EXPLORING TEACHER WELL-BEING THROUGH COMPASSION: A CASE STUDY ON HOW

ORGANIZATIONS CAN SUPPORT TEACHERS' WELL-BEING

By

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ABSTRACT

This mixed methods case study examined teachers' levels of Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue, or the combination of Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress, and strove to understand how teachers experience these phenomena and what supports could be used to alleviate some of the harmful symptoms of Compassion Fatigue. For this study, I used a Healing Centered Approach and the Compassion Fatigue Theoretical Model to develop a plan to help elevate teacher voice in order to help teachers maintain their well-being and center their humanity. This study also involved two phases that were unsuccessful, and the lessons learned from why they were unsuccessful were added to the findings. I reviewed previous literature around Compassion Fatigue and Satisfaction, though most of the work centered around caregivers in the medical profession, workplace well-being, school well-being, and context specific efforts in the District of Columbia Public Schools system that involved teacher and staff well-being. Though the originally intended intervention did not happen, the final research design produced findings around the importance of qualitative research in understanding well-being and Compassion Fatigue and Satisfaction, suggestions for schools and districts to support teacher well-being, and the effect the pandemic has had, directly on teachers and indirectly through the pandemic's effects on their students.

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INTRODUCTION

This research comes out of necessity: a necessity for teachers, including myself, to make sense of the effects the last few years have had on our well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic had devastating effects - sickness, death, social isolation - and has caused many drastic changes since its beginning in March of 2020. The significance of this period is especially important, as the pandemic presented new challenges, although it mostly exacerbated existing systemic problems. The effects of teachers working virtually for a full year and students learning virtually for a full year have yet to be fully understood, not only in regard to academic and instructional outcomes but also social and emotional effects. As a deeply personal investigation, as I was a teacher while doing this dissertation, this research sought to understand teachers' well-being through the lens of compassion and by utilizing a Healing Centered Approach.

Compassion and care for students is a large part of what keeps teachers motivated; it can be difficult to maintain in some environments. The Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) involves three measures, Compassion Satisfaction (CS), Burnout (BO), and Secondary Stress (STS), the combination of the latter two known as Compassion Fatigue (CF). Because of the nature of the caring relationship between teacher and student, the ProQOL was a helpful tool in attempting to separate some of the student-specific Secondary Traumatic Stress teachers were experiencing from the gradual process of Burnout.

Originally designed to be a combination of Design Thinking and Participatory Action Research, the process of this dissertation included two attempts to gather data and involve teachers in Participatory Action Research, but both of these attempts failed. The first one did not have enough participants, and I surmised that the burden of doing a long survey and volunteering teachers' time was too much. The second attempt was tied up in bureaucratic barriers which

caused the funding for the project to not be released in time. Finally, I had to make the decision to do this study at my school of employment, embracing the connections that I already had at the school and the knowledge I had of the structures. Doing this dissertation at my own school allowed me to step into my power as a researcher and advocate for change for teachers.

This case study was designed to specifically reflect the context of the current environment, in regard to time and place. The research design began with a survey sent through Qualtrics, which involved demographic questions, the ProQOL measure, and an open-ended question regarding the supports teachers received to maintain their well-being. The next step was to interview myself with my interview protocol and then interview two teachers who had volunteered. I ended up with 20 completed surveys, 16 responses to the survey question, and three interviews, and those were the three datasets used.

The next step was a process of mixed methods analysis, and the data analysis centered around the research questions:

RQ 1: What supports have you received that help you to maintain your well-being?

RQ 1a: As one indicator of well-being, what contributes to the current levels of teachers' Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue?

RQ 1b: How do the different aspects of one's identity affect a teacher's perception of well-being?

RQ2: How can talking about well-being contribute to teachers' experiences of well-being?

These questions allowed me to integrate Dr. Ginwright's work involving a Healing Centered Approach to social justice and education. Dr. Ginwright writes of the importance of collective care saying "Our movements for justice are fundamentally about how we collectively

have concern and empathy for one another" (S. A. Ginwright, 2022, p. 319). Part of collective care is the exploration of institutional care and in this work, I explore how teachers are cared for by schools.

There were significant findings in this research, and this research presented findings that need to be further explored. For RQ 1, the teachers surveyed identified a range of supports and a lack of support that existed in their school. Next, for RQs 1a and b, examining Compassion Fatigue and Satisfaction in regards to the ProQOL levels and then triangulating that with the survey responses and the interviews, revealed trends across racial identity, such as higher levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress for Black identifying teachers, higher levels of Burnout for White identifying teachers, higher numbers of Black identifying teachers reporting Higher Compassion Satisfaction, and a lack of community or coworker support for teachers identifying as Black and African American. Since the interviewees identified as White and Black or African American, and since those were the most represented groups within the participants, much of the analysis looks at trends within those groups.

After the analysis, I proceeded to the implications for this research. The first implication was that teachers have been affected by the pandemic, both through their own experiences and through the effect the pandemic has had on their students. The next implication was that experiences of Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue vary among teachers, and trends should be further explored through qualitative methods. By allowing teachers to elaborate on their levels of CS and CF, I was able to gain a deeper understanding and clearer picture of their experiences. Another implication was that workspace flexibility may help support teachers' well-being; that information surfaced through mentions of breaks and days off, and because of

how the pandemic has affected the work landscape. These implications spanned from the school of study to the district, and to the educational community at large.

This dissertation was also a deeply personal experience for the researcher, as I was studying teacher well-being at a time when I was a teacher and knew that I would be resigning at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. Through reflexivity memos, member checks, an iterative process, and time spent on care for myself and processing, I was able to complete this work with new perspectives and understandings. I use first person throughout this dissertation because of the deep connection I have to this work.

CHAPTER I: PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Going into the 2021-2022 school year, school and district leaders in District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) encouraged teachers to put their own metaphorical masks on first, or, in other words, take care of themselves before they take care of their students. School leaders knew that the COVID-19 pandemic had taken a toll on people's health and had exacerbated mental health concerns, introducing social isolation and elevated stress levels causing 4 in 10 adults to report symptoms of depression or anxiety disorders (DC Policy Center, 2021; Panchal et al., 2021). In his email to teachers at the beginning of this "unprecedented" school year, the Chancellor of District of Columbia Public Schools said, "I recognize that this school year, with many of our students returning to the classroom for the first time since the start of the pandemic, our families have additional questions, and so might you" (L. Ferrebee, personal communication, August 26, 2021), as he also sent reminders of the policies that were ever-changing throughout the year. As I read that email, a question formed and has stayed with me since that day: How do schools support teachers' well-being, and are well-being supports accessible to all teachers? That question has led the inquiry of this dissertation.

