

# DRAWN TO THE FLAME

Teachers' Stories of Burnout

**Edited by** Erin A. Singer,  
Matthew J. Etchells and Cheryl J. Craig

ADVANCES IN RESEARCH  
ON TEACHING

**VOLUME 45**

**DRAWN TO THE FLAME**

# ADVANCES IN RESEARCH ON TEACHING

Series Editors: Cheryl J. Craig and Stefinee Pinnegar

## Recent Volumes:

- Volume 28: Crossroads of the Classroom: Narrative Intersections of Teacher Knowledge and Subject Matter
- Volume 29: Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogies
- Volume 30: Self-Study of Language and Literacy Teacher Education Practices
- Volume 31: Decentering the Researcher in Intimate Scholarship: Critical Posthuman Methodological Perspectives in Education
- Volume 32: Essays on Teaching Education and the Inner Drama of Teaching: Where Biography and History Meet
- Volume 33: Landscapes, Edges, and Identity-Making
- Volume 34: Exploring Self Toward Expanding Teaching, Teacher Education and Practitioner Research
- Volume 35: Preparing Teachers to Teach the STEM Disciplines in America's Urban Schools
- Volume 36: Luminous Literacies: Localized Teaching and Teacher Education
- Volume 37: Developing Knowledge Communities Through Partnerships for Literacy
- Volume 38: Understanding Excessive Teacher and Faculty Entitlement: Digging at the Roots
- Volume 39: Global Meaning Making: Disrupting and Interrogating International Language and Literacy Research and Teaching
- Volume 40: Making Meaning With Readers and Texts: Beginning Teachers' Meaning-Making From Classroom Events
- Volume 41: Teacher Education in the Wake of Covid-19: ISATT 40th Anniversary Yearbook
- Volume 42: Teaching and Teacher Education in International Contexts: ISATT 40th Anniversary Yearbook
- Volume 43: Approaches to Teaching and Teacher Education: ISATT 40th Anniversary Yearbook
- Volume 44: Studying Teaching and Teacher Education: ISATT 40th Anniversary Yearbook

ADVANCES IN RESEARCH ON TEACHING VOLUME 45

# **DRAWN TO THE FLAME: TEACHERS' STORIES OF BURNOUT**

EDITED BY

**ERIN A. SINGER**

*Texas A&M University, USA*

**MATTHEW J. ETCHELLS**

*Texas A&M University, USA*

AND

**CHERYL J. CRAIG**

*Texas A&M University, USA*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan  
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL

First edition 2023

Editorial matter and selection © 2023 Erin A. Singer, Matthew J. Etchells and Cheryl J. Craig.  
Individual chapters © 2023 The authors.  
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

**Reprints and permissions service**

Contact: [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com)

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80382-416-1 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80382-415-4 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80382-417-8 (Epub)

ISSN: 1479-3687 (Series)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

# CONTENTS

<i>About the Contributors</i>	vii
<i>Foreword</i>	xiii
<b>Introduction: The Burning Out of Teachers and Administrators in Public Education</b>	1
<i>Erin A. Singer, Matthew J. Etchells and Cheryl J. Craig</i>	
<b>Radically Healing or Burned Out: Experiences Among Black Teachers</b>	7
<i>John A. Williams III, Maiya Turner, Alexes Terry, DaJuana C. Fontenot and Sonyia C. Richardson</i>	
<b>A Narrative Inquiry Investigating Teacher Burnout at a Bronx New York Middle School in 2020</b>	27
<i>Peter Scaramuzzo, Julia E. Calabrese and Cheryl J. Craig</i>	
<b>Leaving so Soon? Reality Shock Among Novice Teachers</b>	47
<i>Karen McIntush and Karla Adelina Garza</i>	
<b>Not Picture Perfect: The Storied Lives of Art Teachers in Urban America</b>	65
<i>Lobat Asadi</i>	
<b>Resilience and Persistence in the Face of Burnout</b>	81
<i>Erin A. Singer, Natasha Epps and Margaret DeJesus</i>	
<b>“Who Wants to Be a Teacher in the Face of These Anti-queer Laws?” Burnout Perspective From a Gay Educator</b>	99
<i>Michael D. Bartone</i>	
<b>Parallel Stories of Publicly Imagined and Personally Lived PE Teacher Identity Reconstruction in the Time of COVID-19</b>	117
<i>HyeSeung Lee</i>	

