pietrzak et al., 2012). Ten years after a major earthquake in Italy, studies indicated only a small number of survivors continued to suffer negative psychological consequences (Bonanno & Mancini, 2012).

The research community is also beginning to recognize the prevalence of other maladies such as secondary and vicarious traumatic stress in populations following a natural disaster (Bonanno & Mancini, 2012; Long & Wong, 2012; McLaughlin et al., 2011). Factors such as previous traumatic experiences, length, and duration of exposure, along with sociocultural status have implications for identifying and treating survivors' fragile psychological states (Diamond et al., 2013; Long & Wong, 2012; McLaughlin et al., 2011). As the occurrence of natural disasters continues to escalate, studies previously directed at PTSD can begin to attend to finite details of the emotional and psychological scars in surviving populations (Diamond et al., 2013).

In the wake of a natural disaster, schools often become the center of activity (Buchanan et al, 2010; Kilmer, Gil-Rivas et al., 2010; O'Brien, Mills, Fraser & Anderson, 2011). Schools offer a place to shelter displaced families, distribute food, and other emergency supplies including clothing (Kilmer et al., 2010; O'Brien et al., 2011). A great deal of literature exists supporting the need for schools to provide solace and security for students deleteriously affected by catastrophic events (Alisic, 2012; Buchanan et al., 2010; Jaycox et al., 2010; Kilmer et al., 2010). Long & Wong (2012) suggested creating 'child-centered spaces,' within schools to assist students with relaxing, thereby reducing stress and anxiety resulting from the chaos and confusion. Research documented lower

rates of acute and long-term traumatic stress when youth have strong connections with teachers and peers in their educational environment (Buchanan et al., 2010; Jaycox et al., 2010; Kilmer et al., 2010). Teachers can offer stability and predictability, as they represent continuity during a time when families are struggling with recovering efforts (Kilmer et al., 2010). Documentation of the outcomes following natural disasters has contributed to the development of curricula targeted at assisting teachers with helping children to understand and cope with the turbulence in their environments (Alisic, 2012; Kilmer et al., 2010).

Jaycox et al. (2010) found teachers could play an instrumental role in identifying problematic behavior and growing psychological impairment in students following critical events. There is evidence, however, teachers are uncomfortable with this added responsibility and lack confidence to evaluate students' mental health status (Alisic, 2012; Jaycox et al., 2010). Alisic (2012) recorded increased rates of referrals from teachers to school counselors and psychologist after receiving training to improve their assessment skills.

Following Hurricane Katrina, a school in Mississippi implemented Building Resilience Project (BRP) to offer teachers information on trauma, PTSD, and other potential psychological manifestations of trauma exposure (Baum et al., 2009). Researchers had previously used the methodology in school districts in Israel. Investigators discovered its' efficacy in providing teachers with additional skill sets to support traumatized students. Baum et al. (2009) derived an unintentional benefit when

teachers indicated they became more aware of their own symptoms of psychological distress. The study represented one of the few investigations, which highlighted the need for continued research focusing on outcomes for teachers based on their supportive role of traumatized students.

While collecting data to increase the efficacy of school psychologists' interventions when disastrous events occur in the surrounding community, Alisic (2012) also noted the lack of resources to support teachers. The researcher noted the importance placed on writing exercises to allow students to express their emotions. Some unintended benefit resulted based on exposing the teachers to the curriculum, however nothing focused on their specific needs. The current study describes the lived experiences of teachers' following traumatic events.

Community Violence

Community violence includes incidences of family and intimate partner violence, gang violence, robberies, muggings, homicides, hearing gun shots, physical and sexual assault (Walling et al., 2011; Zimmerman & Messner, 2013). The enduring and escalating crisis in communities across the country is attributable to dysfunctional family relationships, poor academic achievement, and intergenerational poverty (Zimmerman & Messner, 2013). Minority status in another significant factor, as it increases the chances of witnessing a violent act during adolescence to between 50-96% (Copeland-Linder et al., 2010; Zimmerman & Messner, 2013). Researchers' documented African American

males victimized or witnessed violent acts at rates substantially higher in comparison to their peers (Copeland et al., 2010; Zimmerman & Messner, 2013).

Resulting behaviors of young people exposed to community violence as a victim or witness included low self-esteem, poor school performance, substance abuse, and tendencies towards antisocial behavior (Copeland et al., 2010; Rawles, 2010; Theall et al., 2011). Studies documented significant correlations between youthful exposure to community violence and higher rates of psychological impairments and increased internalization of symptoms related to mental illness, which contributes to PTSD and suicidality (Copeland et al., 2010; Rawles, 2010). Adults living and working in high crime environments evidenced greater susceptibility to developing symptoms of PTSD and have dramatically higher rates of substance abuse and alcoholism (Theall et al., 2011; Walling et al., 2011). Walling et al. (2011) discussed the potential of urban workers to suffer from compassion fatigue and chronic stress. Findings suggested indirect exposure, for example, continuously hearing about the ill consequences of violence, contributed to increased rates of psychological distress for those employed in high crime districts (Walling et al., 2011).

Walling et al. (2011) noted the need to consider an *ecopathological model*, which focuses on exposure to violence when it is pervasive, beginning in childhood and continuing through adulthood. Living in neighborhoods deemed as *alcohol environments*, as evidenced by the density of liquor stores, contributes to increased frequency of violent behaviors (Theall et al., 2011). Protective factors, including spirituality and intact support

systems, also affect outcomes for those confronted with repeated and enduring encounters of violent conduct (Copeland et al., 2010; Walling et al., 2011). However, there is limited knowledge concerning how resilient tendencies contribute to individual or collective experiences in communities with high prevalence rates of violence (Copeland et al., 2010; Walling et al., 2011).

Researchers have documented a correlation between community violence and increasing rates of violence in local schools (Espelage et al., 2013; Rawles, 2010). Espelage et al. (2013) defined school violence as aggressive behaviors, which contaminate the overall environment of the school, placing students, teachers, and staff at-risk of harm. Assaultive or threatening conduct, discriminatory behaviors, and criminal violations, are all considered ways in which students perpetrate violence (Espelage et al., 2013; Rawles, 2010). Studies have found young people attending middle school are at the highest risk of victimization (Neiman, 2011; Rawles, 2010).

Causal factors include low socioeconomic status, poor educational systems, high rates of interpersonal and child abuse, and having limited opportunities to change pervasive, intergenerational patterns of substandard living conditions (Rawles, 2010). School violence is prevalent in communities where there are on-going drug and gang activity and high rates of violent crime (Rawles, 2010). Researchers' documented African American students living in urban centers are at increased vulnerability of encountering physical violence while attending school (Espelage et al., 2013; Neiman, 2011; Rawles,

2010). White students living in suburban and rural areas encounter acts of cyber-bullying at greater rates that their urban counterparts (Neiman, 2011).

Espelage et al. (2013) confirmed Rawles' (2010) findings concerning the need for improved positive social engagement between students, teachers, administrators, and families to address the increasing occurrences of school violence. In a 2011 inquiry, Johnson, Burke, and Gielen spoke to groups of students concerning their suggestions about remediating the escalating violence in schools. The researchers found the overall school atmosphere required redress (Johnson et al., 2011). For example, students conveyed feeling less threatened not by the sheer presence of security guards, but rather the positive interaction and rapport they were able to establish with students (Espelage et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2011). Other protective factors included good communication with parents and teachers, and parental involvement in school activities (Espelage et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2011).

Teachers are reporting acts of violence perpetrated against them by students at alarming rates (Chambers, Zyromski, Asner-Self, & Kimemia, 2010; Espelage et al., 2013). Reflective of the hostile community and school environments where they work, teachers indicated feeling emotional and psychological stress due to working under negative, combative circumstances (Espelage et al., 2013). Over time, researchers found teachers becoming increasingly vulnerable to developing major depression, secondary, and posttraumatic stress when working in hostile environments (Espelage et al., 2013).

Reports suggested without resolution, absenteeism, and retention rates among teachers will become endemic problems (Espelage et al., 2013).

More disconcerting than the escalating violence in schools are the growing incidents of school shootings, wounding and killing innocent students, teachers, and staff (Haan & Mayes, 2013; JeeHae, 2013; Mongan & Walker, 2012). From the first report of a school shooting in 1760, the accumulated total in 1990 was 179 incidences (JeeHae, 2013). Since that time, 64 shootings have occurred at schools across the United States (JeeHae, 2013). The student shooters tended to perform well in school, have minimal disciplinary reports, and well established, close peer relationships (JeeHae, 2013). Researchers found peers to be influential in encouraging the perpetration of the crime (Haan & Mayes, 2013; JeeHae, 2013). Nearly 90% indicated bullying was a causal factor in decisions to commit violence with guns (Haan & Mayes, 2013; JeeHae, 2013). Researchers attributed another 12% to psychotropic medications, suggesting the shooter suffered from mental illness (JeeHae, 2013).

Studies also suggested the effect of media exposure to violence and guns, including increases in PG-13 rated movies, contributed to the planning of these horrific acts (Haan & Mayes, 2013; JeeHae, 2013; Mongan & Walker, 2012). The researchers also suggested prolonged and repeated exposure to the crime increased mental health impairment in adolescents (Haravuori et al., 2011). Haravuori et al. (2011) found media attention, including taking photographs and asking for an interview, increased psychological stress for survivors and witnesses to incidents of school violence.

Schools are developing crisis protocols, and critical incident plans to assure the districts are responsive to the needs of students, traumatized by violent occurrences (Crepeau-Hobson, Sievering, Armstrong, & Stonis, 2012). Teachers, again, are a focal point in executing and responding to school crisis (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012). In response to three school shootings in Colorado, preparations are now in place for evacuation, re-unification, and acute response team interventions (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012). Based on previous incidents, teams consist of various levels of school personnel trained to act quickly and with great intentionality (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012). For example, school administrators identified de-briefing rooms at local libraries and other sites away from the school (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012). In addition to the availability of immediate psychological counseling services, teachers can opt to have 'buddies,' mental health counselors sit in their rooms and assist with students for several days after school re-opens (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012). The additional set of eyes also enhances the identification of students and teachers who are demonstrating concerning behaviors, which may require referral to other long-term services (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012). Teachers are also receiving training on four essential tasks researchers have associated with improved outcomes following traumatic situations, ventilation, validation, empathy, and empowerment (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012). While researchers continue to identify preventative methods to avert school shootings and other acts of violence, teachers remain in the forefront of response efforts on the student's behalf (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012; Espelage et al., 2013; Mongan & Walker, 2012).

In précis, the elements of shared trauma include exposure to community traumas where mental health professionals live and work. Information concerning the nature of community traumas in relationship to teachers sets the groundwork for investigating whether similar factors impede or contribute to their personal and professional well-being. When considering these outcomes for African American teachers, an additional influence, racial trauma brings foci to another element of their identity. The following section will present salient historical and contextual literature regarding its inter-relationship to co-occurring traumas in the study population.

Racial Trauma

Racial trauma as described and defined by researchers offers insight into the impact of discriminatory practices on African Americans and other People of Color (Brendtro & Mitchell, 2013; Hardy, 2013; Jernigan & Daniel, 2011; Ponds, 2013). Investigators agreed the influence of continuous exposure to overt and covert acts of bias and prejudice have negative physical and psychological ramifications (Brendtro, & Mitchell, 2013; Hardy, 2013; Jernigan & Daniel, 2011; Ponds, 2013). A more detailed explanation of intentionality of these acts will follow later in the chapter.

Ponds (2013) expressed a socio-constructionist orientation for understanding racial trauma. Collective mentally violent experiences result in African Americans internalizing feelings of hopeless, helplessness, and fear (Ponds, 2013). While Hardy (2013) agreed racial traumas produced these emotions, the author noted their relationship to oppression and interpersonal violence. Hardy (2013) presented a conceptual

framework that included African Americans' expressions of rage and hostility when repeatedly exposed to unjust conduct. While traumas are devaluating experiences, exemplified by abusive, neglectful, and other deleterious acts, others are consequences of voicelessness or the inability to confront discriminatory conduct (Hardy, 2013). Internalization of devaluation and voicelessness damages the soul, spirit, and psyche of those victimized by the behaviors (Hardy, 2013; Jernigan & Daniels, 2011). Jernigan and Daniel (2011) reported how educational institutions silenced developing children's and adolescents' voices by not acknowledging their raised hands or limiting their participation in classroom and extra-curricular activities. Experiences of inequities or racial traumas during vulnerable, developmental years, creates psychological impairments including depression, stress, and anxiety (Carter & Reynolds, 2011; Hardy, 2013; Jernigan & Daniel, 2011).

Devaluation, also termed as social rejection or microinsults, contributes to feelings of disrespect in African Americans who face this treatment (Brendtro & Mitchell, 2013; Hardy, 2013). While Hardy (2013) focused on the behavioral manifestations, Brendtro and Mitchell (2013) also offered physiological explanations. Microinsults have causal relationships to *epigenetics* or dormant and active genes (Brendtro & Mitchell, 2013). Living with negative emotions such as uncertainty, anger, and anguish activates *epigenes* which have pathways to the brain (Brendtro & Mitchell, 2013). People in healthy, stable circumstances respond to this interaction with resiliency and are able to regulate their stress (Brendtro & Mitchell, 2013). Those in undesirable

situations react with fear and anxiety, impairing their mental and physical health (Brendtro & Mitchell, 2013). The researchers noted this process becomes intergenerational when African American females do not experience healthy relationships because it affects their ability to nurture and parent their children (Brendtro & Mitchell, 2013). Studies demonstrated the effect on the next four generations of a family if this pattern continues without interruption (Brendtro & Mitchell, 2013).

Ponds (2013) acknowledged the physiological, spiritual, and psychological damages to African Americans based on enduring racial traumas, but added the socioeconomic impact of this endemic behavior. Higher socioeconomic status had a significant relationship to decreases in the psychological impairment of a sample group of African American professions (Ponds, 2013). In lower African American socioeconomic groups, racial trauma was a foundational stressor, contributing to increased rates of mental illness (Ponds, 2013). Psychological distress exponentially increased when the affected population experienced an additional trauma (Ponds, 2013). Overall, researchers agreed racial traumas produced harmful and deleterious results in populations of African Americans regardless of social or economic status (Brendtro, & Mitchell, 2013; Hardy, 2013; Jernigan & Daniel, 2011; Ponds, 2013).

Overt/Racial Discrimination

Reflections of past injustices, Jim Crow laws, slavery, and other discriminatory and biased practices, continue to contribute to how African Americans formulate their racial identity and fit into Western culture (Bindas, 2010; Hinds, 2010). According to

Alexander (2010) the epidemic of crack cocaine and its ramification for those now caught in the criminal justice system has profound effects on how African Americans participate in the political process, albeit an African American president. The institutionalization of a new caste system, allows injustices of the past to continue (Alexander, 2010). From the atrocities of the Diaspora and departure from countries in Africa, to separate water fountains, classrooms, and other public facilities, oral traditions are used to carry African Americans' storied past (Bindas, 2010; Hinds, 2010; Walker, 2012). Researchers suggested the translation of cultural memories provides the backdrop for future generations' understanding and conceptualization of their racial identity (Bindas, 2010; Hinds, 2010). Overt acts of lynching, watering down with hoses, and forced servitude, perpetrated by a dominant, Westernized culture, continue to linger in the psyches of today's African American citizens (Bindas, 2010; Hinds, 2010). Hinds (2010) referred to the influence of these memories as bifurcated, having social and psychological significance to present day African Americans. The author presented the social aspects through the eyes of noted authors Baldwin and DuBuois, who suggested the inability of older Blacks to make meaning of their experiences in terms of the degradation to their identities contributes to the infusion of dominant cultural values in future generations (Hinds, 2013). Judicial mandates limits voting privileges, access to affordable housing, and educational opportunities, which left unchallenged, will constrain the lives of African Americans for many years to come (Alexander, 2010).

Hinds (2013) offered an analogous relationship between Freud's struggle with being Jewish and the development of psychoanalytical frameworks focused on internalized reflection. Freud's insistence on the inner-psychic nature of mental disabilities suggested a refusal to incorporate cultural memories of externalized anti-Semitic practices (Hinds, 2010). Legal mandates constructed to assure the continued psychological scarring compounds African Americans' internalized oppression (Alexander, 2010). The inclusion of external environmental influences into psychological theory came at the behest of Hartmann, who utilized a holistic, sociocultural framework (Hinds, 2010). African Americans negated and distorted cultural reflections in the Euro-centric educational system supports continued suppression of historically relevant information (Ladfitka et al., 2010).