When teachers are unable to care for themselves, they negatively impact their students' social and academic gains (McLean & Connor, 2015; Zinsser et al., 2016), and many students are already behind in these areas because of the pandemic's interruption in their schooling (DC Policy Center, 2022). The need for teachers to put their own masks on first is crucial if they are to be at their best in supporting students. In the following section, I will identify the problem to be addressed within this dissertation, providing relevant definitions and context.

Defining Well-being and Teacher Well-being

Beginning with definitions, well-being, or wellness, as defined by the fields of health and psychology, is broken down into two overall categories:

- Objective well-being: Quantifiable measures of achievement such as safe neighborhoods, higher educational attainment, or economic sufficiency and stability

- Subjective well-being: Based on an individual's own cognitive judgments and affective reactions to their own life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999; Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness, 2017)

Often described as judging life positively and feeling good, including physical health, mental health, and outlook (American Psychological Association, 2007; *Well-Being Concepts | HRQOL | CDC*, 2018), the research on well-being in the organizational and work setting also considers how an individual is related to the larger system, such as a teacher to the whole school or district, acknowledging both a psychological and social component of well-being (Fox et al., 2020; Song et al., 2020). In this way, teachers' well-being is defined as a teacher's own judgment and affect towards their own life and satisfaction, as influenced by their school.

These definitions provide a baseline for how well-being is defined, but I turn to antiracist scholar-activists Dr. Bettina Love and Dr. Shawn Ginwright to provide a better description of teacher well-being, based on healing, hope, and humanity. Scholar-activist, Dr. Shawn Ginwright, advocates for healing and hope to be at the center of political and educational policies, and in order to repair the damage done to systematically underserved communities by systemic oppression, healing, defined as a "process for restoring individuals and communities back to optimal health" (S. Ginwright, 2016, pp. 37–38), must occur. Ginwright stresses the importance of hope and agency as components of well-being and explains it as an active set of

practices that will sustain, maintain, and expand a person and their community's health and hope (S. Ginwright, 2016) . Going even further to connect this definition to the field of education is Dr. Bettina Love, who wrote in her 2019 book, *We want to do More than Survive,* that wellness and well-being are a part of social justice work for teachers, aiding teachers in the fight against racism by arming them with love, grace, and compassion (Love, 2019). Adding healing, hope, and humanity allows for a broader understanding of how a teacher can sustain, maintain, and expand their well-being practices and grounds the definition in antiracism. In conclusion, these are the definitions I use in this study:

> **Well-being:** An individual's sense of sustainable hope, maintained by a set of community healing practices that help individuals acknowledge the humanity in themselves and others.

> **Teacher well-being:** A teacher's sense of sustainable hope, maintained by a set of community healing practices that help teachers acknowledge the humanity in themselves, their students, the families of their students, and their colleagues.

Well-being through Compassion

There are many different ways to measure well-being, but the measures of the Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) are the most relevant to the teaching profession. Teachers do take on caregiving roles, especially in elementary school, as they are with their students for a significant amount of time and are tasked with their learning and development. Beginning this dissertation journey with interviews and conversations with teachers, I started to realize that the student-teacher relationship is the center of this job, and that can be the reason teachers stay and, also, contribute to why they leave. The ProQOL measures three things, which I will talk more about in the Knowledge Review section, but I want to outline the definitions

here, as they will help to understand the problem better. The following definitions are from the

ProQOL and adapted for the teaching profession:

Compassion Satisfaction - Positive feelings about one's ability to help another person;

in this case, positive feelings a teacher experiences in being to help their student.

Secondary Traumatic Stress - Work related exposure to someone who has experienced

a traumatic event; may include sleep deprivation, intrusive images, and avoiding

reminders of the person's traumatic experience.

Burnout - Gradual feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or

doing your job effectively.

Compassion Fatigue - Breaks into two parts: Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress;

some trauma at work can be direct (primary) trauma and work-related trauma can be a

combination of both primary and secondary trauma, and both contribute to Compassion

Fatigue in different ways.

Urgency

The prevalence of student trauma right now is unprecedented and occurs more frequently

in marginalized communities because of systemic harm and inequitable conditions. Before the

COVID-19 pandemic, 59 percent of Black students and 39 percent of Latinx students reported

experiencing at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE), such as community violence,

abuse, neglect, and household challenges, compared to 17 percent of White students (Bradford,

2021; Coffin & Meghani, 2021); in 2018, 1 in 3 Black children reported 2 or more ACEs

(Bowman, 2018). COVID-19 led to the loss of jobs, family members, and socialization with

peers, making the ACE baseline for many students significantly higher. Regions of the city with

more Black and Latinx residents saw the highest increases in their unemployment rate because of

the pandemic, especially those who worked in the hospitality sector, as those were the businesses that stayed closed during quarantine (Taylor, 2020). A significant study about the Latinx community found that the pandemic exacerbated childhood adversity and toxic stress and disproportionately harmed this community (Claypool & Moore de Peralta, 2021). These conditions existed prior to the pandemic, but the pandemic certainly exacerbated them and disproportionately affected those that were already vulnerable.

The pandemic caused a traumatic shift for communities as they were cut off from supports provided by schools; that effect was felt by both students and teachers. The 2020-2021 DC School Board of Education Report of the Student Advisory Committee found that mental health was a concern for many students due to loneliness, family issues, heightened anxiety, technology troubles, and excessive workload, and though students mostly reported feeling fine and generally happy, though not always asking for help when they needed it, most families expressed concerns about the isolation and anxiety the pandemic caused for their children (DC Policy Center, 2022). Added to that, violent crimes and deaths increased sharply across DC, and witnessing or being a victim to a crime and grieving a loss are considered ACEs, which students bring with them to their learning environment. Though some teachers reported receiving resources such as teachers' support groups, flexible scheduling, and professional development around students' social and emotional wellness and their own well-being (DC Policy Center, 2022, p. 43), that experience was not the same for every teacher, and many teachers realized more support was needed. The shared trauma of a pandemic and virtual schooling contributed to a unique context to be explored, as these factors colored how teachers experience well-being.