<b>Multilevel Approaches to Mitigate Burnout in Education</b> <i>Eleanor Su-Keene</i>	137
<b>Analyzing Teacher Burnout Through Principal Leadership Behaviors</b> <i>Elsa Villarreal</i>	149
<b>Chocolates or Tissues: Mitigating Momentary Burnout</b> <i>Christopher Benedetti</i>	169
<b>Identity Flux: Educator Narratives in the Face of Burnout</b> <i>Jordan Donop, Tamra Walderon and Matthew J. Etchells</i>	181
<b>When Passion Isn't Enough</b> <i>Deja Bailey and Matthew J. Etchells</i>	199
<b>Final Thoughts</b> <i>Erin A. Singer, Matthew J. Etchells and Cheryl J. Craig</i>	225
<i>Afterword</i>	227
<i>Index</i>	229

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Dr Lobat Asadi** received her PhD in Curriculum & Instruction, Education & Cultural Sustainability from Texas A&M University in 2020. She is a qualitative Researcher at Texas A&M, and Associate Instructor at Harvard. Environmental Communications & Wildlife Conservation Education specialist. She investigates issues of social justice in linguistics, race, culture, gender, and sexuality. She has an interdisciplinary background as a former journalist, and an ESL teacher that enhances her intercultural and investigative research skills.

**Deja Bailey** is an educator from the suburbs of Chicago. After obtaining a bachelor's in Early Childhood Education from University of Missouri-Columbia, she embarked on her career teaching in a public school in Dallas, Texas. She is currently pursuing master's in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Urban Education from Texas A&M University-College Station. In 2021, she started a podcast, *Carpet Time Confessions*, where teachers are allowed to show up and share their authentic experiences in the classroom. She is currently working to develop an afterschool program for Black and Brown youth dedicated to having bold and engaging learning experiences to develop diverse skill sets and create safe collaborative connections throughout the community.

**Dr Michael D. Bartone**, PhD, is an Associate Professor in Elementary Education at Central Connecticut State University. As a critical race theorist and queer theorist, his research looks at racial, sexual, and gendered identity in schools, how one comes to know identity, and how teachers (mis) (un)knowings of identity influence their pedagogy in what they in/exclude in their classroom. He also gathers LGBTQ2+ educators' lived experiences. He is a former elementary school teacher.

**Dr Christopher Benedetti**, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, where he teaches graduate educational leadership, research methods, and dissertation writing courses. His scholarly interests include examining psychological, sociological, and equity issues within K-12 school leadership contexts. Dr Benedetti is a former middle school language arts teacher and elementary school principal.

**Dr Julia E. Calabrese** is a former 7–12 mathematics teacher and current Post-doctoral Scholar at the University of Utah. She received her doctorate in 2022 from Texas A&M University in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus in mathematics education. Her research interests include STEM education and teacher preparation. She is currently conducting research in mathematics

curriculum and teacher preparation as well as integrating scientific investigation with engineering design.

**Margaret DeJesus** is a passionate bilingual educator with over 12 years of experience who is currently serving as Assistant Director of Bilingual/ESL and Migrant Education Programs in Bryan ISD. Margaret specializes in combining state compliance efforts with research-based instructional strategies to maximize English Language Acquisition for all multilingual learners. Margaret is a powerful force in any learning community and uses her knowledge, positive attitude, and tireless work ethic to encourage others to work hard and succeed. Margaret is continuously inspired by her husband and their two young children. In her free time, Margaret enjoys cooking traditional Dominican and Mexican dishes, going on family hikes and playing vintage video games with her children.

**Jordan Donop** is an EC-6th certified educator, a Transformational Learning Fellow, and has an M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas A&M University. Jordan engages in research with her colleagues from Texas A&M and her first open access publication was on the impact of COVID-19 on teacher mental health, followed by a book chapter on the effects of COVID-19 on K-12 education. Her passion for research and lifelong learning led her to pursue a doctoral degree in Educational Psychology focusing on Developmental Sciences and she is currently completing her first year in the program.