Critical and systemic race theories provide alternative frameworks to analyze the role institutionalized racism plays throughout the history of the United States (Aguirre, 2010; Chun, 2011; Smith et al., 2011). Both theories presented later in the chapter, outline the relationship between of the psychological scars of racial victimization from the past and the on-going tolerance of overt discriminatory practices (Aguirre, 2010; Chun, 2011; Smith et al., 2011). From the Emancipation Proclamation through voting and civil rights movements, vestiges of slavery remain present in the collective memories of African Americans (Aguirre, 2010; Chun, 2011; Hinds, 2010; Smith et al., 2011; Schwartz, 2009). The enduring atrocities continue to plague the minds and behaviors of

both dominant and subjugated cultures (Bindas, 2010; Hinds, 2010; Smith et al., 2011; Walker, 2012).

Covert/Microaggressions

As an evolving field of study, limited research exists concerning the influence or meaning of microaggressions in the lives of African Americans (Ponds, 2013, Sue et al., 2007). Contextual frameworks reveal the subtle nature of covert actions whose origins stem from historically overt racial discriminatory practices, referenced earlier in the chapter (Pierce, 1970; Ponds, 2013; Smith et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007). The blatantly bigoted practices have evolved into subtle forms or microaggressive behaviors (Pierce, 1970; Ponds, 2013; Smith et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007). Piece (1970) a seminal author in the field, first coined the term microaggression to explain Black on White relationships with analogies to offensive sports play. The researcher highlighted the nature of relentless, slights African Americans receive from Whites asserting their superior role in society (Pierce, 1970). Pierce identified two major institutions, education, and media, as perpetuating the devaluing of African Americans. The assertion was children learn racial role expectations throughout their academic lives (Pierce, 1970). The media perpetuates and reinforces the misnomers concerning supremacy of Whites and inferiority of African Americans (Pierce, 1970). The offensive or aggressive conduct suggests to African Americans that Whites have superior knowledge and their best interest at heart (Pierce, 1970). Daily messages affecting every aspect of African Americans' lives are micro and cumulative in nature (Jay, 2009; Pierce, 1970; Smith et al., 2011).

Cose (1993) presented 12 demons, which described subtle forms of racist actions such as assuming African Americans are unable to hold positions of authority within White organizational structures. Overlooked for promotions, or contrarily acknowledged when they conform or assimilate to dominant cultural expectations, African Americans remained in subordinate positions (Cose, 1993). The author also addressed the effect of color-blindness (Cose, 1993). The accepted societal postures during the 1990's was to not-see or acknowledge a person's race, purporting to view all humans as equal (Cose, 1993; Jay, 2009). Invalidating or negating part of the African American's existence, coupled with victim blaming, Whites could avert taking responsibility for being part of the privileged race in American society (Cose, 1993; Jay, 2009). Sue et al. (2007) continued mining these theories, sub-dividing and titling them into three categories, microinsults, microassaults, and microinvalidations, reflecting the work of Pierce (1970) and Cose (1997).

Also referred to as *aversion racism*, microaggressions are often not intentional but stem from a lack of awareness of the privileged status European Americans hold in America (Burrow & Hill, 2012; Smith et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007). Whites respond with surprise and denial when confronted with allegations of microaggressive conduct (Burrow & Hill, 2012; Smith et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007). Forcing African Americans to decide whether to deal with the psychologically damaging attacks, adds another layer of microinsult (Smith et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007). In enduring these harmful actions or messages, victims often overlook or ignore the behavior (Burrow & Hill, 2012; Smith et

al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007). However, studies suggested the cumulative effect on African Americans results in physical, mental, and emotional damage (Burrow & Hill, 2012; Ponds, 2013; Smith et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007). In one study, Burrow and Hill (2012) found 90% of African Americans reported experiencing microaggressions daily. Sue et al. (2007) suggested every minority person in the United States confronts a form of racial discrimination on a frequent basis.

Microassaults, a sub-category of microaggressions, refer to name-calling and belittling actions taken against African Americans (Smith et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007). Microassaults closely align with traditional overt behaviors (Smith et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007). For the purpose of investigating with greater specificity, researchers, beginning with Sue et al. (2007) identified two other covert forms of microaggression, microinsults and microinvalidations (Mercer et al., 2011; Ponds, 2013; Smith et al., 2011). Microinsults refer to statements made regarding African Americans ineptness and lack of intelligence, underscoring their perceived inferiority to Whites (Ponds, 2013; Mercer et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007). Suggesting an African American received a promotion or entry into college based on affirmative action policies, exemplifies microinsults (Ponds, 2013; Mercer et al., 2011; Smith et al., Sue et al., 2007). As indicated earlier, the notion of color blindness or suggesting a person's color does not matter, represents what Sue et al. (2007) framed as microinvalidations. Similar to Hardy's (2013) explanation of devaluation, microinvalidations include assumptions of criminality, over pathologization of mental health symptoms, and overlooking or

negating an African American's presence (Mercer et al., 2011; Smith et al., Sue et al., 2007). Maladaptive coping mechanisms employed by African Americans are illustrative of the harmful effects of long-term exposures to verbal and nonverbal microaggressive actions of their White counterparts (Burrow & Hill, 2011; Mercer et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007). Smith et al. (2011) highlighted the negative physical manifestations, such as cardiovascular disease and hypertension. Overall, the profound effect of microaggressions is currently under analysis, as researchers continue to investigate potential ameliorative responses to the myriad of public health concerns in the African American community (Burrow & Hill, 2011; Mercer et al., 2011; Ponds, 2013; Smith et al., 2011).

The Euro-centric educational system, dominated by European females (86%), perpetuates discriminatory behavior through disseminating biased educational material, void of positive information concerning African Americans and their contribution to society (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Pierce, 1970; Sue et al., 2009). Teachers, by Pierce's (1970) suggestion, are the symbiotic genesis of continuing vicious cycles of racism. Curry's (2010) exemplification of microinsults in schools pointed out teachers' insensitivity to issues African American students face within the educational setting. Henfield (2011) discussed the higher rates of detention and suspension of African American students. Assumptions of deviance and criminality or microinvalidations contribute to biased disciplinary practices (Heinfield, 2011). Students with names that are difficult for teachers to pronounce receive nicknames or substitute names, further eroding

their sense of ethnic identity (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). Standards, which impose conformity from a Euro-centric perspective, reinforce negative stereotypes and enable inequitable treatment of African American students to continue, traumatizing their young psyches (Grier-Reed, 2010).

African American teachers face similar circumstances in their day-to-day existence in educational settings reflecting the dominant cultures attitudes and practices (Lee, 2012; Milner, 2012; Rollack, 2012). Microaggressions take the form of questioning African American teachers' credentials or expertise in a certain field of study (Lee, 2012). The teachers reportedly feel marginalized and isolated from White peers, additionally expressing subjugation through constant scrutiny and pressure to assimilate to the prerogative culture in educational settings (Lee, 2012; Milner, 2012; Rollack, 2012). Colleagues ask African American teachers about their hair and the time consumed in completing various unfamiliar styles (Rollack, 2012). Others suffered from feelings of fatigue, stress, and exhaustion from the demands of the job, continued racial objectification, and prejudicial treatment (Cozart, 2010, Lee, 2012; Milner, 2012; Rollack, 2012). The effects of racial disparities create physical and psychological harm to African American teachers (Rollack, 2012). Bridwell (2012) discussed the loss of creativity and desire to inspire students after prolonged exposure to the increasing demands of the profession. Coupled with the racially charged environment Cozart (2010) reported teachers feel disconnected to former coping strategies, including connecting to spiritual and faith-based practices. *Racial battle fatigue* describes the emotional and

physical toll of coping with overt and covert discriminatory behaviors from peers, administrators, and parents (Cozart, 2010; Milner, 2012; Rollack, 2012).

Once a revered occupation in the African American community, teachers served as role models, inspiring the next generation to achieve excellence, take pride in themselves and their neighborhoods, and aspire to accomplish more than their predecessors (Cozart, 2010; Lee, 2012; Milner, 2012). African American teachers now report dummying down their intelligence, hiding traces of racial connectedness, and lacking the emotional energy necessary to carry out their duties (Bridwell, 2012; Cozart, 2010; Lee, 2012). African American teachers articulated entering the profession to give back to their communities through educating students they felt had a shared history, commonality in cultural beliefs, and commitment to work towards social justice and equality (Bridwell, 2012; Cozart, 2010; Milner, 2012). According to Milner (2012) the teacher's intentions and professional conduct is misconstrued and distorted with accusations of over personalization, being too strict and structured, and damaging students' self-esteem by yelling and castigating them. Cozart (2010) and Smith et al. (2011) related the outcome of the dual reality for African American teachers' as consistent with DuBois's 'double consciousness.' Being an insider and outsider is duplicative by nature, but consistent with African American's experiences, especially in White society's institutional paradigms (Cozart, 2010; Smith et al., 2011). The inability to reconcile the identity confusion manifests the physical, mental, and emotional damage expressed as racial battle fatigue (Cozart, 2010; Milner, 2012, Smith et al., 2011).

A review of salient literature revealed the pervasive nature of demeaning overt racial discriminatory practices and microaggressions targeted towards African American teachers (Curry, 2010; Jay, 2009; Sue et al., 2009). Discussed in detail later in the chapter, the framing of sociocultural theory, attributed to Vygotsky, contextually explains outcomes of perceptions based on people who are different from the norm (Cozart, 2010; Smagorinsky, 2012). Researchers documented the association of White as normal and acceptable, while black is associated with dirt and impurity (Chaney & Robertson, 2013; Rollack, 2012). The investigation of shared traumatic experiences' relationship to African American teachers includes considering whether racial traumas has a compounding effect they are when exposed to disastrous events. The following discussion of critical race and sociocultural theoretical constructs offers insight into the integration of shared and racial trauma, providing a contextual framework to understand the lived experiences of African American teachers following a community trauma.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory expresses the influence historical discriminatory practices contribute to continued social injustices (Aguirre, 2010; Burton et al., 2010; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Smith et al., 2011). Delgado and Stefanicic (2000) articulated the need to understand the effect of racism throughout any discourse related to African Americans' and other oppressed minority groups' experiences in the context of societal institutions (Hanley, 2011a; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). The application of CRT has evolved from its

original legal perspective, to incorporate acknowledging the effect of unjustly subjecting People of Color to subordinate positions in multiple settings (Aguirre, 2010; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Rollack, 2012).

The theoretical framework also supports embracing the narratives of People of Color because of the link to oral traditions inherent in communities (Bridwell, 2012; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Milner, 2012; Rollack, 2012). Critical race theorist use counterstories or narratives and counterspaces in collecting, analyzing, and presenting data (Bindas, 2010; Hanley, 2011a; Milner, 2012; Wallace & Brand, 2011). Counterstories allow researchers to present information from narratives using a metaphorical perspective (Bindas, 2010; Hanley, 2011a; Milner, 2012). The accounts are depictions reported from 'lived experiences,' retold in a way that protects the informant by using characters in alternative situations to reveal meaning and provide context (Aguirre, 2010; Bindas, 2010; Burton et al., 2010; Wallace & Brand, 2011). Counterstories also present issues of oppression and marginalization from personal or conversational narratives (Aguirre, 2010; Bridwell, 2012; Milner, 2012; Wallace & Brand, 2011). The discourses open the door to re-thinking previously accepted notions, such as the supremacy of Whites over Blacks (Bridwell, 2012; Hanley, 2011a; Milner, 2012; Wallace & Brand, 2011).

Counterspaces represent places where there are opportunities for marginalized groups to discuss sensitive topics without fear of reprisal or reprimand (Bindas, 2010; Case & Hunter, 2012; Gove et al., 2011). In school settings, for example, where minority

staff faces microaggressive behaviors and actions, counterspaces create neutral zones (Case & Hunter, 2012; Gove et al., 2011). Counterspaces are synonymous to comfort zones, where African American teachers can feel safe and develop counteractions to address their predicament (Case & Hunter, 2012; Gove et al., 2011). In retort to systemic oppression, Case and Hunter (2012) discussed the use of adaptive reasoning as a method of coping with intolerable circumstances. The authors identified three major responses to discriminatory conduct, coping, resilience, and resistance (Case & Hunter, 2012). Analogous to Ponds' (2013) description of fight, flight, or freeze, as responses to microaggression, Case and Hunter (2012) determined adaptive reasoning in counterspaces, offers refuge and time to make decisions between the alternative responses. Critical race theory supports the development and construct of ideology based on these various pedagogies (Case & Hunter, 2012; Gove et al., 2011).

The critical nature of the theory focuses attention on the resistance to accept the 'norm,' moving researchers to create an imbalance in the status quo (Bridwell, 2012; Gove et al., 2011; Milner, 2012). Disrupting equilibrium in institutionalized settings, critical theorist move towards developing new lenses and frameworks from multiple sources previously left out of discussions and decisions (Bridwell, 2012; Gove et al., 2011; Milner, 2012). Gove et al. (2011) suggested critical investigations are orientated towards unaddressed sociopolitical issues, for example, racism, with the intent of advancing social justice movements.

Critical race theory will undergird the lenses needed to explore the experiences of African American teachers (Aguirre, 2010; Bridwell, 2012; Burton et al., 2010; Milner, 2012). Transformative in its approach, CRT assists in interpreting the obstacles and barriers African American teachers cope with within Eurocentric educational institutions (Aguirre, 2010; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Milner, 2012; Patton & Catching, 2009). Jay (2009) demonstrated the intersectionality of African American teachers' experiences when placed in the context of racially discriminatory practices. An analysis of the outcomes when steeped in CRT exposes the depth of understanding of racism, overt and covert, necessary to consider the teachers' plight (Bridwell, 2012; Jay, 2009; Milner, 2012; Rollack, 2012).

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theoretical frameworks intertwine with critical theory paradigms (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Gove et al., 2011). The roots of the theory parallel with Vygotsky's life (Smagorinsky, 2012). There is also interplay with the social, cultural, and historical expressions of another sociocultural theorist (Smagorinsky, 2012). Similar to the aforementioned comparison of Freud and psychoanalytical theory, Vygotsky's anti-Semitic experiences, including being ostracized and confined in a Russian encampment during his developmental years played a significant role in the development of a divergent perspective (Smagorinsky, 2012). Having suffered from oppressive treatment, and witnessed government-supported genocide; Vygotsky developed a first-person understanding of the psychological scarring African American's experience based on

being different from their predominant cultural peers (Hinds, 2013; Smagorinsky, 2012; Smith et al., 2011). Vygotsky advocated for the 'defective,' those seen as existing outside of normative society (Smagorinsky, 2012). The need for a holistic representation of humans, including cultural, social, historical, and environmental factors, would lead to embracing differences as opposed to focusing on deviations from what society deemed acceptable (McBride, 2011; Smagorinsky, 2012).The sociocultural perspective advances pathways steeped in culturally significant interactions, which lead to social acceptance (McBride, 2011; Smagorinsky, 2012).

The integration of body, mind, spirit, and the environment are also consistent with Vygotsky's Judaic beliefs (Smagorinsky, 2012). Smagorinsky (2012) asserted Christian ideologies lean toward separating the good away from the bad, whereas Jews support the notion of amalgamation of individuals (Smagorinsky, 2012). This interpretation contributes to understanding Vygotsky's incorporation of social mediation as a factor in assuring a holistic framing of human experience (McBride, 2011; Smagorinsky, 2012).

Culture, as expressed by sociocultural theorist, holds tools offered by historically significant individuals, such as parents, teachers, which contribute to the development of children and intergenerational patterns of cognitive and psychological behaviors (McBride, 2011, Smagorinsky, 2012). Given this assistance, young people can develop new methods of coping with challenging situations based on the need to overcome obstacles prohibiting them from inclusion into mainstream social structures (Smagorinsky, 2012). Vygotsky experienced being able to enter college based on

winning the lottery because Jewish youth were limited to 3% admission policy by the Soviet government (Smagotinsky, 2012). Influencing his philosophical orientations, Vygotsky believed that the educational system could act as a mediator, promoting inclusive language and behavior to diminish or eradicate the deficit based conceptualizations (Agbatogun, 2012; Smagorinsky, 2012).

In the current study, the theoretical underpinnings embraced in sociocultural worldviews, supported investigating the lived experiences of African American teachers. Sociocultural theory promotes inclusion of the collective orientation of African Americans, including the value placed on spiritual, familiar, and close relationships (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Case & Hunter, 2012). Consistent with critical and sociocultural theories, the teachers' contribution provides insight into the nature of the reality of experiencing shared and racial traumas simultaneously, while validating and empowering them through the articulation of their stories (Agbatogun, 2012; Gove et al., 2011).