Because of the stress teachers experienced, burnout rates are high, which caused, and will continue to cause, many teachers to leave the profession. The National Education Association

(NEA), the nation's largest teachers' union representing nearly 3 million educators, released a survey that revealed 55 percent of educators indicate they are ready to leave the profession, and these numbers are even higher in Black (62%) and Latinx (59%) educators who are systematically underrepresented in the teacher profession (Jotkoff, 2022). There are now 567,000 fewer educators in America's public schools than before the pandemic. According to the NEA (2022), around 90 percent of teachers believe that feeling burned out and pandemic-related stress are serious problems for educators, and teachers voted in favor of raising salaries, offering mental health support for their students, and hiring more teachers or support staff, to help alleviate some of this stress. Examples of pandemic-related stress include having to cover for other staff members who are out because of COVID-19, managing new and changing policies for masking or quarantining, and dealing with students' COVID-19 related absences. It can be concluded based on these data that these new responsibilities and ever-changing policies have added stress to an already stressful job, and as teachers try to advocate for their students' mental health, they often overlook the need to address their own, leading to a pile-up of stress that becomes burnout. Without policies and practices for healing, systematically underrepresented teachers and their needs will continue to be overlooked, and more teachers will continue to leave the profession.

Problem Statement

As students bring their current realities into the classroom, teachers are tasked with the job of helping them navigate, but if they are unable to care for themselves, their ability to care for their students becomes compromised. Though school and district leaders acknowledge that teacher well-being is crucial, the inclusivity of well-being opportunities offered to teachers and improvement plans for well-being programming are lacking. Without supportive and inclusive

well-being policies and practices and after repeated exposure to and caregiving for students who have experienced trauma, teachers will begin to experience higher levels of Compassion Fatigue, which can lead to burnout, stress, and negative effects to both their mental and physical health, causing teachers to leave the profession. The exclusion of teachers in the development of well-being policies and programming in schools has resulted in failed attempts and poorly executed measures, contributing to this problem.

The 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years were completely unprecedented and full of unknowns as the entire world worked to live through the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers experienced the loss of knowing how to best do their job. The DC Policy Center releases a *State of DC Schools* each year and recently released their report on the 2020-2021 school year (State of DC Schools, 2022), in hopes of capturing the experiences of different stakeholders within the district's school system. In focus groups of teachers conducted by the DC Policy Center, teachers explained their lack of preparation for the virtual setting, especially since the district kept delaying making any official decisions, and the difficulties of adapting teaching materials and curriculum, which often had them feeling less effective. Many teachers felt they were being asked to do too much, especially in regard to communication with students and parents, and they were not given enough flexibility in the virtual context, leading to a general decline in job satisfaction, lower morale, and higher stress levels; these trends align with the national trends in regard to COVID-19 related stressors. The stress of the first year of the pandemic, paired with new stressors the second year of the pandemic, such as ever changing policies related to the pandemic and excessive numbers of students missing school because of sickness or quarantine, has changed some of the essential duties of the teaching profession, which may push even more teachers to leave.

Positionality

My own firsthand experience with Compassion Fatigue as a teacher, along with watching colleagues experience the same thing, is a major reason why I conducted this study. During my first year of teaching, I entered a program that placed me at a school where many of the students had experienced or were experiencing varying levels of trauma and traumatic stress, resulting from things such as food insecurity, abuse from a parent, homelessness, or being in foster care, and of the 33 students in the class, 32 were Black. The school had a strict, no-nonsense style of discipline, and I spent my days constantly telling the students in my classroom that they were doing things wrong, by not folding their hands, staying still, remaining silent at lunch, or walking with their hands by their sides. I witnessed the natural joy they showed when they were learning wash away with the punitive measures that I, as their teacher, had to uphold. Many of their behaviors were direct results of the trauma they experienced; expecting them to comply with rules that made no difference to their learning was an example of yet another system that set up historically underserved students for failure. Taking away so many students' joy was in direct conflict with my own values; the punitive school measures triggered my own depression and that downward spiral led me to finish only one school year before seeking out another school that would allow students creativity, joy, and freedom, while upholding routines so students can feel safe. Though my teaching program prepared me to skillfully deliver content and thoughtfully plan lessons, it did not prepare me for Compassion Fatigue, how to recognize this phenomenon inside myself, or how to alleviate the symptoms. I am still a teacher, and I have the privilege of experiencing firsthand the love and joy that comes from a strong relationship with a student. When I have the time, capacity, and resources to provide for students and for myself, though not

every moment is easy, it is extremely rewarding and gratifying to build that resilience and power that comes from working together.

Being a White woman and teaching students who do not look like me, I am extremely aware of my positionality and how I can create inclusive spaces. When I was a student in school, some of my earliest memories involve being bullied or teased because of my lower socioeconomic status; therefore, I have a deeply ingrained desire to disrupt that experience for any student whose identity is not accepted in their education space. This part of my identity fuels me to do this work and is why I am deeply committed to it and I have learned that prioritizing my well-being allows me to raise my own awareness of the effect my own identity can have on my students' lives, which is essential to creating inclusive spaces. I also recognize that my White skin has afforded me unearned power and privilege, and the power balance between researcher and participant can be impossible to properly balance. Though I am taking actions to try and eliminate the power structures of traditional research, I recognize that my race and researcher status position me as an outsider. By being intentional, honest, and transparent in all communication, I have worked to gain trust with this community, and I acknowledge the power dynamics that exist in an effort to alleviate them as much as I can.

Conclusion

The 2021-2022 school year was challenging, new, and exhausting, and if something is not done to intervene, teachers will continue to leave the profession. The pandemic caused unforeseen challenges and took a toll on most people's health, adults and children alike, mentally and physically. Teachers should be afforded the resources and environment for healing, especially in a district that promotes antiracism, so they can be the best for their students and for one another.

CHAPTER II: KNOWLEDGE REVIEW

This Knowledge Review consists of a broad overview of existing concepts and literature, mixed with practitioner experience. I first take a broad look at existing research on well-being, occupational well-being, and teacher well-being, while also narrowing in on the challenges, opportunities, and characteristics of the pandemic period in Washington, DC. Next, Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue are explored, mostly within the medical and psychology fields, centering on the experiences of nurses, medical students, and mental health professionals. At the end of that section, I discuss existing interventions and their successes. In each section, these phenomena are strengthened and made relevant through interviews with colleagues and practitioners, coupled with my own experience as a teacher during this period.