**Natasha Epps** is a principal in a large urban school district in North Texas. She is a doctoral candidate in K-12 Educational Leadership at Baylor University. She earned her master's degree in Educational Administration from Lamar University and a bachelor's degree in Speech Communication from Baylor University. Natasha was a finalist for her district's Principal of the Year award in 2022, named the 2018 Outstanding Assistant Principal of the Year for TEPSA-Region 11, and recipient of a former district's Star Educator award for both 2011 and 2020. Her research interests include executive coaching, leadership development, Black principals, and school improvement.

**DaJuana C. Fontenot** has served in the field of education for almost 20 years. She received her undergraduate degree from Lamar University and master's degree from Texas Southern University. She is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in multicultural education from Texas A&M University. DaJuana is driven by the opportunity to impose effective change in the field of education, not only for students but for teachers as well. When not traveling, DaJuana enjoys interactive games and activities with her twin toddlers and husband. She has a firm foundation rooted in faith, and knows that God is truly orchestrating her destined path.

**Dr Karla Adelina Garza** received her PhD in 2023 from Texas A&M University in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus in culture and curriculum. Her research interests include multicultural and minority education, migrant student and migrant teacher education, history of education, and professional

development for educators. Her experiences include teaching Spanish at the secondary level for over 10 years and serving as the Scholarship Director for the Pan American Student Forum of Texas since 2012. She is working as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Texas A&M University.

**HyeSeung Lee** is a PhD candidate in the Technology and Teacher Education Program in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture at Texas A&M University. She is currently working for the Collaborative for Innovation in Teacher Education (CITE), assisting with online teacher professional development course development. Prior to her time at Texas A&M University, she focused on physical education teachers' curriculum-making and its concordance with the national curriculum of South Korea. In her dissertation research, she focuses on different notions of teacher authenticity and how to narratively conceptualize teachers' practice of "being authentic" in the classroom.

**Dr Karen McIntush** is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at University of Houston, *teachHOUSTON* program in the Department of Mathematics. She received her PhD from Texas A&M University in Curriculum and Instruction and continues her research interests on culturally responsive classroom management in her current role. Additionally, her research interests are on preparing STEM secondary preservice teachers in culturally responsive practices to improve retention as they enter high needs campuses in the greater Houston area. She currently is working with her team on a new teacher residency model as well as the induction program in place for *teachHOUSTON* graduates. She also manages several multimillion dollar grants that fund the innovative programs at *teachHOUSTON*.

**Dr Sonyia C. Richardson** is an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work, Director of the Race and Social Equity Research Academy, and the Founder and Director of the Mental Health Research and Practice Lab at UNC Charlotte. Dr Richardson has expertise as a researcher, clinician, and suicidologist working primarily with Black children/families. As a clinical researcher, her agenda focuses on developing and testing novel interventions aimed at reducing suicide among Black youth. Further, she aims to identify and remove barriers to mental health treatment for Black populations and eliminate resulting disparities.

**Peter Scaramuzzo** is a doctoral candidate in curriculum and instruction within the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University, College Station. His area of focus is curriculum studies/curriculum theory with an emphasis in queer theory, ecological sustainability, and multicultural education. Scaramuzzo's instructional career includes serving as instructor-of-record for a preservice teacher education program. He has also served as a full-time teacher in PK-12 for over 10 years. Mr Scaramuzzo teaches high school in New Haven, Connecticut.

**Dr Eleanor Su-Keene** is a Lecturer in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University. She received her PhD in Educational

Leadership and Research Methodology at Florida Atlantic University. She has a Master of Science and a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of Nevada, Reno. She is a former secondary science educator and novice teacher mentorship coordinator. Her research interests are at the intersection of science, social justice, and leadership to address issues in overall school improvement and educational working conditions.

**Alexes Terry** is a passionate educator with over a decade of experience in education. Currently, she is pursuing her Doctorate of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas A&M University, College Station. Her research interests include urban education, culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, teacher preparation, and educator wellness. Alexes is the author of the book *Real Love: Strategies for Reaching Students When They See No Way Out*, the founder of TwistED Teaching Educational Consulting Company, and the Assistant Director of Participant Experience with Urban Teachers Educator Preparation Program in Dallas, Texas.

**Maiya Turner** is a doctoral student in the Multicultural Education Program in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University. Her research agenda centers Black educators and their retention and recruitment into the teaching profession to diversify the teacher workforce. Her experiences include serving as a High School English Language Arts teacher leader at an urban high school in Texas. Upon graduation, she hopes to train preservice teachers on the university level and continue to do the work that centers and empowers Black girls and educators in education.