Summary

Chapter 2 focused on two major traumas, shared and racial. Researchers have documented shared trauma as resulting from mental health professionals living and working in communities that have experienced a community trauma, for example, natural disaster, or school shooting. Shared trauma captures the influence of the duality of practitioners' experiences of residing and providing mental health services in traumatized communities. However, researchers agree on the need for additional studies concerning other professionals who may endure similar circumstances, for example, teachers.

Based on previous investigations, the literature review offers a broad definition of community trauma. The sub-categories contained in community trauma include, terrorism, natural disasters, and community violence. Contextual information assists in understanding how each sub-category affects teachers who live and work (schools) in these environments.

The second portion of the chapter examined racial traumas. The review included historic and evolving research regarding how overt and covert behaviors and practices influence cultural trends and treatment of marginalized populations. This information supports developing insight and framing what meaning racial injustices hold for African Americans. Prevailing studies document African American teachers' experiences, which contributed to using sociocultural and critical race perspectives undergirding the analysis of outcomes of the present study.

I was unable to locate information concerning how teachers and more specifically African American teachers' experience traumas, which occur in communities where they live and work. The dearth of empirical information regarding African American teachers' exposure to traumatized communities drove the desire to conduct an investigation concerning how they make meaning of the duality of their experiences when coupled with racial traumas.

Chapter 3 explains the study methodology for exploring the experiences of African American teachers who live and work in traumatized communities. I provide the steps planned to conduct the study and the theoretical concepts supporting the design.

Additionally, I present issues related to the trustworthiness of the study and review ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Methodology

African American teachers face myriad issues based on their role in supporting their personal recovery and that of their students in the wake of natural and human-made disasters. Addressing the dearth of empirical information related to the strengths and struggles of African American teachers confronted with living and working in traumatized communities, the purpose of this study was to develop a descriptive, interpretive analysis of their lived experiences. The study population had experienced both shared trauma, based on living and working in a traumatized community and racial trauma, due to continuous exposure to prejudicial and microaggressive behaviors.

Phenomenology provided the platform and framework to conduct the process and analysis of the teachers' experiences. To illuminate the meaning of experiencing the overarching traumas, I documented and analyzed the narratives of female African American teachers contextualized through metaphors, artwork, or other artifacts, selected by the participants (Edward & Welch, 2011). Interpretive phenomenology embraces the practice of co-construction, whereby both participant and researcher contribute to formulating what is representative of the meaning African American teachers place on multiple exposures to co-occurring traumas using dialectic expressions (Agbatogun, 2012; Edward & Welch, 2011; Gove et al., 2011; Hairston & Strickland, 2011).

Research Questions

I explored how African American teachers who experience racial traumas perceive living and working in communities traumatized by natural and human-made disasters by addressing the following research questions:

RQ1: How do African American teachers understand and perceive shared trauma, based on living and working in traumatized communities?

SQ1-1: What approaches do African American teachers employ in supporting students after a community trauma occurs?

SQ1-2: What supports, if any, do African American teachers believe are helpful in assisting them with dealing with students after a community trauma?

RQ2: How do African American teachers understand and perceive the nature of racial traumas' presence their personal and professional lives?

SQ2-1: How do African American teachers explain resiliency in relationship to traumatic experiences? What are the shared psychosocial impacts of microaggressions on African American teachers?

Conceptualization of Critical, Interpretative Phenomenology

Utilizing critical, interpretative phenomenology, I conducted an investigation that intertwined African American teachers' lived experiences of shared and racial trauma as it co-occurs in their lives (Edward & Welch, 2011; Gove et al., 2011; Heidegger, 1962). As the teachers share a common set of circumstances, a phenomenological approach offered

insight into their lived experiences by revealing the meaning placed on their inner human truths (Converse, 2012; Edward & Welch, 2011; Flood, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013). The study makes known African American teachers' *lifeworld*, as expressed by Heidegger (1962), based on the co-occurring nature of shared and racial trauma (Edward & Welch, 2011; Heidegger, 1962). Phenomenology includes the interrelationship of humans with their environment, which parallels with the sociocultural theoretic orientation of the study (Edward & Welch, 2011; Flood, 2010). With great intentionality, the investigation focused on how African American teachers make meaning of both environmentally based traumas (shared) and psychologically based traumas (racial) in the context of community trauma.

Critical Analysis

Critical analysis provides opportunities to view power imbalances within relationships and institutional structures (Burton, 2011; Gove et al., 2011). To promote social justice from a sociopolitical orientation, critical studies incorporate the voices of those previously silenced and marginalized based on the need for those in dominant positions to maintain the status quo (Gove et al., 2011). As critical race theory challenges White privilege from an institutional standpoint, critical analysis also integrates self-reflective practices (Gove et al., 2011; Stanley, 2009). For example, Roberts (2010) presented eight counterstories of African American teachers' perspectives on the need for culturally sensitive care of African American students. I conducted a phenomenological inquiry to offer insight into the teachers' perspectives concerning the topic, but also their

self-reflection regarding the information they provided (Roberts, 2010). The critical process is inclusive of participants and researcher's introspection at several points in Colaizzi's (1978) process (Edward & Welch, 2011; Gove et al., 2011; Roberts, 2010). I evaluated both the etic and emic perspectives using a critical eye, challenging status quo interpretations, which marginalize oppressed populations (Benbow, Forchuk, & Ray, 2011). The Edward and Welch (2011) modified version of the seven-step Colaizzi process directs the following procedure (Colaizzi, 1978):

1. Non-verbatim translation/essence checking w/participant
2. Extract and codify significant statements
3. Formulate meanings-restate
4. Formulate meaning into clusters
5. Develop exhaustive description
6. Interpretative analysis of symbolic representations
7. Identify fundamental structure of the phenomenon
8. Validate with participants-integrate additional information to provide points of clarity

I decided to add the sixth step, consistent with Edward and Welch (2011) which includes analysis of the metaphoric expressions I requested the teachers to offer during data collection phase of the study. I will explain this in more detail later in the chapter.

The sociocultural theoretical framing supports a critical analysis in which I explored various realms of the teacher's experiences (Benbow et al., 2011; McBride,

2011). In considering how they sculpt their worldview, I intertwined elements of the political, historical, and cultural aspects of their lives as it relates to the duality of the teachers' traumatic exposures (Benbow et al., 2011). Paying careful attention how they articulate the influence of microaggression and its institutionalization into the educational system highlights the social justice undergirded the study (Benbow et al., 2011).

Interpretative Process

Two schools of thought exist within phenomenological methods, descriptive and interpretative (Converse, 2012; Flood, 2010; Fram, 2013; Tuohy et al., 2013). Descriptive phenomenology dates back to the 19th century when philosophers Hegel and Brentano began to explore the relationship between knowledge and experience (Converse, 2012). Brentano's student Husserl is credited with being seminal in the conceptualization of phenomenology (Converse, 2012). Husserl's student Heidegger, departed from Husserl's descriptive process, suggesting the impossibility of completely removing or bracketing oneself away from what is a life experience (Converse, 2012; Tuohy et al., 2013). Other interpretive researchers, including Gadamer, agreed with Heidegger, articulating the need to disclose preconceived notions and beliefs in order to allow others to decide whether bias exists in the studies produced from a phenomenological investigation (Converse, 2012; Flood, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013). Flood (2010) accepted the notion of bracketing but implied the need for researchers to commit to reflective thinking and journaling, acknowledging the potential influence of previous encounters into their analysis of the phenomena (Heidegger, 1962).

Phenomenological Methodology

Phenomenological methodology is an inductive process (Edward & Welch, 2011; Flood, 2012; Fram, 2013; Reiter, Stewart, & Bruce 2011). The process is an exploration of the inner subjectivity of humans, within the context of their environment, revealing truths regarding how they make meaning of their life experiences (Flood, 2010). Employing what Tuohy et al. (2013) referred to as the hermeneutical circle, researchers openly interpret and reinterpret the interviewee's expressions, looking for their perception of the meaning and essence of a given phenomenon (Flood, 2010; Giles, Smythe, & Spence, 2012). In a co-creative process, the participant becomes the expert concerning their experiences, and the researcher enjoins the process (Flood, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013). Interpretative phenomenological theorists contradict the ability for anyone to bracket away prior knowledge (Flood, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013). Instead, the researchers embrace the blending of the participants and researchers life influences (Flood, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013).

Ontologically oriented, researchers place words on experiences by writing and re-writing scripts, which describe and illuminate the essence of lived events (Flood, 2010; Giles et al., 2012). Investigating the meaning of 'lived' includes environmental, maturational, and relational considerations (Flood, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013). Phenomenology proscribes one cannot separate the mind and body and so the influences of both are inherent when exploring everyday life experiences (Giles et al., 2012; Tuohy et al., 2013).

Rationale

I considered using an ethnographical method as it resonates with the dual cultural aspects of the study (Oladele, Richter, Clark, & Laing, 2012). African American teachers have racial and professional cultural identities (Bridwell, 2012). The investigation would have to take into consideration the shared perspective of teachers whose collective ethnic orientation influences their experiences, especially those related to racially discriminatory practices and microaggressions (Bridwell, 2012). In employing this methodological framework, inquiry would have also included detailing the facets of being an educator as it relates to their responses towards students after a catastrophic event.

Ethnographic research highlights the mutuality of values while exploring power relationships within a cultural worldview (Vandenberg & Hall, 2011). The researcher gathers data through immersing themselves into their daily lives, observing, and documenting their behaviors and attitudes (Oladele et al., 2012; Vandenberg & Hall, 2011). I rejected the ethnographic approach based upon the determination that the strategy is more appropriate for in-depth, studies where the researcher intends to spend protracted periods in the field.

A phenomenological approach intertwines the phenomena with philosophical literature, metaphors of lived experiences of the population, and researcher's analytical perspective to formulate descriptions of the phenomena prior to developing a theory (Giles et al., 2012). Conversely, inherent in the grounded theory process is the notion of the out coming data contributing to identifying a new theory (Reiter et al., 2011; Strauss

& Corbin, 1994). Meticulously developing a framework from interviews and follow-ups, grounded processes are similar to Colaizzi's methodology (Reiter et al., 2011; Edward & Welsh, 2011). The difference lies in the intentionality attributed to grounded theory to discover a new theoretical orientation, while the Colaizzi phenomenological process allow themes to emerge from the data but without formalized ideological construction (Edward & Welsh, 2011; Reiter et al., 2011). There was also a need to determine the analytical approach in the development of the dissertation proposal. However, contrarily Reiter et al. (2011) suggested delaying the choice between the various methods until students thoroughly investigate both options based on the research question. Reiter et al. acknowledged the impossibility for doctoral students to leave the decision open because they are required to commit to a methodological approach during the development of the prospectus.

Role of the Researcher

I am a female African American parented by a female African American teacher. Previous biases could have influenced the process or analysis (Valandra, 2012). My educational background is in the fields of social work and human services, creating the potential for familiarity based on shared worldviews (Valandra, 2012). Employing the technique of self-disclosure exposed potential prejudicial thoughts and feelings allowing readers to determine their influence (Flood, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013; Valandra, 2012). Consistent with interpretative phenomenology, the researcher reveals pertinent personal

information, as opposed to attempting to bracket the issues away from the analysis (Tuohey et al., 2013).

The use of interpretative phenomenology also undergirded my role as observer-participant. Calderon (2011) suggested this format as appropriate when study participants are from traditionally marginalized groups. Reflective of this study, the author noted the value of observer-participant when the interviewer and contributor have a similar socioeconomic background. As a researcher, I needed to be conscious of interactions with the teachers, which may mirror experiences from my parent-child relationship.

My interactions with the participants were relaxed and conversational in manner, encouraging the co-creation of their narratives. Peredaryenko and Krauss (2013) discussed the need for novice interviewers to take an 'echoing' position, remaining open the participant as an expert on the subject matter. I treated the interviewees with respect and gave deference to their knowledge and insight, equalizing and balancing perceived disparities in power (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Using an informant-centered approach, I engaged in constant reflection while maintaining focus on what as being shared (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Following the interviews, I made field notes documenting any concerns I had during the exchange. The notes, along with dissertation journal entries contributed to moments of reflexivity, a practice used by qualitative researchers to reduce biases from impeding the data collection and analysis processes (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013; Vandenberg & Hall, 2011).

While my mother is a long-standing member of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., I am not a member, and nor have I ever participated in formal or informal meetings. I have attended sponsored events by the organization but have had no direct affiliation with any of the members. I used no form of coercion in the recruitment process and volunteers did not receive remuneration for participating in the project. I made this decision to avoid potential violations of professional conflicts of interest that exist for state employees.

Methodology

Study population

In 1923, seven African American educators saw the need to create a safe space, now referred to as a counterspaces, to discuss the struggles and difficulties they faced working in Euro-centric school districts (Hanley, 2011; Milner, 2012; Phi Delta Kappa, n.d.; Wallace & Brand, 2011). Banding together to offer support and encouragement to each other, the founding teachers incorporated Phi Delta Kappa Sorority in Jersey City, New Jersey (Phi Delta Kappa, n.d.). The sisterhood continues to grow, and now houses international chapters (Phi Delta Kappa, n.d.).

Sampling strategy

Recruitment efforts focused on members of chapters in the northeastern and southeastern regions of the United States. The supreme basileus agreed to provide e-mail lists to assist in making requests for participation to individual members. I visited monthly meetings and made power point presentations available to groups and

individuals when requested. I offered direct contact information in e-mails and any information distributed allowing interested members to contact me directly.

Dowdy (2008) conducted a qualitative study of five African American college professors to ascertain their lived experiences working in predominantly White institutions of higher learning. Culturally sensitive critical care provided by eight African American teachers was the focus of Roberts (2012) phenomenological study. Jay (2009) inquired about the experiences of five African American teachers in relationship to daily microaggression they experienced in the workplace. The author concluded racism was a national epidemic and thoroughly rooted in the educational system (Jay, 2009). The current study mirrors both the population and sample sizes used by previous researchers conducting similar studies (Dowdy, 2008; Jay, 2009; Roberts, 2012). Consistent with qualitative, phenomenological methodology, I purposefully selected a small sample size of six African American teachers from the pool of volunteers, who indicated a willingness to participate in the study (Higginbottom, Pillay, & Boadu, 2013; Oladele et al., 2012). I contacted additional volunteers and conducted interviews until the data reached the point of saturation (Williams & Morrow, 2009).

Sample criterion

Selected participants ranged in age and years of service but were homogenous in respect to gender, ethnicity, and profession (Creswell, 2013; Naidu, 2012). Also known as, criterion sampling, purposeful ascription of candidates promotes the collection of information-rich narratives, while also establishing greater transferability and

comparability (Suri, 2011; Suldo et al., 2009). Beyond identifying as female and African American, they also currently or in the past five years performed the duties of a classroom teacher in grades K-12. All participants met the criterion of living in the community or city where they work and had exposure to natural or manmade disaster as described in Chapter 2 of this document. Candidates who responded indicated in writing assurances that they met the study criteria. These assurances were part of the informed consent package.

Saturation and Sample Size

Qualitative researchers seek to reach data or theoretical saturation to demonstrate the validity and reliability of their outcomes (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967 as cited by Mason, 2010). Williams and Morrow (2009) compared the degree of saturation used to validate qualitative research with the weight placed on the sample size in quantitative methods. Purposeful rules dominate qualitative studies, while quantitative investigations use concise methodological procedures (Patton, 2001 as cited by Marshall et al., 2013). I purposefully selected six respondents for the study, and reached the point when content became redundant.

Marshall et al. (2013) recommended citing similar studies with comparable populations to justify small sample sizes. I selected four previously conducted studies that inquired about African American teachers, racially discriminatory practices, and educational institutions to substantiate the sample size of six for this investigation. The selected sample size is consistent with Marshall et al.'s (2013) finding of 6-10

participants for phenomenological research projects. Mason (2010) cautioned doctoral students to be diligent but constrained, recognizing when new information is not necessarily useful but potentially counter-productive. Citing Morse (1994), Mason (2010) also noted phenomenological studies include no less than six candidates in the sample.

Mason (2010) noted the overall goal for doctoral students is often to identify a sample size that is defensible, but not necessary adhering to qualitative research principles. The author reviewed over 500 dissertations and found use of round numbers, for example, 10 and large samples to ensure the credibility of their data to instructors (Mason, 2010). I engaged a sample consistent with other studies but allowed flexibility to assure I achieved saturation, the gold standard of qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006 as cited by Mason, 2010; Marshall et al., 2013; Tuohy et al., 2013).