Aspects of Well-being

The term "well-being" has no single definition because of the many different aspects of one's life that it can encompass. Whether it is judging life positively, feeling satisfied with one's life, or simply feeling good, the term encompasses a range of disciplines, such as:

- Physical well-being

- Economic well-being

- Social well-being

- Development and activity

- Emotional well-being

- Psychological well-being

- Life satisfaction

- Domain specific satisfaction

- Engaging activities and work (*Well-Being Concepts | HRQOL | CDC*, 2018)

As noted on the table below (Diener et al., 1999), positive effects include joy, elation, contentment, and happiness, compared with unpleasant affects such as guilt, shame, sadness, depression, and stress. Stress is something that teachers often mention; it will be discussed further in following sections. Well-being also happens across different domains of one's life, and those different domains can have an impact on one another. For example, if one is stressed about something within their family, that stress could have an impact on one's work performance.

Figure 2.1

Components of Subjective Well-being

Pleasant affect	Unpleasant affect	Life satisfaction	Domain satisfactions
Joy	Guilt and shame	Desire to change life	Work
Elation	Sadness	Satisfaction with current life	Family
Contentment	Anxiety and worry		Leisure
Pride	Anger	Satisfaction with past	Health
Affection	Stress	Satisfaction with future	Finances
Happiness	Depression	Significant others' views of one's life	Self
Ecstasy	Envy		One's group

As mentioned earlier, there are some objective ways to measure well-being, such as household income, unemployment levels, health-related data, neighborhood crime, as well as subjective measures, which typically involve self-reporting. Including both objective and subjective well-being data helps strengthen policy changes.

Workplace well-being

Workplace well-being is extremely important, as it leads to employee retention and better employee performance. Many different understandings of workplace, organizational, or

occupational well-being exist, but in general, workplace well-being relates to all aspects of one's work life, from the quality and safety of the physical environment, to how employees feel about their work and environment, and the culture and climate of the organization ("Occupational Wellness | Health and Wellness | Washington State University," n.d.; *Workplace Well-Being*, 2009; Saraswati et al., 2019). Identity and belonging is a large part of environmental well-being, and creating environments that promote equity and inclusion (Winters, 2020) is extremely important, as employees who feel included are more productive and more likely to stay at their current workplace. Much like well-being in general, there are many different aspects and factors to consider and measure, but it is agreed that better organizational well-being leads to better productivity, performance, and retention.

The pandemic caused a shift in how workplaces view well-being, recognizing the need for flexibility in the work environment. Many workplaces, including schools, were forced to go virtual for some time, creating a new model that blurred the lines between work and home because of remote working. Instead of merely thinking about job satisfaction, "today, employee well-being has expanded beyond physical well-being to focus on building a culture of holistic well-being including physical, emotional, financial, social, career, community, and purpose. At the heart of this is the growing need for flexibility in where, when, and how employees work" (Meister, 2021). In response to the pandemic, workplace leaders have expanded well-being opportunities offered to their employees to include workplace flexibility (especially because of the safety concerns of the pandemic), free online counseling sessions, trainings for leaders on empathic leadership, delegating time in work day to non-work activities, and counseling or meditation apps (Jack, 2022; Meister, 2021). Instead of seeing workplace well-being as an

unnecessary add-on, leaders are working to create environments where wellness opportunities are responsive to the needs of the employees to promote their performance and retention.

Addressing workplace stress can have many benefits for a company, including productivity and financial gains. The amount of money that companies would need to spend if their employees are unwell far outweighs the cost of providing programming and opportunities for employees to maintain well-being. Chronically stressed employees can cause a company to incur healthcare costs and decrease productivity.

Responsibility of leaders

Though well-being does happen on an individual level, the responsibility of work leaders to create environments that help their employees to sustain their well-being can have a massive impact on productivity, retention, and performance. Leadership has been cited as a key lever to catalyzing employee resilience, performance, and retention, and Gallup found that leaders who communicate effectively with their employees are more likely to feel safe and cared for (Gallup, 2021). Creating environments that thrive requires leadership that can orchestrate multiple stakeholders' priorities and can acknowledge past harm while allowing opportunities for growth and change (Heifetz, 2009).

When leaders are not making decisions that benefit all employees take a top-down approach without considering, acknowledging, or empathizing with employees' experiences, challenges will occur. When leaders assume they know what is best for all employees, especially those from holistically underserved communities, they are perpetuating inequity and creating an unstable and unwelcoming work environment (Winters, 2020). Without inclusion when creating policies, White Supremacy continues to thrive in work environments, pushing out employees of color or requiring them to assimilate to the dominant culture (Goger & Ford, 2021). A recent

survey in DCPS revealed that a higher percentage of Black and Latinx educators than White teachers said they were ready 7/26/22 10:40:00 AMto leave the profession; opportunities for diverse input on workplace policies must be created (Jotkoff, 2020).

Teacher well-being

Objective measures of teacher well-being include retention rates, the tracking of employees' days off, and insurance claims and data. Many teachers cite burnout as a main reason for leaving the profession, (Alisic et al., 2012; Fox et al., 2020; Lambert & McCarthy, 2006), and the pandemic is causing teachers to leave at an alarming rate (Henry, 2021; Jotkoff, 2022). When I spoke to the Wellness Coordinator at Montgomery County Public Schools, she mentioned that the most drastic change and the highest number of insurance claims comes from an increased demand for mental health services such as behavioral health, medication, and therapy (L. Cooperstein, personal communication, September 30, 2021). This data serves as one way to objectively quantify well-being for schools, though the only demographic factor Montgomery County had available for analysis was age. Taking the time to aggregate the data by demographic or community characteristics could help to identify trends and opportunities for access and improvement.