**Dr Elsa Villarreal** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at Texas A&M-Commerce. She earned her PhD in Educational Administration from Texas A&M University-College Station. She earned a master's degree in Educational Administration from the University of Houston-Victoria and a bachelor's degree in Spanish from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Elsa's research interests include principal preparation programs, Latina principals, and leading campuses with English Learners (ELs).

**Tamra Walderon** works in the Center for Research & Development in Dual Language & Literacy Acquisition as the Curriculum Development Coordinator where she helped develop two research-based dual language curriculums for English Learners (ELs). She holds an associate degree and a bachelor's degree in elementary education, a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in bilingual/ESL education at Texas A&M University. Her research interests include teacher and school leader education and professional development, burnout in education, the impact of COVID-19 on K-12 education, critical consciousness in education, and culturally sustaining pedagogy.

**Dr John A. Williams III**, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Urban/Multicultural Education at Texas A&M University at College Station, and is the Founder and

Director of the Urban Lab for Transformative Research and Assessment. His research focuses on developing and replicating best practices, policies, and personnel to dismantle inequitable discipline outcomes for African American students in K-20 school environments. Additionally, his research investigates how to prepare and support culturally inclusive teachers through the adaptation of multiculturalist frameworks to instruct in urban schools.

This page intentionally left blank

# FOREWORD

Cheryl J. Craig

Teaching is one of the most satisfying and rewarding careers for those who choose it as their life's work. However, because it involves relationships and interactions within a politically charged system, it is also stressful and a source of potential burnout. This volume features teachers' experiences of feelings of being used up. Their voices, their emotions, and their metaphors and words lead the way. Theory and psychology follow behind in a manner fully reflective of qualitative – particularly narrative inquiry – research. This book is a testament to teachers' desires to do their best for youth, even when they face impossible educational demands. It illuminates why teacher shortages exist and what can be done to reduce teacher anxiety and stress.

This page intentionally left blank

# INTRODUCTION: THE BURNING OUT OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Erin A. Singer, Matthew J. Etchells and Cheryl J. Craig

Teaching is a caring profession; teachers not only care about the content they teach but also, and primarily, they show up to work because they care about students. Hydon et al. (2015) discussed “compassion fatigue” in teachers and in other school personnel. They noted the ways in which teachers can become traumatized within and as a result of conditions promoted through a given school context:

Teachers can be vulnerable to secondary traumatic stress (STS) because of their supportive role with students and potential exposure to students’ experiences with traumas, violence, disasters, or crises. STS symptoms, similar to those found in posttraumatic stress disorder, include nightmares, avoidance, agitation, and withdrawal and can result from secondary exposure to hearing about students’ traumas. (p. 319)

Teacher attrition and burnout have been researched in school districts all over the country for decades. Zysberg et al. (2017) discussed the symptoms and indicators of burnout, stating that “[b]urnout is a multi-level response syndrome associated with prolonged exposure to stress and characterized by physical and psychological exhaustion, cynicism (as an interpersonal and emotional indication of built-up aggression), and a sense of helplessness and low self-efficacy” (p. 123). These symptoms can lead to anxiety, depression, diminished job performance, absenteeism, and attrition.

Researchers document the continued departure of teachers from the teaching profession. Teachers leave the profession or change schools for many reasons, ranging from poor working conditions to inadequate salaries (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hanks et al., 2020; Ramos & Hughes, 2020), and hiring and retaining qualified teachers remains a challenge for many school districts. Gold (1985) attributed

---

**Drawn to the Flame**

**Advances in Research on Teaching, Volume 45, 1–5**

**Copyright © 2023 Erin A. Singer, Matthew J. Etchells and Cheryl J. Craig**

**Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited**

**ISSN: 1479-3687/doi:10.1108/S1479-368720230000045001**

teacher attrition before retirement to “poor public opinion regarding education, tight budget constraints, staff reduction, dealing with disruptive behavior, students’ lack of interest in their work, new programs, accountability testing, and excessive paperwork” (p. 255). She called for more systematic research to be conducted on the burnout phenomenon and the underlying feelings that “lead to burnout during student teaching” (p. 257). Watts and Short (1990) discussed teachers’ use of drugs and alcohol, suggesting that teachers with higher stress levels correlate with higher rates for “alcohol, amphetamines, and tranquilizers” (p. 60). Zysberg et al. (2017) asserted that “emotional intelligence” might be a key factor in the identification and processing of negative emotional experiences and the effective regulation of those emotions to reduce the symptoms of stress and burnout (p. 133).