I used a semi-structured interview protocol, approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) 01-14-15-0347573 and my dissertation committee, included in Appendix 1. Additionally, I grounded the inquiry in the literature presented in the previous chapter and pre-tested questions with non-subject parties, Walden doctoral students. Interview questions provided a framework for the investigation, however, consistent with phenomenological research methodology I explored participant's answers to delve deeper into concepts and thoughts they offered. Utilization of an emergent design by posing open-ended questions supports the co-creation process inherent in interpretative phenomenology (Flood, 2010; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Roulston, 2011). The interaction based upon reflective contemplation, engaged the interviewee, while

promoting opportunities for clarification, exemplification, and illumination of points throughout the development of the culturally rich narrative (Flood, 2010).

Researchers suggested planning all meetings during the initial stages of the process to assure candidates are willing and able to commit the requisite time to the study (Carlson, 2010). Options for meeting places included the teacher's classrooms, or private rooms in the library where they hold monthly sorority meetings. Although face-to-face meetings were preferable, I used GoToMeetings.com an internet supported meetings site that enabled me to audio record the meetings given the distance the teachers lived from me.

Once identified, I contacted the interviewees via telephone and email to discuss a convenient time to the scheduled meetings. Consistent with Seidman's (1991) in-depth phenomenological interviewing method, the initial discussion collected background information and offered context for the interview (Flood, 2010; Roberts, 2012). In preparation for the next conversation, I asked the teachers to identify an artifact, which represented the symbolic meaning of the traumatic experience we would be discussing (Edward & Welch, 2011).The goal of the initial exchange was to establish rapport, concretize the informed consent paperwork, and make plans for the additional meetings.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) offered direction to novice interviewers, suggesting they keep the session conversational and fluent. The authors noted the need to establish rapport by asking simply questions in the initial stages of the exchange, leading to sensitive inquiries after the interviewee becomes comfortable (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

During the final moments, questions lead back to lighter exchanges, including researcher's self-disclosure when topics discussed are personal in nature (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

During the GoToMeeting encounter, the teachers responded to semi-structured interview questions and had time to discuss the creative expressions, for example, poems, artwork, metaphors, or offer explanations concerning what held special meaning to them (Edward & Welch, 2011). An additional step in Colaizzi's seven-step phenomenological model, Edward and Welch (2011) suggested this process adds to the richness and detail of the accounts of the teachers' experiences. It also gives 'voice' in a way that can supersede typical verbal exchanges (Edward & Welch, 2011). Using a think-out-loud method, I asked participants debriefing questions following each major interview question (Brod, Tesler, & Christensen, 2009). Restating the question and summarizing the teacher's responses allows for cognitive processing throughout the interview and is consistent with Colaizzi's procedures (Brod et al., 2009; Edward & Welch, 2011). Researchers' suggested this also contributes to decreasing interviewer bias while opening opportunities for the interviewee to offer additional or unexpected information (Brod et al., 2009).

Colaizzi's methodology does not require verbatim transcription; however, during the interview researchers capture significant and repetitious words, phrases, and sentences from audio recordings and field notes (Edward & Welsh, 2011). I proceeded to set up another meeting to present the results of the transcription so the participants could

validate the content and context of the data (Chan & Wai-tong, 2013; Edward & Welsh, 2011). Later in the chapter, I discuss details regarding member checking and other processes to establish trustworthiness.

Data Analysis Plan

The research sought to explore how African American teachers who experience racial traumas perceive living and working in communities affected by natural and man-made disasters. Transcribed audio taped interviews, along with descriptions of the symbolic expressions offered by the teachers contributed the answering the posed research questions. Phenomenological studies use the researcher as part of the collection and analyses, thereby what I have experienced, the role I play in conducting the interview, and how I analyze the data influence the overall findings (Calderon, 2011).

Using a modified version of Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis steps, which includes the symbolic expression, following the transcription and participant validation I hand coded the data, extracting significant statements, words, and phrases (Edward & Welsh, 2011). To assist in understanding and ascribing the meaning of the coded concepts, I created re-statements and developed thematic clusters, performing constant comparison of transcribed data (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012). Constant comparison analysis inductively reduced information into themes (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). After analyzing and textually coding the themes, I checked to see whether the identified topics interrelate to headings and subheadings in the literature review (Onwuegbuzie et al.,

2012). The fluidity assured proper alignment of the literature to the analysis and results (Creswell & Zhang, 2009; Wagner et al., 2012).

Synthesizing the clusters contributed to developing a detailed description, which added to the interpretation of the symbolic expressions (Edward & Welsh, 2011). The combination of the analysis of symbolic expressions into the thematic clusters elucidated the essence of the meanings participants placed on their experiences as African American teachers who experienced co-occurring racial and shared traumas. Before concluding the analytical phase of the study, I presented the outcomes to the participants for final validation.

Discrepant information offers opportunities to explore concepts participants did not repetitively express in their responses (Brod et al., 2009; Coromina, Capó, Coenders, & Guia, 2011; Simpson, 2011). As referred to as deviant responses, these statements or thoughts illuminate points where conflictual or divergent information exists (Coromina et al., 2011; Simpson, 2011). Extraction and analysis of unanticipated disclosures can reveal concepts, which would provide greater insight concerning the experiences of the study participants (Brod et al., 2009; Coromina et al., 2011; Simpson, 2011). In a study conducted by Barusch, Gringeri, and George (2011), only 8% of researchers reported incorporating deviant case review into their data analysis. Although infrequently used, I reviewed outlier information and considered whether further investigation of the concepts warranted in-depth analysis. As described in the following section, the review of deviant

cases also contributed to validating the analytical process used in the study (Barusch et al., 2011)

Issues of Trustworthiness

Given the continued questioning of the validity and reliability of qualitative research, establishing trustworthiness becomes tantamount (White, Oelke, & Friesen, 2012; Williams & Morrow, 2009). Investigators use multiple methods to concretize and validate results from the various qualitative approaches (Gelo, Braakmann, & Benetka, 2009; White et al., 2012). Confirmation and credibility rest in the researcher's ability to provide descriptive, interpretative, and explanatory validation (Gelo et al., 2009; White et al., 2012).

Reflexivity is commonly used to establish the credibility of the collection and analytical processes (Gelo et al., 2009; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; White et al., 2012; Williams & Morrow, 2009). Reflexivity is an inherent feature of the Colaizzi model of qualitative analysis (Edward & Welsh, 2011). During the development of themes and clusters, Edward and Welsh (2011) encourage the researcher state and then reflectively re-state identified topics. I used this process to analyze the interview data and symbolic expressions offered by the teacher.

Mind mapping was other reflective techniques I employed to confirm of the outcomes of the study (Davies, 2011; Parikh et al., 2012; Whiting & Sines, 2012). As a secondary check of associations between various themes and clusters derived within the study, mind mapping created an illustrative depiction of the significant points in the

development of themes and clusters (Davies, 2011: Whiting & Sines, 2012). Further establishing additional reliability of the outcome, I developed visual displays to connect overarching themes and provide structure for the identification of clusters (Davies, 2011; Edward & Welsh, 2011; Hanley, 2011b). Mind maps revisit a researcher's objectivity as the study unfolds (Hanley, 2011b; Parikh et al., 2012). I used them to document thoughts and questions as they emerged from the data (Hanley, 2011b; Parikh et al., 2012).

The interpretative phenomenologist incorporates and acknowledges previous experiences concerning the subject and participants (Tuohy et al., 2013). In establishing credibility, I used mind maps to demonstrate whether biases affected the analysis and processes undertaken in the study. The mapping provided a foundation for self-disclosure, while appealing to a visual style of learning.

Along with reflexivity, I performed member checking, following Edward and Welch's (2011) enhanced Colaizzi 7-step model (see page 66). Contrary to the majority of qualitative investigations utilizing one point in time to perform member checking, Edward and Welch (2011) suggested conducting member checking at two points in the analytical process, following the transcription of the data and prior to finalization of the results. Member checking both the initial interpretation and then verifying the analysis increases confirmability, while enhancing credibility and dependability (Carlson, 2010; Edward & Welsh, 2011; Houghton et al., 2013; White et al., 2012). Although this requires a lengthy time commitment from participants, it is consistent with the analytical approach used in the Colaizzi methodology (Edward & Welsh, 2011). The additional

checking further assures reduced bias and authenticates the articulation of the teacher's lived experiences. As indicated earlier in the chapter, I emphasized the time commitment requested of participants while securing informed consent (Carlson, 2010). The participants were fully informed of their ability to withdraw from the study at any time (see Appendix D).

The transferability of resulting data from the study is constrained based on the small number of participants. Another way to confer transferability is by spending time in the field with the study participants while compiling rich narratives, reflective of the teachers' journeys and experiences (Houghton et al., 2013; Williams & Morrow, 2009). I took field notes reflecting observations made during time spent in the field, which when intertwined with the other data undergirded the transferability and credibility of the study (Houghton et al., 2013; Williams & Morrow, 2009).

Ethical Procedures

I received approval to proceed with data collection from Walden University's IRB, the approval number for this study was 01-14-15-0347573. Additionally, I received certification in Protecting Human Research Participants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research in 2013 (Appendix E). Being aware of the required steps necessary to assure no intentional or unintentional harm to volunteer participants, I informed them of the potential for the study to result in minimal distress due to the sensitive nature of the research questions and topics. Ahern (2012) documented that while some qualitative study candidates reported feelings of minor distress during

interviews, none regarded the process as harmful. Subjects in the Ahern study viewed the ability to reflect on positive aspects of their coping styles as beneficial and reported feeling empowered through sharing their stories. The researcher recommended limited use of member checking and requiring participants to read transcripts (Ahern, 2012). However, because member checking is inherent in the Colaizzi methodology, I articulated the expectations in the consent material. At the conclusion of the interview and member checking meetings, I asked the respondents if they would like referral information to free local counseling services. Providing referral information is a form of debriefing, however in giving them the choice to decline, I am demonstrating respect for cultural nuances and possible aversions to therapeutic interventions (Lees, Phimister, Broughan, Dignon, & Brown, 2013).

I recruited participants from the membership of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc, an international sorority of African American teachers. Initially, chapters received an email from the national basileus, introducing the study, its purpose and intended benefit to the overall population of African American teachers. Namageyo-Funa et al. (2014) suggested using a gatekeeper, for example, the leader of the organization to gain entree and establish the credibility of the project. Collaborating with the basileus eliminated ethical concerns regarding coercion based on prior relationships (Klitzman, 2013).

I followed-up with direct emails and phone calls to local members of chapters in the northeast and southeast region of the United States and responded to those who indicated a willingness to commit to the study (Appendix C). Upon request, I offered

additional material explaining the process and intent of the study. Because the initial outreach effort was not successful in identifying the requisite number of volunteers, I expanded the catchman into other chapters located in broader regions. Expanding the geographic range hampered my ability to conduct face-to-face interviews.

Participants received informed consent documents by email (Appendix D). I discussed with each candidate the purpose and intended procedures, including confidentiality and anonymity protections for participants contributing to the study. The consent materials included expectations and their ability to withdraw from the project at any point along the way. As part of the consent process, participants received information regarding storage, security, and archival in the consent documents.

Respondents contributed to the study voluntarily, without coercion (Klitzman, 2013). Prior to coordinating meetings with study participants, I made full disclosure of the nature of the study. Resources for follow-up care were available in writing, at the time of the interview. I was able to provide an atmosphere where the participants felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and beliefs, and had assurances of the confidential nature of the data collected (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I did not inquire about within-group homogeny (Hunter & Schmidt, 2010).

Summary

Chapter 3 provides an in-depth explanation of the methodology, instrumentation, and analysis I used to conduct the phenomenological investigation. In detailing plans to assure the trustworthiness of the analytical process, I also highlighted and attended to

concerns regarding ethical conduct. In the following chapters, I will provide insight into the actual data collection process and analysis. I conclude the paper with a discussion posing recommendations based on the findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide a descriptive analysis of the experiences of female African American teachers who live and work in traumatized communities, Included in the investigation were questions regarding whether racial traumas played a part in what they encountered when disastrous events occurred in their surrounding neighborhood. I utilized an interpretative phenomenological approach to describe the teachers' 'lived experiences,' detailing them for contributions to the body of knowledge not previously explored. In the current chapter, I document the processes and outcomes of the research.

Research Questions

Two overarching questions formed the foundation to unveil how female African American teachers experience living and working in communities traumatized by natural and man-made disasters and if racial traumas impacted their experience. I also asked sub-questions to open opportunities for more in-depth inquiry.

RQ1- How do African American teachers understand and perceive shared trauma, based on living and working in traumatized communities?

SQ1 -What approaches do African American teachers employ in supporting students after a community trauma occurs?

SQ2 -What supports, if any, do African American teachers believe are helpful in assisting them with dealing with students after a community trauma?

RQ2-How do African American teachers understand and perceive the nature of racial traumas' presence in their personal and professional lives?

SQ2-1: How do African American teachers explain resiliency in relationship to traumatic experiences?

SQ2 -2: What are the shared psychosocial impacts of microaggressions on African American teachers?

This chapter presents the findings of the study using an interpretative phenomenological methodology. Grounded in critical race and sociocultural conceptual frameworks aforementioned in this text, the data collection followed an enhanced version of the Colaizzi 7-step process (Edward & Welsh, 2011). Member checking, field notes, and mind mapping contributed to analyzing the rich data collected from the participants.

Setting

When recruiting participants in special communities often a gatekeeper can validate the value of the research by lending their creditability to the group (Namageyo-Funa et al., 2014). I contacted the Supreme Basileus of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., who agreed to assist in identifying sorors who met the study criteria and supplied a letter of cooperation to Walden's IRB (Appendix E). She disseminated the information to the regional directors, who in turn shared it with their local chapters. After receiving the

identified names, I forwarded the letter of recruitment and informed consent directly to the participants via e-mail, for review and signature (Appendix C and D).

Contrary to the plan articulated in Chapter 3, members of northeastern and southeastern chapters volunteered to participate. The distance away from me necessitated using internet access to conduct and record the interviews. I used GoToMeeting.com, a site that facilitates and records virtual meetings. Prior to the scheduled meeting time, each soror received an e-mail invitation with call-in information.

Although I asked the teachers to relate to a previous community disaster, additionally each revealed multiple traumatic experiences. I detail these disclosures later in the chapter. The participants offered information from their other experiences as it was relevant to the current study.

Demographics

I received 28 referrals, from which six female African American teachers met study criteria and responded to the research questions. They ranged in age, years of experience and academic attainment.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Years of experience	Region of residency	Community trauma
Alice	35	Southeast	Hurricane Katrina British Petroleum Oil spill
Gwendolyn	38	Southeast	Hurricane Katrina
Ida	40	Southeast	Hurricane Katrina Hurricane Isaac
Hallie	45	Northeast	9/11
Betrice	27	Northeast	9/11 Hurricane Sandy
Maya	11	Northeast	Death of a student

Within-group homogeny was not investigated (Hunter & Schmidt, 2010). All of the teachers were currently or within the past 5 years classroom instructors for children in grades kindergarten through twelve. Each had experienced at least one significant event, which traumatized the community where they lived and worked. Two identified themselves as living in the New York Metropolitan area following the events of 9/11, although one did not discuss 9/11 during the interview. Maya focused on the death of one of her students during a vacation break. The third lived and worked near the Pentagon, also struck by a terrorist airplane during the terrorist attack on 9/11. One of these teachers experienced both 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy. Three others survived Hurricane Katrina, one of which also had survived Hurricane Isaac several years later and the British Petroleum oil spill in 2010.

Data Collection

All participants received an invitation to participate and an informed consent document via email (see Appendix C and D). The e-mail also detailed when I would be calling to set up a convenient time to conduct the interview. I contacted them via telephone to arrange a date and time best suited for the initial conversation. Upon contacting them, we identified a date and time for the interview, and I explain the use of GoToMeeting. They received conference line and internet access to the meeting under separate e-mail correspondence. This process followed the plan presented in chapter three because I included making accommodations to use other VoIP (GoToMeeting.com) for teachers who were not readily accessible for in-person interviews.

I asked the interview questions to all six participants, with variations or additional questions for clarity included based on individual responses. Interview times ranged from 50-75 minutes. Following a brief review of the informed consent material and each teacher's agreement to record the meeting, GoToMeeting.com's internal recording process documented the conversation.

I converted the content into a Windows Media Video (.wvm) file, and hand transcribed the audio document using voice over internet protocol (VolP) into a word document. Following the transcription process, I coded each file using pseudonyms of famous female African American writers. A separate document correlated the names and I stored the document in a folder located in another file of my database.

A high percentage of teachers referred to me did not meet the study criteria and I excluded them. Another difficulty arose because the regional directors did not contact the referred teacher prior to releasing their information to me. In attempts to engage the teachers, they were hesitant, and some did not return telephone calls or respond to the emails. The lack of response protracted what I had anticipated being a 2-3 week collection timeframe into over eight weeks.