Teaching can be a stressful job, and the mental, physical, and emotional toll that stress takes is a reason why many teachers leave. Workload and stress are consistently cited as reasons that teachers experience Burnout or leave the profession (Alisic et al., 2012; Fox et al., 2020; Lambert & McCarthy, 2006), and the policies added during the pandemic, though sometimes necessary for health and wellness, added to these experiences for teachers. For example, when teachers take days off, the workload increases for the teachers in the building, which can cause stress; the pandemic resulted in teachers taking more days off than in a normal year due to illness

or close contacts (Jotkoff, 2022). Policies put in place because of the pandemic regarding teachers who tested positive for COVID-19 or who were exposed to or in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, had to quarantine anywhere between 5-7 days at different points in the year, depending on new and updating information from the Center for Disease Control and DCPS. These absences put more responsibilities and burdens on the teachers who remained in the building. For example, in February, instead of providing academic services for my assigned students, I was asked to cover a different classroom, which meant I experienced the stress of teaching students I had never met while also not providing services to the students I regularly taught. The stress of the 2021-2022 school year was unlike any other, and without teacher input when updating those policies, teacher burnout will continue to worsen.

DCPS Wellness Policy

DCPS's Wellness Policy (DCPS Office of Equity, 2017) does include specific language around staff well-being and the benefits of its staff achieving optimal health. Through partnering with DC Department of Human Resources (DCHR), the policy includes implementing and promoting workplace wellness programs such as wellness opportunities and fitness events, fitness and wellness discounts, and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), a voluntary program that offers free and confidential assessments, short term counseling, and referrals and follow up services to employees who have personal or work-related problems. The policy states "All staff will be encouraged to promote a healthy school environment by modeling healthy behaviors throughout the school day," and annual professional learning opportunities for staff to increase their health and nutrition knowledge will be offered by DCPS, centering the learning around connections between academics and health (DCPS Office of Equity, 2017, p. 25).

More recent District-wide Educator Wellness Initiatives

In 2010, DCPS began efforts to respond to the high amounts of student trauma, by adopting Trauma-Focused Evidence-Based Treatments, which later transformed into the Trauma Responsive Schools Model. In partnership with a nonprofit called Turnaround for Children, DCPS expanded their initiatives in a number of ways, including the openings of the Office of Learning Sciences and the Office of Trauma Responsive Schools Initiatives in 2020.

Though much of the literature on trauma talks about negative effects, there is also literature that seeks to help us understand how strong relationships, maintaining routines, and learning resilience can help people change and disrupt the neural pathways that trauma creates. DCPS and Turnaround for Children (Turnaround) began to target high needs schools. Turnaround, dedicated to connecting the dots between science, adversity, and school performance, introduced the idea of the 3 R's (routines, relationships, and resilience), explaining about each (Cantor & Felsen, 2020):

- Relationships are the "active ingredient" in any environment – classrooms included – because they boost oxytocin – the love/trust hormone – and activate the learning centers of the brain.

- Routines are something we have some control over in this uncertain time and can make our home environments feel safer and calmer.

- Building resilience is likely the most important task we have, for ourselves and our kids. Tt starts with knowing the strengths we already have from our life experiences and bolstering the skills and mindsets we possess to regulate our emotions, our actions, our behavior.

The partnership with Turnaround began as an effort to target certain schools but was expanded to the entire district, specifically when the pandemic began and interrupted the 2019-2020 school year. Their work has helped educators understand the neuroscience of trauma and best practices to help their students be engaged and access learning content.

This initiative includes healing language and identifies the need to prioritize educator wellness. The Trauma Responsive Schools Initiative included four components, one of which is "Healing Centered Treatments and Educational Practices," which aims to "make adequate supports available and easily accessible to students, families, and staff" (DCPS, 2021). A working group led by the School Mental Health Team gathered in 2018 and laid out five non-negotiables healing centered practices:

1. Every teacher spends dedicated time with their classroom or homeroom students to build relational trust.

2. Every student is greeted with positive and affirmative language daily and with each classroom transition.

3. Every school teaches, models, and reinforces school-wide behavior expectations for students and adults.

4. Every school provides opportunities and a designated space to practice emotional regulation.

5. Every school should include opportunities for staff wellness.

Every teacher was required to virtually attend a professional development session that laid out these practices at the beginning of the year, and some initiatives were enacted to enforce the last practice regarding staff wellness.

These Trauma-Responsive Non-Negotiables were incorporated into the Office of Trauma Responsive Schools Initiative, which made some efforts to support educator wellness. This Office hosted an event in 2022?? called the RecoverMe plenary, an Educator Wellness Summit that centered around the *8 Dimensions of Wellness* as defined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA): emotional, spiritual, social, occupational, financial, environmental, physical, and intellectual (SAMHSA, 2016). The one-day event featured a speaker and breakout sessions and different options for teachers to participate in for the day. This event was a responsive and inclusive idea; if more events like this were created for educators, even at the school level as opposed to the district level, similar to LHS's A Time to Heal, which will be discussed further in a later chapter, then teachers would have another source of support.

The district also created the DC Educator Wellness Center, and in a press release by the Washington Teachers Union, they explained:

> In the **DC Educator Wellness Center** DC Educators will find access to a prevention-forward, self-guided, digital microlearning experience designed to provide you with on-demand content related to mental health. The growing list of topics includes Mental Health Basics, Managing Mental Health Challenges, Developing Resilience, Supporting Loved Ones With Mental Health Challenges, and Mindful Living. (Washington Teachers Union, 2021)

I wonder how many teachers are aware and are using this resource to support their wellness, but to know it is available could be a helpful connection.

Another opportunity was on the third quarter's staff professional development day, when DCPS offered a wellness session for teachers. However, instead of making it part of the regular

programming, it was during the lunch break and was optional. This was frustrating for me and I

posted on Twitter. I was reTweeted by 13 people and received 58 Likes:

Figure 2.2

Researcher Tweet
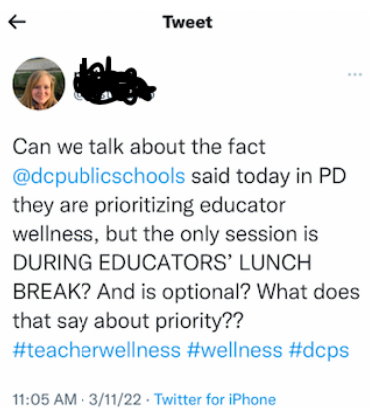
Never having been retweeted so many times or received so many Likes, I felt connected to many

teachers, as their Likes meant they supported what I said, and their reTweets showed an even

stronger show of support and connection.