Through narrative inquiry – using story to inquire into stories of experience, our work aims to qualitatively surface the stories of teachers and pedagogues in a variety of settings (e.g., urban, suburban, rural) across a variety of sociological conditions (e.g., economic, racial, sex/gender), who experienced firsthand the impact of a pandemic, the chaotic transition to remote learning, the impact of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and racial strife, on students and curricular planning processes, and other nuanced lived realities. Collectively, we hope to provide a broad picture of voices and experiences that point to coping strategies surrounding those factors and mechanisms that lead to “burning out” while expanding the notion of “burnout” through our participants’ own conceptualizations.

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Narrative inquiry examines the experiences of participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in their own terms, using their own words. It is grounded in Dewey’s (1934/1997) assertion that education is an experience that is personal, social, context-based, and occurs over time. The intersection of social interaction, temporality, and the added dimension of place or context form a three-dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The term narrative inquiry was first coined by Clandinin and Connelly in the 1990s. They stated, “our interest as [narrative researchers] is lived experience, that is, in lives and how they are lived” (p. xxii), and that experience is the critical term in narrative inquiries (2000, p. 2). Narrative inquiry has been used in various social science and humanities disciplines since the 1980s (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). More specifically, narrative inquiry methodology and methods have been widely employed in the fields of anthropology, psychology, psychiatry, and education.

This book is divided into two sections. Section one is focused on the research of educator burnout, and section two is focused on the narratives of educator burnout.

Intro each of the chapters.

**Chapter 1:** *Radically Healing or Burned Out: Experiences among Black Teachers*

Black teachers often face different expectations than their white counterparts, and these expectations, without the proper support, lead to Black teachers burning out at higher rates. In an effort to understand Black teachers and the experiences that contribute to them remaining in the classroom, the researchers explored Black teachers' working conditions through a phenomenological approach.

**Chapter 2:** *A Narrative Inquiry Investigating Teacher Burnout at a Bronx New York Middle School in 2020*

Through the metaphoric (Craig, You, & Oh, 2017) image of a candle, and using the tools of narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) – broadening, burrowing, storying, and restorying – we surface four teachers' lived experiences in a year filled with incredible grief and loss, socio-political-cultural trauma, racial strife, and personal-professional challenges to show their resolve and resiliency to persevere through and beyond burning out.

**Chapter 3:** *Leaving So Soon? Reality Shock Among Novice Teachers*

Disillusionment among novice teachers often sets in upon entering the teaching profession, and this leads to novice teachers leaving the profession at high rates, with underserved schools more adversely impacted by their departure. This chapter explores the sources of burnout via the lived experiences of three novice teachers and the impact that burnout had on their intent to remain in the profession.

**Chapter 4:** *Not Picture Perfect: The Storied Lives of Art Teachers in Urban America*

This chapter investigates the impact of art practices and art teachers on socioemotional self-regulation of students, as we consider the impact on teacher retention using the Heuristic model of child self-regulation and reactivity and school outcomes. The ironic finding that teaching art classes is financially emotionally draining for teachers to the point of decreasing retention, yet some are still impassioned to teach art classes, is juxtaposed with attachment theory.

**Chapter 5:** *Resilience and Persistence in the Face of Burnout*

Teachers now face increased workloads, the increase in high-stakes testing and accountability, social-emotional and behavioral challenges, school safety concerns, equity concerns, and now the coronavirus pandemic. We examine the effects of stress and burnout among three alternatively certified teachers and the behaviors and strategies these educators employ to build resilience and persistence in their service to the students who shape our future.

**Chapter 6:** *“Who Wants to Be a Teacher in the Face of These Antiquated Laws?” Burnout Perspective From a Gay Educator*

A war still rages in the United States. One such battle being against queer teachers and students, as well as teachers and administrators who support queer youth and teachers in their schools. Queer people are battling for humanity and existence in schools, and understanding teacher burnout from a queer perspective poses incredible challenges.