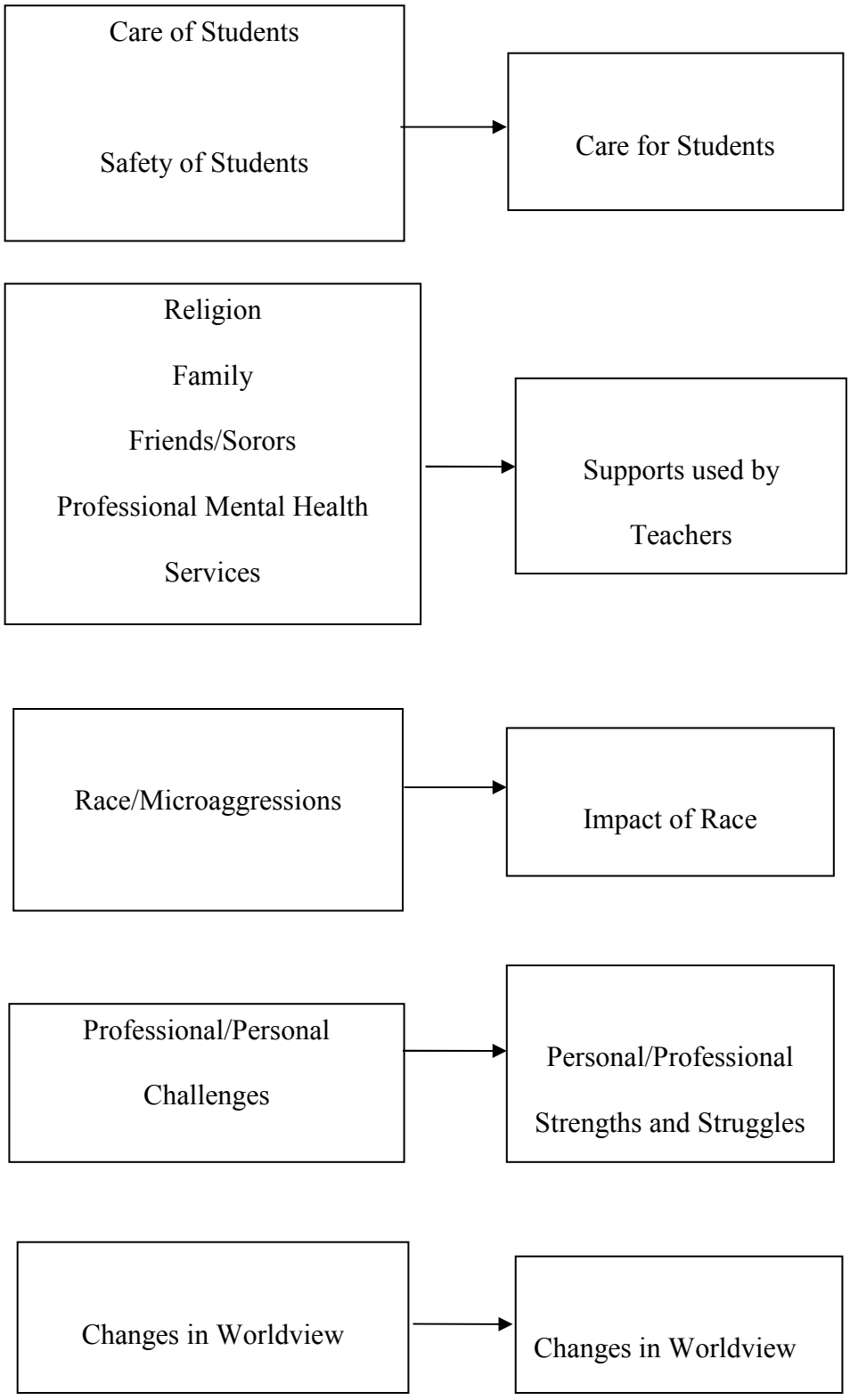
The selection of a metaphor or artifact representative of trauma became problematic as the teachers could describe their feelings but had difficulty identifying a specific object reflective of their experiences. Two of six did offer pictures, the details of which I discuss later in the chapter. One described a mural and its meaning to her; however, she did not have a picture of the mural on hand to contribute. The remaining three talked further about what was significant to them but could not find a tangible representation.

Data Analysis

The coding process began once I completed transcribing the interviews. I highlighted phrases that seemed significant or were repetitive within the context of the answers I received. Following Colaizzi's 7-step analysis methods, I emailed the results to the respondents for review and further clarification (Edward & Welsh, 2011). The teachers returned the document with only minor changes, for example, I described the height of a school building off the ground as four feet, but it was 12-14 feet.

Upon receiving the participant's checked transcribed data, I began another transcription process, whereby I highlighted portions of shared text using color codes as I identified patterns and themes. I considered the emic and etic qualities of each highlighted phrase. Consistent with the Colaizzi methodology, the theoretical concepts filtered the lens from which I viewed the information (Edward & Welsh, 2011). Ten overarching themes arose from the initial coding.

Figure 1. Inductive Categorization of Themes



I re-colorized the transcription and placed it into a separate page based on the corresponding theme. A third coding resulted in identifying five themes, producing better representations of the concept or reduced redundancy. I copied the text from the document and pasted it into new pages separated by color and code. Constant comparison allowed for the inductive development of the five codes. The use of mind mapping assisted me in visually identifying emerging themes.

I reflected on field notes, as I had made written comments during the interviews, noting things the interviewee emphasized. I composed a new mind map to allow me visual representation of the changes for reflective contemplation. Consistent with the enhanced version used by Edward and Welsh (2011), I integrated the metaphoric expressions into the identified themes. In completing the third stage of re-categorizing, I also reviewed the information presented in the literature review (Chapter 2), to check for alignment with resulting themes (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). I performed an additional reading, rechecking to assure the themes reflected the authentic meaning communicated by the teachers.

Thematic Outcomes

Care for Students

The teachers each described how they prioritized the needs of their students; assuring the safety of their students was paramount. Gwendolyn stated "We had to do additional things after these events. So we just worked with the kids the best we could." Participants expressed feeling a certain responsibility for the children's well-being. All

of them talked about how deeply they cared about the and wanted them to feel safe. Maya expressed her feelings “It was very different it was about the students in my class. And how they would deal with it Maya stated:

> So my thought process always was, no matter what happens outside the classroom, I would build a conducive environment inside so that everyone is involved and everyone can be successful regardless of what is going on when you leave me at the end of the day.

Betrice underscored Maya’s comments, “As an educator our primary concern is the students and so by nature you hide what you are actually experiencing. And that’s what the teachers did on 9/11.” She also shared, “We knew what we needed in order to support our children. Because we are there for those kids. Those who came back did it for the kids, and it was by any means necessary.”

Teachers discussed the need to be supportive and comforting, providing things they knew were absent because of the event. Ida’s reflections included, “But those of us who were fortunate would collect socks and underwear. I would catch sales at Wal-Mart and Target. Every sale I could catch, I caught.” Gwendolyn noted:

> For schoolchildren this was their haven, the school was their haven. You had so many families where the families went to the same school, teachers were teaching the children and grandchildren of people they had in their classrooms. There was a sense of familiar, of deep, deep familiar. That was really, really, traumatic.

Alice offered, “We wanted to keep the children safe while their families were gutting houses and throwing stuff away.” Three of the participants talked about how they took on additional responsibilities willingly because it would help their students. Again, Alice contributed, “we became the janitor, the cafeteria worker or whatever they needed. Our focus was on making sure the children had a safe environment.” Gwendolyn added, “I am not a social worker or school psychologist, but I found myself doing more of that. Social work aspects with children, predominantly Black.” Following the sudden death of a student in Maya’s classroom, she described the effect on her class, the school, and the entire community. The child died in an automobile accident, along with his parents and sister. They delayed the announcement for two weeks, but finally gathered the students in the auditorium to convey what happened. During this time, her students inundated Maya with questions about the student’s absence. Several days later, the school had a memorial service for the deceased student. Maya insisted on inviting the parents, as well. She offered:

> And the day of the conversation, I brought balloons into the class. We took them to an outside area, and there were students who were crying and parents that were very upset. It was just a very emotional day. We released the balloons, and I explained to the students what that meant and how we would think good wishes to him and then let it go. As the time progressed, I noticed it was very difficult for my students and as a teacher I had to do

> research. I did research on-line to see how other educators had dealt with the passing of a student. But I knew the classroom dynamics had changed.

Previous studies have recognized the important role teachers play in reducing long-term mental instability (Alisic, 2012; Moore & Varela, 2010). Their efforts to support and nurture their students are a significant factor in determining how well the students will cope with tumultuous situations (Alisic, 2012; Kilmer et al., 2010; Moore & Varela, 2010). They also feel a sense of pride in their ability to influence the outcomes for children following traumatic events. Gwendolyn offered:

> When you are an educator, it doesn't matter whether you are retired or not. You always have the interest in children at heart. You always want to make sure that the generation coming after you are going to make our communities and our country better.

Betrice was grateful the events of 9/11 happened during the course of a school day. In her comparison of 9/11 to Hurricane Sandy, she noted:

> So for a while the students did not know what happened. But at some point the community came into the auditorium, and they were informed. But they were informed in a way that they were told they were in the best place. They were in school with people who were going to make sure and ensure their safety. And if they get home and find out one of their loved ones has perished, there would be a certain amount of support that their family can render from the school community

Maya related how caring for her students during and after perilous situations was paramount.

> For me, I took it very personally. I feel like I am a village keeper in every child's life that I impact, that I work with. So when they are with me for that six or seven hours per day, I take on the role of not just the instructor or teacher in front of them, but that nurturer or protector. I am always mindful of the students.

Consistent with the literature, the relationship between student and teacher has short and long-term impact on the student's ability to navigate difficult circumstances successfully (Buchanan et al., 2010; Jaycox et al., 2010; Kilmer et al., 2010). Previous researchers documented decreases in the prevalence of PTSD and other trauma outcomes when stable bonds existed with students prior to and after community traumas (Alisic, 2012; Jaycox et al., 2010; Kilmer et al., 2010; Moore & Varela, 2010).

Supports Used by Teachers

Experiencing the challenge each trauma presented and what intrinsic characteristics assisted in their recovery, teachers also talked about dependency on outside supports. In overcoming these obstacles, teachers used various methods to console themselves and recover their losses. Each teacher articulated the role of the church and natural supports, for example, friends, family, played in their healing. They identified their religious beliefs as being essential in giving them hope and contributing to their ability to endure the multitude of problems unearthed by the turbulent event. Ida

shared, “To get through it I leaned on Jesus. He conditions me for the things I have to go through in life. Because of my relationship with the Master, God, Jesus, I think I am able to get through some things. I shed my tears, I do whatever.” She added:

> I think the most important thing is my religious aspect, a supportive family. I had those moments when I thought the world was going to crumble around me but I was always able to walk away, shed my tears, and come back fighting. Those things, the cross, certainly the cross. Relying on faith and belief that God would get us through this along with an appreciation of life. I was blessed to come out of both disasters.

Maya’s sentiments were similar, “My prayer is that I am always the one to propel them. I know my religious background plays a role in that. I know God put us all here for a purpose, and I really think this is my purpose. I want to do the best I can with it.” Gwendolyn also expressed the importance of faith:

> I prayed, constant pray and talking to other teachers in the same situation. We shared our successes, like someone would say, “They put sheet rock up on the left side of the house, Hallelujah.” That was bit thing.

Friends and family were another important source of support. Maya shared:

> When I spoke to friends, I had friends who would call me. One called me and said ‘I know you are stronger than this. I can’t really speak to what you are going through, but I know the strength that you have. I just going to speak to that strength. And this conversation was towards the end of the

> situation because I used it to propel me. I am strong, but it's okay to grieve but at some point I am going to have to push through it and find practical ways to deal with it. I did speak to people.

Ida's experience spoke to how coming together as a family was necessary during the two hurricanes she experienced.

> I rejected the trailer because my sister had a place for me, we are a supportive family. I do have a supportive family. We went to grocery store as a family, so we could get more because we had a lot of mouths to feed. We took in any family member who needed a place to rest their head. We lived in a community area. My daddy was there, my sister and brother in-law were then and then another sister moved in. When my daughter came for the weekend she would stay there. We just lived in that house as a family unit.

She added, "When I went to my sister's home, because I did not have water. I had a meal, I would take my bath, we had no TV." Although she was not in the path of the second storm she stated, "But when Isaac hit in 2012 her house (daughter) and my sister's house had 7 feet of water and they had to move in with me until they refurbished their homes and move back in."

Two of the teachers mentioned professional counselors; however, they did not describe the interface as favorable. Betrice noted, "There was not much that

helped me from the professionals other than just praying. I just prayed." Maya also had difficulty with the counselor sent from the school system.

> I think it took more time because she saw the outer shell and this strong African American woman that was just crying over the situation. She was like, you'll get over it. And I will get over it but she said next week you'll feel better, but the next week I didn't feel better. In the back of my mind I felt as if when I went to my friends and of course they are not professional counselors, I didn't feel the same way. I felt they could sympathize with the emotion, they understood, they knew I was committed to the child and how I was with the kids. They understood, They understood.

Ida's expression captured the feeling of those who could not access their supports:

> So the storm just messed up so many people. So many people died from the grief, from the flood waters, from the loss of the sense of community. And when I say loss of community, I mean their churches, their neighbors, their neighborhoods.

Unable to connect to others and feeling isolated Maya offered:

> I did speak to sorors, but I felt like when I spoke to other people like my friends, my sorority sisters, they were able to offer, "we understand you experienced a loss" but no one could speak to me as the classroom teacher.

The internal fortitude and external supports allowed the teachers to survive through the various traumas. Eyre et al. (2012) noted patterns of dependency on church,

family, and friends as being common in African American communities. Teachers' reflections underscored the nature of collective communities in turning to natural supports.

Impact of Race

After discussing the event itself, I posed a question to elicit their feelings regarding whether being African American affected their experience. I offered an explanation concerning racial trauma, its definition and relationship to emerging terminology, microaggressions. None of the teachers was familiar with the term, and so I offered a descriptive clarification using illustrations, which they could parallel with their own experiences.

Betrice offered her personal experience as it related to race relations following 9/11, "There was a limited amount of racism, and I think that there was an outpouring globally to all victims. That a positive thing and it lasted quite a while, I would say at least 3-4 years." She added, "I was at work on 9/11, I can't pinpoint whether racism played a part because it didn't differentiate, in other words every culture was affected because of the number of people that died." In coping with tragic circumstances following Hurricane Katrina Alice echoed a similar sentiment:

> The district that I am in is a predominantlypredominantly Black district. My experience in regards to microaggressions is that it was very eye opening for everyone because not only did Black people lose their homes, the white did, too. I think it leveled the playing field so to speak. I had a

> Black friend in the same district I was in and I asked her if we could have prayer service at 6:45 am, before the kids came in. She said, "Okay " and asked if anyone else could. When we got in the circle, we had Black, Whites, Latinos, we had every color in the rainbow. So it did not matter, we were all in the same place. From my perspective, I didn't feel that. When Katrina wiped out everything, it didn't have a color on it, it wiped out everything.

There was consensus between the teachers concerning the lack of racial division because of the enormity of the trauma. Morgan et al. (2011) reported similar findings in a study conducted in New York, post 9/11. The researchers documented the increased positive relationships and exchanges based on sharing losses across previous cultural and ethnic boundaries. Betrice asserted:

> And so what it did was eradicated the impact because everyone felt the same thing. So possibly, people who act in racist ways found themselves in a shared situation so there was a little bit more compassion. And it was a lot more support. Like was such a level of patriotism that I had not experienced.

Alice felt the media depictions of the area affected by Hurricane Katrina highlighted biased outcomes. "It didn't just affect low income Blacks. The media shows you what they want you to see, and that's not it at all. That storm took out everybody."

Gwendolyn spoke of the historical significance the storm had on school systems in the New Orleans districts. “It is frustrating because all of the schools in our district were named after African Americans. That was part of our heritage. All of that is gone’” Following the rebuilding and restoration of damaged schools, she expressed:

> We also lost part of our history because if our kids went to a particular school they knew the history of the name. Let’s say Eve Francois. They knew who that was who they were and what they had done for the community. We had a school named Frederick Douglass. The kids that go there now don’t know who Frederick Douglass was.