Well-being as a function of social justice

> When talking about health disparities in the District, the narrative is usually the same:
> African American residents in Wards 7 and 8 are either at risk or are greatly impacted by
> illnesses such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity, kidney disease and cases of sexually
> transmitted diseases. These disparities are so well-known, they aren't even newsworthy
> any more; it's almost as if we can no longer see them. (T. E. Brown, 2017)

> The DC Policy Center published this article in 2017 to highlight the health disparities in

Washington, DC, specifically in the Black community. African American residents, who

accounted for around 46 percent of DC's population were six times more likely than White

residents to die from diabetes-related complications and twice as likely to die from coronary

heart disease. Because of consistently unaddressed systemic issues, Black and Latinx residents are more likely to be exposed to pollutants and experience more stresses caused by poverty and crime (Sheehan & Geyn, 2021). The need for access to healthcare is crucial, and as these communities continue to be underserved, the harm continues to grow. Barriers to well-being are not easily explained, but many have to do with systemic harm that has not been addressed. While over 97 percent of White DC residents and 94 percent of Black residents are insured, only 87 percent of Latinx residents have health insurance (Sheehan & Geyn, 2021); healthcare is unsustainably expensive without insurance. Though many DC residents do have insurance, often overlooked is the historical mistrust that systematically underserved communities have for the medical system (López-Cevallos et al., 2014; Sheehan & Geyn, 2021), and the experiences of discrimination from healthcare providers leads to mistrust and dissatisfaction with healthcare. The inequitable access to healthcare causes significant barriers to well-being for those who have been historically marginalized.

The definition of well-being for this dissertation includes life satisfaction and a sense of hope for the future, which requires societal and systemic changes. Dr. Isaac Prilleltensky theorizes that well-being is a function of social conditions, and we need social action and social justice to promote wellness in society, and "social justice reminds us that for individuals to experience personal wellness there has to be collective wellness and a fair allocation of resources in society" (Benhabib, 1996). Though barriers exist for communities of color, social justice work and activism can be achieved through increasing access and opportunities to strengthen individual and collective well-being.

Why Teachers Stay: The importance of the teacher-student relationship

The role that a teacher plays in the ecosystem of a school is vital to its ability to thrive. Teachers are the people that students see every day, who become involved in their lives, and who are tasked with creating a safe place where students can not only receive academic learning but also gain social skills and begin to build their own identities. Teachers are on the front lines to disrupt racism and inequities in their classrooms and across their school, and they have the opportunity to engage in and build antiracist, equitable, and inclusive spaces and practice (Love, 2019). Enhancing the idea of "banking" knowledge, which describes how teachers merely invest their knowledge into their students, seeing students as merely containers or accounts to hold the information, teachers often take on caregiver roles in the lives of their students (Freire, 2014), inspiring trust and inquiry as they learn together.

Centering well-being helps teachers to create more antiracist environments and allows their students a better chance at building their own well-being practices. For example, a study which surveyed more than 3,000 students ages 12–13 and more than 1,100 teachers, found that better teacher well-being is associated with better student well-being and with lower student psychological difficulties (Laskowski, 2020). Having meaningful relationships with teachers can further impact students' social-emotional abilities and can be an indicator of adjustment; students need teachers who can model proper ways to respond to situations (Davis, 2003; Denham et al., 2017). Davis (2003) states, "Central to attachment perspectives on student–teacher relationships is the belief that students bring to the classroom relational schemas, or models, about the nature of social relationships and their social world" (p. 209). Teachers must be prepared and able to accept and interact with the realities their students bring if they wish to build an accepting and

antiracist environment for their students. Both teachers and students deserve spaces where healing can occur, and centering well-being can be a part of that.

The value of centering teacher well-being as opposed to student well-being

Considering the prevalence of trauma that students have experienced, many schools have adopted trauma-informed policies for teaching and providing support for their students, but this dissertation focuses on addressing and elevating teachers' experiences and voices. If students are experiencing trauma and bring that to the classroom, teachers must be equipped to handle those experiences in ways that maintain their humanity and their students' humanity. When thinking about how to take away the burden from students and how to equip teachers with tools and skills, the school at which I was employed during this dissertation, adopted Conscious Discipline, a method and approach that focuses on adult behaviors and mindsets, to help adults be conscious of how their choices impact their students (M. Kennard, personal communication, 2021). Simply teaching students resilience and grit is not enough to combat the bias that teachers hold and a system that is not always created for their success.

Compassion Satisfaction

A healthy and caring student-teacher relationship has many positive effects for the student and also for the teacher. As previously mentioned, Compassion Satisfaction (CS) is a descriptive term for the pleasure that one derives from doing work with people who need care (ProQOL, n.d.). One of the potential benefits of that relationship is Vicarious Resilience, which comes from helping others through difficulties and through the experience of witnessing others' resilience (Acevedo & Hernandez-Wolfe, 2014). Many teachers enter and stay in the profession because of the relationships formed with their students and their need to continue to provide love and support for those students (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020; Roberts- Bitar, 2021.; Steen, 2020).

The process of healing together helps to strengthen the bond between teacher and student, building resilience in both. Higher levels of CS are more likely to continue in the profession (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020) and can contribute to an environment that promotes healing.

Contributing Factors

The teacher-student relationship is only one piece of a much larger system, and other factors contribute to teachers' ability to maintain Compassion Satisfaction. For example, organizational and leadership support, proper training, and resources are necessary for establishing a community of healing. When teachers are given the tools they need to teach and support their students who are experiencing trauma, their self-efficacy increases, allowing them to feel more satisfied with the work they are doing (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020; Fox et al., 2020). Bandura describes Self-Efficacy as "people's beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over their own functioning and over events that affect their lives… and can provide the foundation for motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment" (*Self-Efficacy Theory | Simply Psychology*, n.d.). Helping teachers feel autonomy and choice, especially after the stress and trauma the pandemic has caused and will continue to cause, will be crucial in improving their well-being (Yang, 2021; Zee & Koomen, 2016). In a study conducted with social workers who were working with clients with PTSD, those that were given opportunities to learn evidence-based practices showed lower amounts of Compassion Fatigue and greater amounts of Compassion Satisfaction (Craig & Sprang, 2010), which has implications for teachers who have had more training or exposure to evidence-based practices for teaching students who have experienced trauma and even more training on managing their own experiences. Maintaining higher levels of Compassion Satisfaction has been determined to also be dependent on factors

such as emotional involvement, years of experience, student characteristics, and environmental factors.