**Chapter 7:** *Parallel Stories of Publicly Imagined and Personally Lived PE Teacher Identity Reconstruction in the Time of COVID-19*

Physical education is inseparable from physical movements, bodily dialog, close physical contact, and active, direct interactions between engaged individuals. Accordingly, PE teachers are experiencing diminished room to implement their pedagogical repertoires and, in turn, affecting their deconstruction and reconstruction of their teacher identities.

**Chapter 8:** *Multilevel Approaches to Mitigate Burnout in Education*

Approaching burnout and well-being from a multilevel perspective can rectify both direct and indirect causes of burnout, and a systematic approach is more likely to lead to meaningful, sustained change to better working conditions. Improving the US educational system in a postpandemic era will require concerted efforts to support the head, the heart, and the health of public education professionals.

**Chapter 9:** *Analyzing Teacher Burnout Through Principal Leadership Behaviors*

Hargreaves (2004) attributed the growing teacher burnout phenomenon to accountability pressures in the forms of high-stakes testing and increasing work demands. Administrative leadership can further inhibit a teacher's professional growth by failing to meet the teacher's needs with respect to instructional coaching and lacking opportunities for professional self-reflection.

**Chapter 10:** *Chocolates or Tissues: Mitigating Momentary Burnout*

Teacher burnout is a persistent challenge for school principals, complicated by the lack of a proven, repeatable strategy to mitigate burnout. Since burnout can vary in severity and frequency, principals can work to mitigate burnout in the moment, seizing the opportunity when burnout is first observed.

**Chapter 11:** *Identity Flux: Educator Narratives in the Face of Burnout*

This chapter uses narrative inquiry to tell the stories of two female neophyte educators experiencing the oppositional misalignment between their idealized perception of female teachers in American society and their reality. American teachers, especially women, are perceived as a homogeneous group that live to serve the children of others and inhabit a monochrome, two-dimensional, existence inside the educational landscape of schools.

**Chapter 12:** *When Passion Isn't Enough*

The narratives of burnout of women of color are critical for consumers of research to glean a deeper understanding of the intersectionality of sex and race in burnout research. The insurmountable pressure placed on teachers has led to a robust and persistent departure of the profession causing the entire education system to rethink the policies, structures, and systems that influence teacher burnout.

## REFERENCES

- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2–14.
- Craig, C., You, J., & Oh, S. (2017). Pedagogy through the pearl metaphor: Teaching as a process of ongoing refinement. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 49(6), 767–781.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). Keeping good teachers: Why it matters, what leaders can do. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 6–13.

- Gold, Y. (1985). Does teacher burnout begin with student teaching? *Education*, *105*, 254–257.
- Hanks, J. H., Ferrin, S. E., Davies, R. S., Christensen, S. S., Harris, S. P., & Bowles, W. B. (2020). Law and policy impacts on teacher attrition in public education: Data suggesting a new focus beyond silver bullets of targeted STEM and other salary increases. *Brigham Young University Education and Law Journal*, *2020*(2), 115–146.
- Hargreaves, A. (2004). Inclusive and exclusive educational change: Emotional responses of teachers and implications for leadership. *School Leadership & Management*, *24*(3), 287–309. doi:[10.1080/1363243042000266936](https://doi.org/10.1080/1363243042000266936)
- Hydon, S., Wong, M., Langley, A. K., Stein, B. D., & Kataoka, S. H. (2015). Preventing secondary traumatic stress in educators. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, *24*(2), 319–333. doi:[10.1016/j.chc.2014.11.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chc.2014.11.003)
- Ramos, G., & Hughes, T. (2020). Could more holistic policy addressing classroom discipline help mitigate teacher attrition? *JEP: eJournal of Education Policy*, *21*(1), 41–58. doi:[10.37803/ejepS2002](https://doi.org/10.37803/ejepS2002)
- Watts, W. D., & Short, A. P. (1990). Teacher drug use: A response to occupational stress. *Journal of Drug Education*, *20*, 47–65.
- Zysberg, L., Orenshtein, C., Gimmon, E., & Robinson, R. (2017). Emotional intelligence, personality, stress, and burnout among educators. *International Journal of Stress Management*, *24*(1), 122–136.