Other teachers discussed the issue by reflecting on their childhood experiences. Ida related, “I came from a predominantly Black school where everyone owned their own business, but everyone respected my parents,” Similarly, Hallie spoke of why race had not been an issue for her, “I went to a HBCU, and I did well. Real brothers and sisters don’t have to be lower echelon. I was raised in a middle class environment. I didn’t have those experiences.” The importance of getting a good education was instilled in Gwendolyn as a way to get ahead:

> You have to go down to the bottom of the barrel and say this is not right. Then you have to start over and you can’t undo the damage you did. Education was the only way we had out. It is a problem. It is upsetting to me to try to rehash this. I get so passionate about it.

As Ida passes this on to her students she explained, “I put my hand next to theirs and tell them we are the same color, I need you be to my doctor, my lawyer, the next president but you can’t when they put you out. That’s me talking with them.” Later in Chapter 5, I will explore these concepts further, relating them to current literature and potential intervention strategies.

Personal/Professional Strengths and Struggles

Alice spoke to the resiliency many other teachers noted in their statements. “I have this strength in me but the strength you are looking at is not the emotional side of me.” Maya expressed a spirit of optimism stating, “I think that if we have to work together and go through anything together, I have to speak up for who I am in ways that are appropriate.” Betrice felt, “It is a matter of learning how to adjust to what happens in life.” Ida concluded, “So we just worked with the kids the best we could.” They were creative in their approaches to sustaining themselves and their students, a sentiment threaded throughout the interviews. To assist coping with the death of a classmate and student, Maya created a safe space to share their grief:

> I found that my students were more vocal, and they realized their voice had an impact and that it was okay to feel a certain way. They knew how to have discussions a little better because they had real situations to speak about. When people approached them and say, “well how do you feel because he is dead.” They would say well we learned to talk about it, it

> happens to everyone, but we learned to remember the good things about him.

For some, counseling did help. Gwendolyn noted, “We were able to get a grant that allowed counselors to come in and meet with our parents and our kids. Other districts were not that fortunate, but my district was.” She added, “They sent outside counselors that we could send our children, and we could go ourselves. They would not turn anyone away.” Maya’s experience was beneficial in some ways: “My union did send a counselor who came regularly for awhile, and she taught me how to say thank you and keep going. Not have a conversation about it.” In an effort to avert future loss following a natural disaster, Betrice noted:

> I am in a better position to protect my personal belongings and my family. 9/11 is very difficult to prepare yourself because it’s terrorist, other than being more alert. When you go out you have to be a little more conscientious of where you are and what you’re doing. Because at any given time, and I hope this won’t happen anymore, but at any given time you may see a car bombing you may see someone trying to infiltrate a plane with a bomb and these things have happened after. Those things are controlled by individuals.

During the interviews, teachers had a difficult time focusing on their personal and professional challenges. I often had to inquire about how they experienced the trauma and it’s after affects several times. The reticence possibly underscored poor help-seeking

tendencies noted in Chapter 2 (Alisic, 2012; Baum et al., 2009). Other rationale includes understanding the reliance on natural supports, for example, church, family, and friends, which presented itself as another theme covered later in the chapter (Ai et al., 2011; Ladfitka et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2009). Teachers expressed how the uncertainty of the traumatizing event created anxiety for them. Teachers described the trauma in terms of how different it was than any other event in their lives. Additional probing questions prompting them to articulate how the community trauma affected both their professional and personal lives. Maya shared:

> It was something I had never dealt with before, and it was something where I didn't know where to turn. As the classroom teacher, you're the teacher but you're not the immediate parent. It was very surreal, out of body kind of experience and like I said I had never experienced.

Betrice added:

> After Hurricane Sandy, I didn't know how to deal with that. I didn't know who to go to. Other than my union and they didn't have a solution."
> I think what we needed was opportunities to seek counseling. I remember the guidance counselors in the building offered their services. But it didn't do what was needed. It wasn't enough. I can't tell you what I really needed other than some days to just deal with the business I had to deal with.

While they discussed feeling competent to handle their classrooms, issues at home were troublesome. Following Hurricane Sandy, Betrice tried to carry out her efforts to fulfill her volunteer commitments after the storm:

> During the elections, I had no electricity. I was assisting with the election because it was a presidential election. I remember calling until the very last minute. I had to drive in the dark to get to the call in center.

She also revealed another significant experience, which continues to affect her, "I remember people were standing out there with pictures, asking if you had seen that person. Teachers who lost family members were the most impactful. There was no closure, just no closure."

Alice offered, "Now do I look at myself because my house was a total mess and had to hire someone to gut it. They had to remove everything, everything down to bare walls. We had to get to studded walls and my house that was all that was left." Later Alice added:

> I think being evacuated was more of a crisis for me than going back to face what I had to face. I left with three pair of shorts, and I did have a nice pantsuit, I still have it. But you were only going to gone for three or four days. But that didn't happen. You were gone from September to at least half of October.

Betrice described the emotional tool Hurricane Sandy had on her:

> Depression, physical pain, lethargic, not feeing well, not upbeat. I remember rain frightens me. I am not talking drip drops, but serious storms, it affects me. That's why I am having my house raised. None of my neighbors are doing it, and they think I'm insane but I didn't like it, I just didn't like it. I did not like having no control of the water.

Maya related her personal turmoil:

> I think I always bring things home emotionally with things with my students. Sometimes you hear things like students don't have books, and so you go out and buy books for the child. You hear about abusive households or households where there is a lack of certain things that other kids have. So I do think I brought things home but I never actually grieved in the way I did with this child.

During a time when access to services was limited following Hurricane Katrina, Alice faced challenges to her physical health:

> We had hospitals inside of little trailers. I remember I got a bad infection, I had a cyst, and I went to the hospital they lanced it. When I followed up with my doctor, it wasn't healing. I had an IV for several days, and I remember when I left that trailer site, a makeshift hospital that was put together, I would go back to work.

Changes in Worldview

After the catastrophic events each teacher experienced, they discussed how their view of the world had been altered forever. All expressed fears, anxieties, and other conflictual feelings resulting from the tragedy they had endured. Hallie explained:

> There was just a lot of things you didn't do, like before when you went to the White House, you didn't have to have tickets and all that other stuff. You just went to the White House, maybe some mild searching. But now you have to get those tickets early and not that much fun. Look at the White House now. You use to drive on Pennsylvania Avenue. You don't drive on Pennsylvania Avenue anymore. It's all closed up. I am a Washingtonian but it's all different now. You don't dare go behind the fences or barricades or ask too many questions because you are afraid. You know your boundaries, if you got sense.

In expressing her fear she stated, "It was a traumatic time because you didn't know what was going to happen, the next day or the next few days. It was kind of scary." After losing her student in a car accident, Maya changed certain activities based on her experience:

> I just kept thinking in my mind, for awhile it was hard for me to dismiss the kids for vacation. So since that experience, I make sure that when the kids go on vacation I hug every child. I asked them "where is my vacation hug?" and that came from knowing that it may be the last time I hug that

> child. You should think of it every day, but you don't think of it as a reality until it hits you in your classroom. That the child may never return was a thought in my mind but was never a reality, never a question.

Betrice noted the basis of her new discomfort:

> But the thing about Sandy, I was actually affected. I stayed in the home and watched the water infiltrate into my home and feeling helpless. Not being to stop the water or know how much damage was going to be done. Because you just don't know. At one point I thought the whole house was going to be submerged under water. So it was frightening. 9/11 was frightening but from a level of what going to happen next.

Teachers made decisions concerning their plights, some of which were based in coping with fears and trepidations. Ida reported:

> And I waited another year to get back to it because the community was filled with people I didn't know. My neighbors were not with me and I am a widow, I am single and you don't go into an environment where you don't feel safe. Home was safe but this wasn't just home anymore. I didn't feel safe so I didn't come back for a while.

Gwendolyn shared:

> I don't like to hear what is going on in education anymore but it is just too discouraging and there is nothing I can do to change it. Rather than to deal with the pain of what is happening, I choose not to listen to the news.

Later she added:

> It has destroyed our sense of community. It has destroyed people's lives. The quality of life here is very difficult. We have never had to struggle really hard. Now our lives have changed because we have to struggle.

Betrice's words reflect the long-term change in mindset, "We are living in a new world. With the tsunamis and all that is going on, we are living in a new world. It isn't the community like when I was raised, it is a new world. Similarly, Gwendolyn shared:

> And now we are operating in what I call the "new norm." And the new norm might consist of kids who might live next door to me, who choose to go across the river, which is on the opposite side of the city because part of New Orleans is located on the opposite side of the Mississippi River. I walk at 6 - 6:30 am every morning and the kids are at the bus stops.

She concluded, "Now we are trying to operate in this new normal, For teachers like me, and those within 5-10 years, there is this new normal that we still trying to adjust to 10 years later."

Discrepant Cases

There were two discrepant cases based on the initial descriptions of community traumas. The first was the affect of the British Petroleum oil spill on the communities

bordering the Gulf Bay. Alice articulated the enormity of the issue in those neighbors where families were depending upon fishing and related products for their livelihood. She was able to relate it from the educational system's perspective, as she recounted the number of displaced children, based upon the need for their parents to relocate in order to find employment. Residents left houses vacant and in their blighted state attracted squatters, rodents, and other deleterious conditions. Children lost best friends and other close relationships. The emotional toll wreaked havoc in previously stable classrooms.

The other discrepant case was the teacher who experienced the death of a student. Although chapter 2 referenced the sudden loss of life with students and teachers, I did not anticipate having an example in the context of the current study. However, Maya talked about the affect it had in not only her class, but also the entire community, including parents and teachers who identified with the emotions surrounding the loss of young children. She expressed the compounding experience she had when they attempted to console her. Maya sought counseling to assist her with how to reply to those offering their condolences but small things continued to bring the loss to the forefront of her mind. Pointedly she described how the class had to deal with what to do with the student's name banner and desk. As a class, they decided to leave the name banner in place for the remainder of the year and draped a red bow around their desk. This was a constant reminder but it honored the other students' need to grieve and make sense of the loss. In documenting both interviews, it caused me to spend time analyzing the differences

between the two discrepant cases and other more expected reports. Maya summed it up by saying:

> What I do with the students at the end of each day, is a call and response, I say to them 'today and every day, scholars, "and what they say is that "they matter." And as they depart we do a high five and each time the kids high five me they say "you matter" and I say back to them "you matter." It something that connects the kids, some affirmation they leave with each day. For me, I never know what tomorrow holds for them

With the ever-increasing number of man-made and natural disasters, this holds true for everyone. The teachers' expressions underscore the uncertainty of the future and how disasters and other traumas felt throughout a community can bring this reality to the forefront of our minds. They shared their personal accounts to bring attention to the challenges they face, while continuing to execute their professional duties and responsibilities.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In establishing credibility, I used mind maps, along with two points of member checking the data to ensure it reflects the authentic voice and experiences of the teachers. The mind mapping appeals to my learning style, while also serving as an illustrative display of the information I collected during the interviews. I used a color coding process, which allowed me greater visualization of points of comparison throughout the stages of analysis. The first was a graying of repetitive thoughts. After the teachers reviewed their

interview transcriptions with the graying of certain text, they confirmed it represented the essential thoughts they wanted to convey. Following the enhanced Colaizzi eight step processes, the second member check increases creditability as it further validates or invalidates the researcher's analysis. In this case, the teachers expressed confirmation the themes and attached statements reflected their experiences and researcher bias was therefore minimized.

I did re-code the third analysis point. There were duplicate colors based on the second round of coding. As I began to focus on themes and the third re-organization became confusing and I reorganized the entire process to assure I had attributed the appropriate statements to each participant. Although it protracted the analysis, it also gave e additional time to reflect while I redistributed the color codes.

The small sample size of qualitative research studies immediately presents limitations in terms of transferability (Houghton et al., 2013; Williams & Morrow, 2009). This study reflects a broad geographic sample, however, because only three teachers from two regions participated, I cannot generalization to the larger population of teachers. The varied experiences of the teachers highlighted the similarities and differences based on the traumatic experience but again the minimal number of interviews does not promote conjecture into other similar populations or situations. As related in chapter three, I did use field notes and journal entries to assist in the analysis of the data. While this does not create transferrable data, it does however open the door for further exploration.

The enhanced Colaizzi methodology requires varying points of reflexivity, a process employed by qualitative researchers to establish the creditability of the analytical process. I spent time following each interview to transcribe and reflect on the information shared by the teachers. The act of transcription promotes a deeper understanding of each word and phrase offered during the interviews. Each step of coding allowed for additional retrospection. Multiple readings of the interviews led to identifying smaller thematic vignettes. The vignettes represented places to extract and inductively narrow down content into focused themes. Reflexivity and member checking at numerous points of the analysis contributes to the dependability and confirmability of the outcomes of the study (Houghton et al., 2013; White et al., 2012; Williams & Morrow, 2009).

Results

African American teachers living and working in traumatized communities shared various perceptions upon reflecting and describing their experiences. While shared trauma was the backdrop of the study, only two teachers expressed challenges or concerns about their professional roles and responsibilities. Researchers described shared trauma in mental health workers following 9/11 as having conflictual feelings concerning work and personal priorities. The workers also noted a propensity to expand previously established boundaries, for example, hugging or touching a client or revealing personal information during sessions. While participant teachers struggled with personal recovery from the event, none articulated boundary spanning with the students, nor did they suggest they had conflictual feelings regarding their role in the classroom. One teacher

did acknowledge additional time off to resolve matters at her home would have been helpful, however, there was consensus concerning their need to assure the safety and security of their students as a priority. Because each teacher described elements of acknowledging their world had changed forever and altering their perceptions about the world based on the trauma they experienced, vicarious trauma would better describe their outcomes. I will discuss this in more detail in chapter five.

The second question queried whether previous racial traumas affected their experiences in recovering from the community trauma they had experienced. In reviewing the results of the interviews, race did not play a significant role in how they experienced the trauma or in the period following the occurrence. Participants discussed how the trauma was so significant race became insignificant. For example, a survivor of 9/11 revealed how people in New York City came together. A feeling of patriotism overrode feelings of bias and prejudice. Similarly, those who experienced hurricanes also talked about how communities came together because everyone had such significant losses.

Chapter 5 will provide additional information regarding the analysis of the data. I will also offer recommendations for additional studies, while acknowledging the limitations of the current study. The chapter and dissertation will conclude with a discussion regarding potential change efforts to support the needs of teachers in the wake of disastrous events in the future.

Chapter 5

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to inquire about the teachers' perceptions of living and working in a community where natural or human-made disasters had occurred. My intention was to identify both their strengths and struggles, thereby illuminating the path towards offering teachers appropriate support, augmenting their ability to overcome personal difficulties and sustain vulnerable students. I asked the teachers to determine whether racial traumas played a part in their experiences following tumultuous events. Describing the nature of their experiences will inform the academic, political, and human service fields about how teachers cope when faced with the duality of personal and professional challenges following traumatic events.

I used an interpretative phenomenological approach to guide a modified version of the Colaizzi 7-step methodology. The findings revealed two significant outcomes. Shared trauma, as defined in previous studies with mental health workers, did not describe outcomes for the teachers interviewed for this study. Racial traumas were not significant factors in the process of recovering from the traumatic events.

Interpretation of the Findings

Shared Trauma - RQ1

Researchers detailed the plight of mental health workers who lived and worked in traumatized communities. The majority of the studies focused on social service professionals in the New York Metropolitan area following the terrorist attack of 9/11.

Baum (2012) and Tosone et al. (2012) discussed how mental health professionals lost feelings of sanctuary at home, where they previously found comfort and support. Previously, they dealt with the stress of providing services to people experiencing challenges to their mental health in their homes or by spending time with family and friends. Home no longer represented a safe place because of the disruption caused by the disaster (Baum, 2012; Tosone et al., 2012). The authors reported how concerns about family and friends disrupted the service providers' thoughts during sessions (Baum, 2012; Tosone et al., 2012). Other negative effects included ethical and moral conflicts. Researchers discovered workers were concerned about how to prioritize multiple demands on their time (Tosone et al., 2012). They struggled with coping with personal issues and balancing increasing caseloads. Assuring they maintained their professionalism was another stressor (Baum, 2012; Dekel & Baum, 2010). The study participants reported boundary spanning during sessions, which they described as revealing personal information to clients and sharing stories about the outcomes of the event (Baum, 2012; Dekel & Baum, 2010). Mental health professionals also disclosed how they began hugging and embracing patients, a practice many avoided prior to 9/11 (Baum, 2012; Dekel & Baum, 2010; Tosone et al., 2012).

When comparing various trauma responses, distress, and other resulting concerns were inconsistent with posttraumatic, secondary stress, or vicarious trauma. Researchers attempting to differentiate between the diagnoses reported symptoms related to each did not appropriately describe outcomes for the mental health workers who lived and worked

in the affected community (Biggs et al., 2012). The intent of my study was to examine whether teachers who lived and worked in areas negatively affected by natural and man-made disasters had similar results as the mental health workers identified as demonstrating symptoms of shared trauma.