Compassion Fatigue

Sometimes used interchangeably with the terms Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS), Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder (STSD) and Vicarious Trauma, Compassion Fatigue (CF) was first used to describe the experiences of professionals such as lawyers, therapists, nurses, and social workers, and their repeated exposure to hearing about others' trauma and the effect it had on their mental health and well-being (Figley, 1995; ProQOL, n.d.). Much of the research done by Figley (1995) suggests that those who work closely with traumatized individuals begin to exhibit some of the same characteristics as their patients, becoming traumatized simply by learning about the traumatic event or working with someone who has experienced the traumatic event. Though Compassion Fatigue was intended to be used when speaking of nurses, psychiatrists, or social workers, Compassion Fatigue has the potential to be widespread among educators because of the nature of this caring profession (Steen, 2020). Those experiencing Compassion Fatigue may have elevated blood pressure, emotional dysregulation, interference with home life, begin to become apathetic to the experiences of those they are helping, or their work performance may suffer (Figley, 2002). The trauma becomes consequential to both the person who has experienced it and the caretaker.

Figure 2.3

Professional Quality of Life Model (Stamm, 2010)
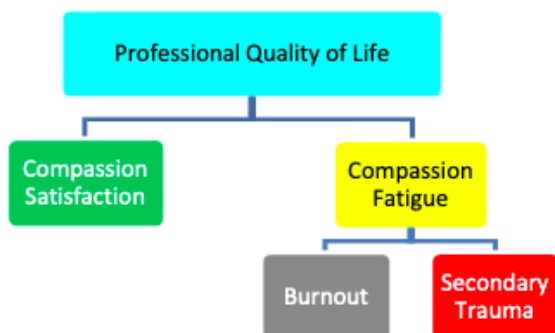
Two Aspects of CF

Compassion Fatigue, as a phenomenon, is a combination of two experiences: Secondary Traumatic Stress and Burnout. Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) is a condition that is typically associated with a triggering event or experience when working with a person who has experienced trauma. When one is exposed to STS often or is unable to mitigate the effect of it on their lives, it can begin to add to one's experience of Burnout. Burnout is a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity (Mayo Clinic, n.d.), which leads to feeling exhausted and unable to cope, emotionally distancing from work, and a reduction in work performance (Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Healthcare, 2020). When it comes to teachers, numerous factors can contribute to Burnout, such as work environment, background, teacher preparation, and self-actualization (Schaufeli et al., 2001). Burnout happens over a long period of time, but Secondary Traumatic Stress is typically associated with a specific exposure to the trauma or suffering of a specific client (Figley, 1995, 2002). What connects these two things is that repeated exposure to STS or not knowing how to manage it will lead to Burnout, which may cause one to leave their profession.

Attempts to Alleviate Compassion Fatigue

Some studies done in the medical field, centering on clinicians, nurses, and medical students, show how some of the symptoms of these conditions can be lessened. Research shows that

positive coping strategies, such as social support, clinical supervision, and consultation will help

alleviate symptoms of compassion fatigue and will increase compassion satisfaction (Jacobson,

2006; Kourkoutas & Giovazolias, 2015; Măirean, 2016; Shoji et al., 2014; Wessels & Wood,

2019). Also, as previously discussed, strong organizational and leadership support increase self-

efficacy, allowing nurses, medical student, and teachers to feel more satisfied with the work they

are doing (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020; Fox et al., 2020; Ouellette et al., 2018).

 Social Healing. Many therapeutic interventions for individuals with trauma-related

conditions involve social support. Furthermore, in all of the initial teacher interviews done, when

asked where they received the most support, many teachers mentioned other teachers, as opposed

to leadership, coaches, or training programs. When teachers experience stress related to their

work or to their relationship with teachers, they first go to the people who can appreciate and

share experiences, similar to those in the nursing field (Potter et al., 2013). Though most of this

research focuses on caregivers, health professionals, or those who have actually experienced

trauma, the experience of teachers and their role as a caregiver of students experiencing trauma

implies that social support could be crucial to the healing process.

 Group therapy and Support Groups. Group therapy, or different versions of it such as

processing groups or support groups, all involve the social and communal process that is

essential for the healing process. Beginning with Joseph Hersey Pratt in 1905 for patients with

pulmonary tuberculosis, Pratt began to notice the impact of the group experience on group

members' emotional states as they discussed their common problems (Ezhumalai et al., 2018).

This work continued through the 1930s to be used for patients with physical and with mental

illnesses, particularly those having just completed treatment for a mental illness. According to

the American Group Psychotherapy Association (1971), the group therapy process was used with

young children and usually involved a creative outlet, but Betty Gabriel, a social caseworker, then extended it to the parents of the children participating after observing the mothers in the waiting room as they waited for their children to finish. The practices expanded to all sorts of groups that need processing spaces, such as people with addiction issues, people, such as veterans, experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, students in the medical fields, those with eating disorders, and others. Group therapy can be led by a professional, or in groups such as peer support groups, could be a group effort, where the group is all experiencing a similar condition, and though there may be a leader, the group is about shared experiences.

The benefits of group processing are substantial, as they provide a place for collective healing and processing. For example, in a study done with first-year medical students participating in support groups led by second-year students, students noted the benefits of developing peer support, and reported that "getting to know classmates, ventilating feelings, and discovering 'I'm not the only one' who is anxious, lacking confidence, lonely, and so on was the most beneficial aspect of the program" (Redwood & Pollak, 2007, p. 45). Though the experience of Participatory Action Research is not meant to be therapy, the process of sharing and analyzing the experiences of the participants is an essential part of the process.

Participatory Action Research. Because this project strives to elevate systematically oppressed voices and bring more voice and power to the community, this research will employ Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is a branch of Action Research that positions the participants, themselves, as researchers. Recognizing the participants as researchers is an epistemological shift in agency and power that could help to decolonize the research process, allowing for shared power between all in the research process (Cahill, 2007; Gill et al., 2012). Through this process, people band together to explore their current reality, and dialogue between

researchers is a large part of this process (Freire et al., 2014; Jacobs, 2016). Paulo Freire

describes two states in which one must engage in order to be free from oppression and

oppressive teachings:

> In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit
>
> themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression
>
> has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and
>
> becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. In both stages,
>
> it is always through action in depth that the culture of domination is culturally
>
> confronted. (Freire et al., 2014, p. 54)

By engaging in this process, teachers can begin to unveil the barriers they face that have led to

inequitable access to well-being opportunities and to find this commitment to transforming the

systems that uphold that inequity.