This page intentionally left blank

# RADICALLY HEALING OR BURNED OUT: EXPERIENCES AMONG BLACK TEACHERS

John A. Williams III, Maiya Turner, Alexes Terry,  
DaJuana C. Fontenot and Sonyia C. Richardson

## ABSTRACT

*The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic certainly exacerbated the teacher shortage in the United States for all racial/ethnic groups, but especially for Black teachers. Black teachers account for 7–8% of the total teacher population and this percentage is the direct result of decades of systemic and structural barriers set against Black teachers in the form of racism. Still, Black teachers who enter the profession do so with the willingness to support all students and uplift Black students who often go years without seeing a teacher that looks like them. Black teachers often face different expectations than their white counterparts and these expectations, without the proper support, lead to Black teachers burning out at higher rates. In an effort to understand Black teachers' and the experiences that contribute them remaining in the classroom, the researchers explored Black teachers' working conditions through a phenomenological approach. The findings of this study suggest that Black teachers deserve working conditions that nurture who they are culturally and professionally, that reject actions of oppression toward them – both implicitly and explicitly, and offer spaces for Black teachers to be authentically heard.*

**Keywords:** Black teachers; COVID-19; teacher burnout; Black teacher burnout; discriminatory practices; working conditions

---

Drawn to the Flame

Advances in Research on Teaching, Volume 45, 7–25

Copyright © 2023 John A. Williams III, Maiya Turner, Alexes Terry, DaJuana C. Fontenot and Sonyia C. Richardson

Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited

ISSN: 1479-3687/doi:10.1108/S1479-368720230000045002

Every time I try to leave, something keeps pulling me back. –Howard Earl Bailey Jr.

For several decades, the US teaching profession and teacher preparation programs have struggled mightily to recruit and retain highly qualified and highly effective Black teachers for PK-12 positions (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Farinde-Wu, Butler, & Allen-Handy, 2020; Gershenson, Hansen, & Lindsay, 2021; Gist & Bristol, 2022; Ladson-Billings & Anderson, 2021; Williams & Lewis, 2020). The disappearance of Black teachers from PK-12 classrooms is the result of discriminatory practices and policies that emerged immediately following the decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 (Madkins, 2011; Williams, Davis, & Butler, 2020). Although separate but equal was eliminated legally, de facto segregation still permeated how schools, school districts, and states forced Black teachers either out of the profession entirely or into menial positions (Irvine & Irvine, 2007). For example, literature highlights how busing, hiring practices, redistricting, hostile work environments, and districts' commitment to affirm unqualified White teachers at the expense of qualified Black teachers all contributed to the erasure of Black teachers (Ladson-Billings & Anderson, 2021; Madkins, 2011). The overarching response to *Brown* was to get it done, not to ensure that integration was accomplished effectively and efficiently for Black and Brown students (Heller, 2019). The catastrophic effects on the number of Black teachers in the classroom remain evident. The US Department of Education (2020) recognizes that only 2% of the teaching workforce are Black men and 6% are Black women. Given these alarming statistics, various stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels have actively pursued avenues to increase the number of Black preservice teachers entering the workforce and supporting Black in-service teachers to help them remain in the profession (Gist & Bristol, 2022). While efforts to improve these deplorable statistics have promised some change (e.g., Black male teachers increased from 1% to 2% in the last 10 years), progress can be fleeting despite meritorious efforts.

Recently, the world experienced a catastrophic pandemic known as COVID-19. COVID-19 exacerbated a number of already debilitating challenges occurring in PK-12 learning environments, such as the lack of funding and resources (Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf, & Spencer, 2011), outdated and culturally unresponsive curriculum (Martin, 2022), overcrowded classrooms (Verstegen, 2016), inefficient learning technology (Harrell & Bynum, 2018; Purcell, Heaps, Buchanan, & Friedrich, 2013), and overworked teachers (Pressley, 2021). In the midst of this chaos exist teachers, many of whom were already showcasing signs of burning out (Learning Policy Institute, 2018). What is of particular importance is that the signs of burning out for teachers can appear differently based on the gender and racial/ethnic demographic makeup of teachers (Ails, 2022). For Black teachers, the toll of the challenges is multiplied by the often emotionally and racially/culturally demanding environments in which they teach. Literature denotes that they are often required to experience episodic acts of oppression through structural, systemic, and personalized racism in the teaching profession. Still, many Black teachers remain in the teaching