Interviews conducted with six African American teachers who lived and worked in communities traumatized by a specific disaster revealed outcomes did not reflect the symptoms previously described as shared trauma. Participants did not discuss boundary spanning or conducting themselves in ways, which varied from normal interactions with students. The teachers who demonstrated caring and nurturing behaviors, for example, hugging, did so prior to the disaster and in the normal course of a school day. None of the participants discussed significantly changing their daily interface with students. All were able to sustain their classrooms with minimal distractions resulting from their personal challenges. They expressed pride in their ability to provide a safe, secure place for those entrusted to their care, especially following dramatic events in the community which was consistent with patterns of posttraumatic growth, researchers documented as expressed by mental counselors following 9/11 (Bauwens & Tosone, 2010). All of the teachers reported changes in their perspectives about life and the world around them, which is indicative of vicarious trauma, rather than shared trauma. They experienced increased concerns regarding their safety and securing. Certainties once taken for granted became questionable. Interviewees revealed how they had accepted they would never return to life, as they knew it prior to the event.

Maya, who lost a student to a car accident, describe altering end-of-day behaviors. Based on her realization any day could be the last day, she began having the students recite positive affirmations before they went home for the day. However, these changes closely aligned with vicarious trauma, as it was a response to changes in her worldview. Similarly, other teachers shared how their overall perspectives about life reflected new fears and increased reverence for life. The teachers explained how the surrounding community had changed. They used the term 'new norm" to portray how the environment, including people and places once familiar to them, would never be the same.

Vicarious trauma (VT), unlike shared, secondary, or posttraumatic stress, embraces how involvement with traumatized populations alters a survivor's perspectives about life based on empathizing with their plight (Cohen & Collens, 2012). Studied in mental health workers, firefighters, and EMTs, VT poses difficulties based on workers adopting negative concepts about life, similar to the teachers' expressions concerning needing to adapt to the "new norm" (Cohen & Collens, 2012). Alice exclaimed, "It has destroyed our sense of community. It has destroyed people's lives." There was a certain fatalistic expression in their voices. Alice described her feelings as, "I am stuck where part of me is struggling is trying to let go of where I or what I was because part of me can't let go. It's like I am stuck between two worlds." Betrice also talked about how her perspective had changed. She stated, "When you go out you have to be a little more conscientious of where you are and what you are doing. Because at any given time, and I

hope this won't happen anymore, but at any given time you may see a car bombing you may see someone trying to infiltrate a plane with a bomb." These were new concerns for her. She articulated how she felt the need to prepared at all times for anything that may happen. These along with other reflections from the teachers pointed to vicarious rather than shared trauma.

Sociocultural Theory

Trauma related to vicarious experiences is steeped in constructionist self-development theory (CSDT), which is closely aligned with sociocultural theory (Cohen & Collins, 2012; Hunter & Schmidt, 2010). Both theories emphasize the need to understand the human experience from a holistic construct (Cohen & Collins, 2012; Hunter & Schmidt, 2010). Constructionist self-development theory speaks more to how people develop schemas based on their life experiences (Cohen & Collins, 2012). The sociocultural orientation focuses on considering all elements of the human experience, body, mind, spirit, and the environment. It provides a conceptualization of how they contribute to a person's identity formation (Hunter & Schmidt, 2010). It considers how people formulate worldviews while CSDT focuses on cognitive development and disruption (Cohen & Collins, 2012). I found CSDT to be a better theoretical framework to support understanding vicarious trauma. Future studies will incorporate the use this alternative framework to analyze whether other populations' experiences align with CSDT's conceptual orientation.

Racial Trauma - RQ2

In terms of the influence of racial traumas, the teachers also disconfirmed the notion race played a significant role in how they experienced the community trauma and resulting recovery efforts. Moreover, there was a certain universality in how people interacted following events i.e. 9/11, and hurricanes. Interviewees described communities as coming together, helping one another cope, and feeling the shared pain of what had occurred. Contrary to media reports, in the days following Hurricane Katrina Alice acknowledged everyone had experienced significant losses. She offered the storm did not know color, a sentiment similar to what Betrice, a survivor of 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy, shared. Consistent with the findings of Morgan et al. (2011), New Yorkers pulled together, began to speak to strangers on the street, and offered assistance to those in need regardless of whether they knew them personally. Considering the western world's orientation reflects an individualistic cultural orientation, the enormity of the community tragedies seemed to bring out a collective communal response (Norenzayan & Lee, 2010; Stein et al., 2013).

Researchers have also articulated the propensity of African American and other collective cultures to turn to natural supports in times of trouble or distress (Eyre et al., 2012). Based on comments offered by the participants, this was also true for the teachers. They spoke of how their belief in God, prayer, family, and friends sustained them during the challenging events they faced. These primary support systems also contributed to their development as caring professionals. The interviewees lived in predominantly

African American neighborhoods and had upbringings in similar settings. Hallie confirmed her limited exposure to people of other cultural backgrounds based on living in "Chocolate City." Residing there reduced her interactions with Whites and thereby opportunities to experience microaggressions with any frequency. Conceptually each teacher understood how it affected others outside of their home settings. However, living and working in predominantly African American communities served to insulate them from constantly experiencing discriminatory behaviors. Smith et al. (2011) and Sue et al. (2009) articulated the need to focus studies of microaggression and racial battle fatigue in areas that were of mixed race or where African Americans were the minority race. Both research teams underscored the differences in exposure based on decreased daily interactions (Smith et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2009).

Critical Race Theory

The other theoretical framework used to understand the experiences of the African American teachers was critical race theory (CRT). Because the teachers interviewed work within educational systems, I selected CRT as it explores the effect of racism within institutional settings (Aguirre, 2010; Kohli, 2012). CRT purports there is a systemic promotion of oppressive behaviors, whereby our society condones offensive conduct (Aguirre, 2010; Kohli, 2012). The theory expanded from its original context in the judicial system to view other institutions, which threaded within the human experience include the educational system. In order to understand the plight of African Americans, CRT incorporated the historical significance of slavery. CRT theorist

advocate for intertwining the resulting and continuing outcomes in school books and other educational materials in order to avoid blaming victims for the negative experiences in their lives. By viewing individual failures as systemic, infused into every facet of society, the door becomes open to a comprehensive analysis of issues related to the African American community.

Betrice spoke of how she had to "norm" a Jewish teacher in her school who demonstrated racially biased conduct. Alice pointedly described the loss of cultural heritage when schools that previously carried the names of notable African Americans were renamed following Hurricane Katrina. She deeply felt about the students being disconnected from their history and not understanding the contributions or sufferings of their ancestors.

An alternative concept, the Africentric theory may better capture the outcomes related to racial trauma in this study. The Africentric theory identifies and acknowledges the differences between African Americans and people of a Eurocentric cultural orientation (Ackerman, 2012; Gilbert, Harvey, & Belgrave, 2009). It underscores the reason and importance of African Americans' reliance on family, friends, and spirituality (Ackerman, 2012; Gilbert et al., 2009). Stemming from the expectation of assimilation into mainstream society, which included an individualistic culture, African Americans continue to depend on natural supports as articulated by study participants (Ackerman, 2012; Gilbert et al., 2009). While CRT supports understanding inherently racist systems,

for example, education, Africentric theory captures the thematic expressions of the interviewees.

Limitations of the Study

The size of the sample was the greatest limitation of the study. It constrains generalizability to other demographic segments of the population and geographic areas. Although the sample reflected participants from northeast and southeast regions of the United States, it cannot be qualified as representative of African American teachers, either male or female, or teachers in the regions where the interviewees resided and worked. The criterion also hampers generalizability and transferability as noted in chapter one. I excluded teachers from private or charter schools, those employed in higher education, and those without classroom experience in grades kindergarten through high school. In chapter one, I also recognized not capturing inner group homogeny, for example, West Indians or those from countries in Africa.

In overcoming the limitations, I took great care to document the procedures used to reduce researcher bias and assure authenticity of the resulting analytical process. Inherent in the enhanced Colaizzi 7-step methodology are two points of member checking. The teachers actually wanted the ability to review the data, although they offered minimal feedback or changes. Member checking kept them engaged while also assuring them I had protected their identities. Additionally, I created mind maps to reflect the outcomes at three stages in the analytical process. Color-coding highlighted similar passages to me, and I continued to recode until thematic patterns emerged. Field notes

taken during the interviews provided a fourth checkpoint to assure my biases did not hamper articulating the outcomes of the data I collected.

The other limitation expressed in chapter one was concern about multiple traumatic experiences becoming infused and confusing to the participant. Notably, four of the six did discuss other community traumas they had experienced. However, each was able to delineate between them. For example, although Maya's interview focused on the death of her student, she also lived in the New York area following 9/11. Similarly, Alice was able to differentiate between Hurricanes Katrina and Isaac. Her home took a direct hit from Hurricane Katrina, while Isaac created significant losses for other members of her family. I did not inquire about other personal traumatic experiences, such as childhood traumas.

Time elapsing between the event and the study was another concern. Often after years transpire, memories are not as clear and information could be unintentionally altered. However, this was not evident in the reports from the interviewees. Several made statements about how concretized the event was in their minds and how no time had seemingly passed. They were able to recall finite details of their experiences, suggesting the historical nature of the topic did not impede the teachers' memories or reflections.

Recommendations

Future research can investigate similar information from other demographic populations, for example, men, specific age groups, ethnic categories, or years of service. In addition, differentiating between specific trauma categories, natural versus man-made,

will yield comparative data, enhancing the trustworthiness of each subsequent study. For example, my plans include replicating the study in areas where significant community violence occurs, including communities grappling with the increasing numbers of murders of young African American males by law enforcement. Betrice, who had experienced both, was able to articulate the difference in her experiences. She explained how the hurricane was an act of God while 9/11 resulted from intentional acts of humans. Overlapping traumas is another area for further exploration. Diamond et al. (2013) discussed the lack of exclusivity between nonpathological and pathological responses. Based on the initial findings of Diamond et al. (2013) and Eyre et al. (2012) a combined clinical and non-clinical study could inquire about traumatic exposure from varied experiences. Delving further into each thematic category using additional qualitative research inquiries will hone in on the unique or contradictory nature of teachers' experiences. Further exploration of posttraumatic growth, nonpathological responses or ongoing traumatic stress response (OTSR) can reveal correlations to other studies, similar to those conducted by Diamond et al. (2013) and Eyre et al. (2012), discussed in chapter two. In addition to posing questions to people in other demographic categories, this will illuminate the differences in responses and coping mechanisms useful for the development of intervention strategies for broader dissemination. Similarly, testing the consistency and inconsistency between other professions, for example, firefighters, police, and other first responders will highlight the need for alternative methods of support based on the experiences from multiple perspectives.

Although teachers did not relate outcomes reflective of shared trauma, researchers suggested similar interventions strategies for those challenged by vicarious trauma. Recommendations included providing increased time for teachers to spend in counterspaces, or places where marginalized groups can speak openly and freely (Bindas, 2010; Case & Hunter, 2012; Gove et al., 2011). Offering additional classroom support, for example, the "buddies" used in schools in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, can decrease the stress of coping with students displaying abnormal behaviors attributable to the traumatic event (Baum et al., 2009). Other studies related the need to encourage survivors to access their support systems (Argentero & Setti, 2011). In the case of African Americans, this is commonly family, friends, and church. The interviews' comments underscore this practice. Offering counselors with appropriate cultural sensitively can be an option for teachers who are comfortable with seeking assistance from mental health providers. Alice and Maya accessed professional services following their traumatic experiences. However, Maya's recollections underscore the need for cultural sensitivity.

I intend to compile additional data to inform the construction of a quantitative instrument. Enhancing generalizability and transferability provide data to develop responsive interventions. Emergency management planning teams will be able to incorporate specific procedures directed at supporting teachers in the aftermath of traumatic situations.

Implications

Positive Social Change

Upon entering the field of research on any topic, one must recognize the need to substantiate the potential positive outcomes the endeavor will produce. I began this dissertation by asserting the historical context of African American teachers. These dedicated professionals have contributed to the evolution of African Americans post-Diaspora. Alice shared, "Education was the only way we had out." Ida's expression of the value of education was explaining how she dealt with unruly students. She stated, "I put my hand next to theirs and tell them we are the same color, I need you be to my doctor, my lawyer, the next president, but you can't when they put you out." The older teachers discussed how the educational system had become bureaucratic, taking away the creativity and spontaneity of the students and teachers. However, each explained in different ways the most important thing was providing a safe environment for children to learn, grow, and develop into productive citizens.

An anonymous writer offered, "Teaching is the one professional that creates all other professions." The critical role teachers' play in the lives of our children is elevated when disastrous events create chaos and turmoil in communities. Betrice shared the comfort she felt because the children were in school when the tragic events of 9/11 occurred. Her school assembled the students and explained what had happened that day, and gave administrators time to prepare the children for unexpected circumstances once they left the school grounds. Ida revealed how teachers stayed after school to prepare

evening meals for their students living in tent city following Hurricane Katrina. They knew there were no cooking facilities, and the young people may not have another opportunity to eat until they returned the next day. Taking on multiple hats and additional responsibilities, none of the interviewees expressed feeling burdened but to the contrary accepted the call to provide a safe and secure environment to shelter the young minds from additional emotional scarring. For example, Ida's concern also focused on the children's exposure to violence, nudity, and sexual activity of strangers, because the large tents did not have dividers or curtains. She explained how she was not as concerned about children seeing things in their own homes, but the open environment allowed them to see behaviors from non-related adults and children. Concerns and insights such as this can become points of advocacy to protect children following future storms.

Individual/Family

This study represents a step toward understanding the significance of the teachers' experiences when disaster strikes. Their unique needs are clearly articulated and documented for consideration n developing future actions and offering appropriate supports and services. Betrice suggested additional time off to deal with family, and other personal issues would have been helpful to her as she recovered from Hurricane Katrina. Culturally sensitive counseling could have reduced the feelings of misunderstanding for Maya.

Understanding the experiences of teachers facing ever-increasing numbers of community disasters contributes to assuring longevity as many are leaving the profession

(Espelage et al., 2013). Coupled with the pressures for students to perform well on standardized tests, and continuous changes in administrative policies, the additional complexities of coping with storms, shootings, and other unanticipated events, creates an atmosphere of skepticism. Overwhelmingly the teachers in this study articulated how frustrated they were with systemic issues. Alice contributed:

> People with no affiliation with the field can come and dictate policy, what you should be doing, what children should be learning. That is very aggravating to trained educators. It is frustrating that our profession has come to this. They have taken the love and joy out of teaching.

The lack of teachers matching the cultural backgrounds of the students they serve is becoming a pressing issue for many communities who struggle with attracting and retaining talented educators; Perry & Hayes, 2011). Identifying variations in underrepresented populations promotes implementing flexible practices; intone with teachers from different cultural orientations.

Organizational

School districts across the country are developing emergency management plans. There are several initiatives focused on immediate and appropriate responses for students when unforeseen events occur. PRePARE, Building Resilience Project (BRP), and other intervention strategies equip local educational systems to implement and carry out a coordinated effort to support pupils when disasters strike (Baum et al., 2009; Bernard et al., 2011). In the immediacy of the event, psychological first aid (PFA) and other

debriefing activities focus on reducing emotional stress, while comforting and de-escalating the distressful situation (Allen et al., 2010; Cain et al. 2010; Pandya, 2013).

O' Brien et al. (2011) implemented an alternative to conducting assemblies to inform and provide access to services for children. Instead, they invite pupils to a common, quiet space, such as a gym, where the child can select from a variety of available activities (O'Brien et al., 2011). Trained staff offers clay molding tables, art supplies, music, and other options to students (O'Brien et al., 2011). Children can also opt out and decide to sit quietly, talk with peers, or leave with their parents and guardians. The authors felt forcing students into debriefings and assessments before they have time to individually process the incident is counter-indicated in many cases (O'Brien et al., 2011). As additional studies compile information, identify supports, and initiate responses, my hope is emergency management plans will speak specifically to the needs of teachers.

Alisic (2012) noted the lack of attention paid to address teachers' needs following these horrific occurrences. Researchers acknowledge the critical role they fulfill when traumas befall their communities; however, minimal interventions focus specifically at the educators (Alisic, 2012; Kilmer et al., 2010). Alisic (2012) found teachers benefited from learning about PTSD and other trauma-based responses, despite the fact that the trainings were intended to benefit the students. Baum et al. (2009) underscored the need to be cognizant of how teachers cope with the stresses of caring for traumatized students following community tragedies. The researchers employed "teaching buddies" in

classrooms in one New Orleans district (Baum et al., 2009). The "buddies" tasked with identifying troubled students, took the pressure from teachers, especially those who indicated they felt uncomfortable with that particular role (Baum et al., 2009).

In her interview, Gwendolyn discussed how outside counselors provided services to teachers, as well as parents and students in her district. She and her co-teaching colleague arranged their schedule so they could cover for one another while each sought services from the counselors. Gwendolyn acknowledged that they were one of the few districts receiving this advantage. Ida had the opposite experience. She detailed how psychological services once available in the school, did not return for several years after Hurricane Katrina. Based the amount of students that were dislocated and did not return, schools limited access to school social workers and psychologists.

Societal/Political

Alisic (2012) and Baum et al. (2009) advocated teachers to considered as first responders based on the caretaking role they have with students following disasters. Proponents of including teachers in this category note the importance of offering them access to resources, similar to firefighters and other rescue emergency service providers. Often governors declare a state of emergency in order to bring additional personnel and federal resources, for example, FEMA to critical situations (McCreight, 2015). Ida discussed the trailers FEMA installed on school grounds following Hurricane Katrina. As residents returned to the area, and the need for teachers increased, they were provided

with temporary shelter until they repaired their homes or attained stable living arrangements.

The declaration also brings to bear priority access to psychological counseling, health providers, and other supports for example, liability protection for professionals and others deemed first responders (Rutkow, Gable, & Links, 2011). States have varying requirements concerning who is coverage and the length of time they will have access to care and protection (Rutkow et al., 2014), However, states are currently updating legislation to reflect additional options based on increases in the frequency, duration, and resulting long-term implications for communities throughout their respective regions (Rutkow et al., 2014).

Alice revealed the need for health care, especially following the teacher's retirement. In districts in New Orleans, teachers do not pay into social security and are not eligible for Medicare. She explained how it was normal for teachers to seek other jobs to pay for private insurance and maintain their post-career lifestyles. Alice felt they needed continued or alternative support given the psychological stressors related to recovering from multiple catastrophic events. New legislation could adapt categorizing teachers as first responders. Policy changes can make mental health and other services available to them on an immediate and long-term basis. Continued research in this area provides politicians documented studies to support advocacy efforts.

Conclusion

I have presented information to enhance people's understanding of the experiences of African American teachers following community calamities. In response to my inquiries, clear evidence unfolded concerning the commitment and dedication these professionals have towards the future leaders of our society. Each day they must be prepared to respond to unanticipated events, including disasters, which traumatize the local communities. I explored the experiences of a specific group of African American teachers who both live and work in neighborhoods adversely affected by natural and man-made disasters. As all were members of chapters of the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., their stories of coping with deleterious conditions illuminated both their strengths and struggles. Consistent with previous research conclusions, connections to family, friends, and commitment to God and their belief systems served to buttress them during times when faced with challenging circumstances. The interviewees related the pride they felt in being able to handle these difficult situations while protecting and nurturing pupils entrusted to their care.

The group was intentionally homogenous in terms of race, allowing inquiry concerning whether racial injustices influenced their recovery efforts. Participants did not feel race was a significant factor in their post-disaster experiences. Rather, they indicated a feeling of comradery with other survivors, regardless of race. Having experienced similar losses, community residents pulled together, supporting each other's rehabilitation efforts.

As our society faces increasingly violent neighborhoods where incidences of bullying, suicide, and shootings are escalating, teachers continue to be a constant, stabilizing resource. In this study, I recognize and document their efforts to assist and support our children while confronting their own personal challenges. Moving forward, additional research will illuminate ways to support them, as heretofore their needs have received nominal attention. Unveiling the potential of becoming vulnerable to the negative effects of vicarious trauma, as opposed to shared trauma, contributes to formulating strategies to deter or ameliorate any long- term negative consequences. While race did not appear to play a significant role in their recovery process, future studies may reveal different patterns based on varying demographic considerations.

I will always remember hearing the story of the red bow, placed on the desk of the student who died in a horrible automobile accident and the mural of faces of those lost in shocking events, which unfolded on 9/11. I can visualize the floodwaters flowing through the homes in the path of recent destructive hurricanes. I now listen intently to the voices of those protesting their discontentment with murders of young men and other violent acts in the streets of our cities. Critical events will continue to occur in the communities where we want to raise our children to be productive, contributing members of society. Supporting those who facilitate that process can only reap immeasurable rewards. As academicians, our work leads us to move our society forward. Continuing the research is one significant part but the other is the actions we take to ensure the message we identify with our findings causes others to make changes in current processes. This research can

become the first steps in ameliorating the painful outcomes attached to recovering from traumatic events, while also celebrating the strength and courage teachers' exhibit when challenged by unexpected circumstances.

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APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The research seeks to explore how African American teachers who experience racial traumas perceive living and working in communities traumatized by natural and man-made disasters.

RQ1- How do African American teachers understand and perceive shared trauma, based on living and working in traumatized communities?

Sub-questions

What approaches do African American teachers employ in supporting students after a community trauma occurs?

What supports, if any, do African American teachers believe are helpful in assisting them with dealing with students after a community trauma?

RQ2- What do African American teachers understand and perceive the nature of racial traumas' presence their personal and professional lives?

Sub-questions

How do African American teachers explain resiliency in relationship to traumatic experiences? What are the shared psychosocial impacts of microaggressions on African American teachers?

Introduction

To begin the interview I want to share some background on what brought us here today. When I initially began my doctoral studies, I was interested in learning about posttraumatic stress disorder and secondary trauma as it related to African American veteran's wives. My research revealed a growing number of veteran's spouses demonstrating signs of the disorder and I wanted to learn more about how it inter-related to their racial experiences and background. However, a couple of years ago a friend of mine, who is an Art Teacher in Atlantic City, opened my eyes to the challenges teachers face when disasters, such as Hurricane Sandy occur. In supporting her through the crisis, I began to recognize certain outcomes for teachers based on increased responsibilities of caring for their students when turbulent events occurred. Many of her colleagues lived in the area most affected by the storm and as she began to describe the challenges they faced, I started to wonder whether they fell into a secondary trauma category also. My review of the literature revealed a malady referred to as shared trauma. This term is used to describe the outcomes for many mental health professionals when they live and work in traumatized communities. Interest in shared trauma from academia primarily focused on the events following 9/11, when social workers and other counseling professionals lived and provided therapeutic services to clients in the New York Metropolitan area. They found the professionals became conflicted when work and personal demands collided. My thoughts were to identify if teachers would describe similar feelings based

on caring for their students while recovering from personal losses. I remember a story my friend shared about a teacher who had lost her personal belongings including clothes and family memorabilia, but was not allowed to receive clothing from the donations made to the school. She was staying late to distribute food and clothing but then had to go shopping to get something to wear for the next day. Many of her students lives were also disrupted and during the day she was confronted with students being sad while others began acting out. Both described the challenges of trying to maintain order and structure but needing to take time to comfort and console the students who were struggling with their new reality. As other stories were relayed, I decided to change the focus of my dissertation to investigate how teachers, specifically African American teachers, experienced the duality of their roles following a broader term 'community trauma.' Community trauma speaks to any trauma that occurs and the entire community is affected, for example, the events of 9/11 or Hurricane Sandy. My close proximity to Camden City led me to expand the inquiry to include teachers who worked in communities where there was gang violence, student shootings, and v violent other occurrences, which affected the entire community where they lived and worked. This interview is intended to collect information regarding how African American teachers experience community traumas but is sensitive to the impact their racial identity may contribute. I have asked you to bring something that represents a recent traumatic experience (within the last 5 years) and so we will also discuss what you brought and why, as part of the interview.

First, let us review the informed consent document to make sure you are fully aware of your rights and my responsibility as a researcher. Do you have any questions regarding the informed consent document? I want to make sure you are aware you can stop the interview at any time and/or refuse to participate in follow-up meetings. Your information will remain anonymous and I will take the following procedures to assure you the information you share will remain protected.

1. Any documentation of this interview will be coded and your name will appear as a pseudonym. The coding assists in maintaining your privacy and I will be the only person who knows about your contribution to the study.

2. All documents will be stored in my home office where my computer is password protected. Anyone seeking to gain entry into my files will need 3 separate passwords and a key to open the office door. I will back up the data in a separate software package that has additional security protections.

I am also asking your permission to audio tape this interview. The audio tape will placed in a file on my laptop and have the same security measures as I discussed before. Do you consent to me audio taping the interview?

Do you have question before we begin?

Can I begin taping now?

Interview Questions

1. Let's start with you telling me something about yourself

Professional background- years in the field/college attendance/future plans

Personal history - married/children/pets/hobbies

2. Are there any specific experiences you have had similar to the ones I discussed earlier?

When did they occur? Tell me about how you responded.

Can you describe the outcomes in terms of your personal life? Professional life?

3. Can you tell me about (Metaphor/artifact)? Why did you select it? What meaning does it hold for you? If you agree, I would like you to take a photograph of metaphor/artifact to add to the information you are sharing today. You can refuse or withdraw from this portion of the study at any time. I have a separate agreement granting me permission to use the picture in my final documentation. The picture will not be shared without your consent. If you agree, please remember, this will kept under the same pseudonym as the transcribed portion of this interview and remain anonymous.

4. Recent studies reveal that discriminatory practices once overt in their expression, have taken on an insidious nature and are now covert and discrete. Being followed around in stores while shopping, assuming all African Americans are the same, questions regarding your hair, or having someone tell you they do not see race are instances referred to as microagressive conduct. Given this description, does that resonate for you in any way?

Would you tell me about how your racial identity influences your daily activities?

Personal/Professional

4. What influence, if any, do you feel being African American have on the experience(s) you described?

5. Is there anything else you would like to add? Are there other questions you feel could be asked to inform my study

Thank you for your time and valuable contributions to this study. If you agree, I will be contacting you shortly to review the transcription of our discussion today. After we complete the editing portion of the transcription, I will further analyze the results, adding the content regarding the metaphor/artifact that you identified. To assure I properly assess all elements of the information you shared, I would like you to participate in a final review once my analysis is complete. I would appreciate your feedback at that time, also, but reiterate your ability to withdraw at any time.

Would you like any additional information to clarify the information we discussed?

Would you like any information concerning resources in the community to assist you?

I will now stop the audio recorder.

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF RECRUITMENT - SUPREME BASELIEUS

Juanita Lynne White, MSW
3231 Walters Lane, OT2
Forestville, Md. 20747
juanita.white2@waldenu.edu
(240) 716-3918

Dear Mrs. Williams,

I am currently working towards my Ph.D. in Human Services at Walden University. I am in the process of completing the dissertation phase of fulfilling my degree requirements. My proposal focuses on ascertaining the experiences of African American teachers, who live and work in communities traumatized by natural and manmade disasters, such as hurricanes or school shootings. The intent is to fill a gap in empirical knowledge concerning the teacher's strengths and struggles. I have attached a copy of the first chapter of my dissertation to give you better sense of the project.

Familiar with the history and mission of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., my desire is to draw my sample size from the membership of your sorority. I have had preliminary discussions with your regional directors and am reaching out to you as the leader of the organization for additional assistance in my recruitment efforts. The goal is to conduct interviews with a minimum of six African American female teachers who both live and work in traumatized communities. The first meeting will take about 30 minutes. During that time, I will explain the study, the expectations for their time, and complete informed consent documents assuring the teachers understand the process and procedures. I will

explain the parameters of their participation including the use of pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity, and their ability to withdraw at any point without any repercussions.

I will conduct the full interview during the next meeting, which I approximate will take 90 minutes. Two follow-up meetings will be to review their transcribed interviews, offering clarification and editing of the outcome data. The intent is to engender their feedback at each stage of the process. Each meeting can either be in person, by telephone, or alternatively via Skype.

In begin the formal recruitment, I would like to reach out by email to your membership, explaining the study and requesting volunteer participants. To that end, I am asking your guidance concerning how to best facilitate disseminating the materials.

An important element of this investigation is giving voice to a marginalized population that I know has been the backbone of our community throughout our history in the United States.

Having learned the importance of education at a very young age, I have continued to be a life-long learner, now reaching the final stages of a seminal degree. My intention is continue researching various aspects of trauma in my post-doctoral studies, as this investigation is only the tip of the iceberg. I look forward to your support in my efforts and hope to have an opportunity to discuss this with you further in the near future. I thank you in advance for your time and cooperation.

All the best,

Juanita White, MSW

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF RECRUITMENT - PARTICIPANTS

Juanita Lynne White, MSW
3231 Walters Lane, OT2
Forestville, Md. 20747
juanita.white2@waldenu.edu
(240) 716-3918

Good afternoon,

Your name and contact information was shared with me as you indicated a willingness to participate in my dissertation study. By way of introduction, I am currently working towards my Ph.D. in Human Services at Walden University and am in the process of completing the dissertation phase of fulfilling my degree requirements. My research focuses on ascertaining the experiences of female African American teachers, who live and work in communities traumatized by natural and manmade disasters, such as hurricanes or school shootings. The intent is to fill a gap in empirical knowledge concerning the teachers' strengths and struggles. The title of the study is *Shared Trauma: A Phenomenological Investigation of African American Teachers.*

Familiar with the history and mission of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., my desire is to draw my sample size from the membership of your sorority. The goal is to conduct interviews with a minimum of six African American female teachers who both live and work in traumatized communities. The investigation process will entail one interview and two follow-up sessions. During the first of three meetings, I will explain the study, review the expectations of your time, and complete informed consent documents assuring you understand the process and procedures. I will request your permission to audio tape each encounter. I will also explain the research parameters including the use of pseudonyms to maintain your anonymity, and your ability to withdraw at any point without any repercussions. I approximate the interview will take 60 minutes, eliciting responses to two research questions:

1. How do African American teachers understand and perceive shared trauma, based on living and working in traumatized communities?
2. How do African American teachers understand and perceive the nature of racial traumas' presence their personal and professional lives?

Other points of inquiry will focus on understanding:
What approaches did African American teachers employ in supporting students after a natural or man-made disaster occurs?
What supports do African American teachers believe are helpful in assisting them with dealing with students after a natural or man-made disaster?
How do African American teachers explain resiliency in relationship to traumatic experiences? What are the shared psychosocial impacts of microaggressions on African American teachers?

I will ask each participant to bring or share an artifact or metaphorical expression reflective of the experiences you will be discussing. For example, you may have a picture or poem that holds meaning to you. I will be asking you to share this with me and also take a photo of the item you selected. There will be an additional release for you to sign should you decide to allow me to publish the picture upon completion of the study.

In order to engender your feedback at each stage of the process, two follow-up meetings will be requested to review the transcription of your interview, offering clarification and editing of the outcome data. Each meeting can either be in person, by telephone, or alternatively via Skype or other video networking. The two follow-up meetings should take no longer than 30 minutes each.

An important element of this investigation is to give voice to a marginalized population I know has been the backbone of the African American community throughout our history in the United States. Having learned the importance of education at a very young age, I have continued to be a life-long learner, now reaching the final

stages of a seminal degree. My intention is continue researching various aspects of the issues related these topics in my post-doctoral studies, as this investigation is only the tip of the iceberg. I welcome and look forward to your participation and hope to have an opportunity to discuss this with you further in the near future. Please feel free to contact me at anytime at:

(240) 716-3918 or (240) 510-8188(c)
I can also be reached via email at:
juanitalwhite@yahoo.com or juanita.white2@waldenu.edu

I will be reaching out to you later today or tomorrow to schedule a convenient time for us to get together. I will also be asking you for a desirable location, keeping in mind privacy and confidentiality is of the utmost importance. I am also attaching an informed consent document for your review prior to the meeting. I will be asking you to sign the document before we begin the interview, after answering any questions you may have.

I thank you in advance for your consideration, time, and cooperation.

All the best,
Juanita White, MSW
Ph.D. Candidate

APPENDIX D: LETTER OF COOPERATION

Dear Juanita White,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Shared Trauma: A Critical Phenomenological Investigation of Female African American Teachers with the members of Phi Delta Kappa Sorority, Inc.

As part of this study, I authorize you to contact members for the purposes of recruiting participants, collecting data, and member checking. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. Participants will be able to interact with the researcher face-to-face, or via telephone, email, and/or Skype.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include:

- Providing contact information for teachers who meet the study criteria
- Disseminating recruitment material to local chapters in areas that meet the study criteria

We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the participant and Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Charlotte Williams

Authorization Official
Supreme Basileus
The National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

APPENDIX E: CERTIFICATION OF COMPLETION

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Juanita White successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 06/22/2012

Certification Number: 938454