CHAPTER III: THEORY OF ACTION

This plea, in an article about the presence of Compassion Fatigue during the pandemic, is the underlying guide to the Theory of Action for this dissertation:

> School and district leaders have a responsibility to establish an environment that not only allows educators to heal but encourages it. Not because we will leave their campuses unless they do or student achievement will suffer, but because they recognize the humanity of the individuals who are educating our young people. This is the kind of compassion we should all have time for. (Ewing, 2021)

So many interventions have been designed for the students who have experienced trauma, it is time for educators to be given the opportunity to heal as well. This section describes how we can help teachers begin to achieve their humanity.

To move from identifying the problem and studying the cause, a well-planned course of action must take place. Utilizing a driver diagram is an effective way to move from identification to action. According to *The Improvement Science Dissertation in Practice: A guide for faculty, committee members, and their students,* a driver diagram is a tool that "shows leverage points in a system where change can happen" and allows a practitioner to test a working hypothesis or prediction (Perry et al., 2020, p. 91). Because of the nature of this dissertation program, as it is time bound and practitioner based, a driver diagram is the most relevant tool to generate an actionable theory of improvement. A theory of improvement is an explanation of how the scholarly practitioner will move from problem analysis to actually tackling the problem during the testing phase. Read from left to right, the Driver Diagram is a way to backwards map a plan from its end goal. The components are the following:

- **Aim**: Specifies what you are trying to achieve and the time by which it should happen.

- **Primary Drivers**: Identifies where within the system key leverage exists as areas for improvement.

- **Secondary Drivers:** Identifies the highest-order elements that specify what is required to change to achieve the outcome; identifies actionable approaches, places, or opportunities.

- **Change Idea/Concepts:** Specifies the ideas/concepts to be tested through inquiry cycles that prescribe how to generate desired outcomes.

In the following section, the elements of the Driver Diagram created for this process are explained.

Figure 3.1

Driver Diagram: Supporting Teachers' well-being through PAR
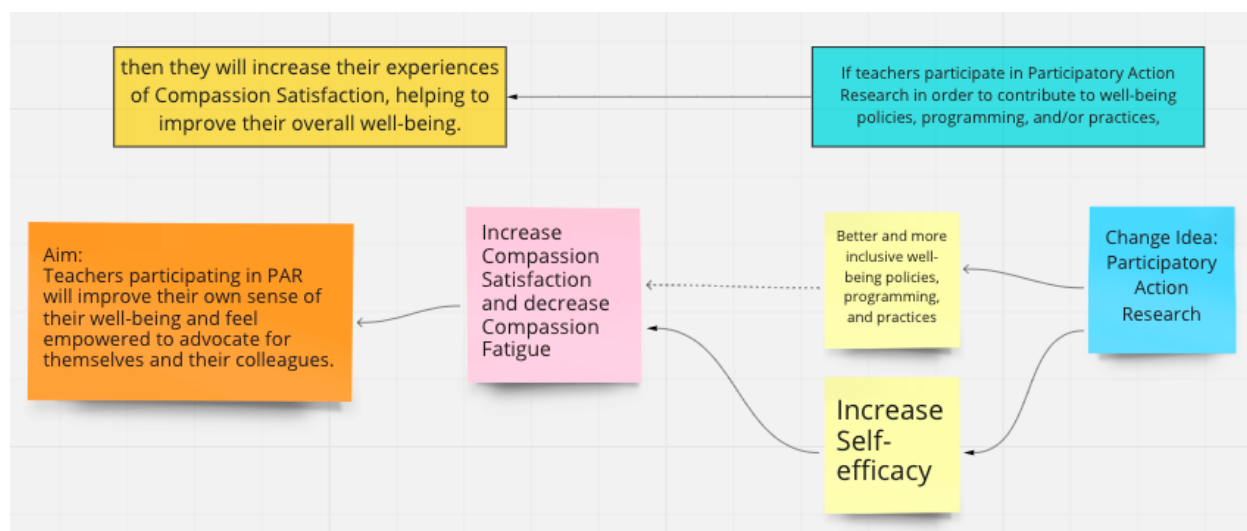
Aim and Approach

The aim of this research is to boost teachers' well-being and to empower and highlight teacher voice, exploring ways that teachers could be involved in well-being policy, programming, and procedures. The initial design of this research set out to empower teachers and build their self-efficacy, regarding advocating for support for their well-being. Teaching is a

draining job, and with the complex challenges presented during the 2021-2022 school year, teachers have felt powerless, tired, frustrated, and stressed. Survey data from the National Education Association's revealed 55 percent of teachers may be leaving the profession this year (Jotkoff, 2022). Though the intention to leave is not the same as leaving, this high number has created a spotlight on teacher turnover. By addressing teacher well-being, more teachers will desire to stay teaching and their well-being could help them to be more effective teachers.

Healing Centered Approach

But I've come to realize, that as a society, we don't really do a good job at preparing, teaching, or training people how to be vulnerable, cultivate empathy, practice self-reflection- all the stuff that makes us human. Healing involves more than repairing the deep wounds of racism, healing the scars of sexism, or easing the pains of poverty. Healing is the capacity to restore our humanity and care for ourselves and others even in the midst of our fear. Healing is the only pathway to real justice because it requires that we take an honest look at what harmed us and pushes us to restore our humanity and finally to move us confidently into a possible future. (Ginwright, 2022, p.3)

A concept and approach that has been less researched but has strong implications for effectiveness is a Healing Centered Approach; much of the related literature comes from author and scholar Dr. Shawn Ginwright in his 2018 publication…..?. In contrast to the programs and approaches that seek to teach students grit and resiliency, healing centered practices begin to address the whole person, along with the collective experiences of people, which means we have to consider the environmental context of the harm taking place. Healing involves not simply a life without trauma but "a holistic approach involving culture, spirituality, civic action, and collective healing" (Ginwright 2018). Also, healing must involve vulnerability, and as a leading

researcher in shame and vulnerability, Dr. Brene Brown explains, "To reignite creativity, innovation, and learning, leaders must rehumanize education and work" (B. Brown, 2012, p. 187) by learning to engage with their vulnerability, which she defines as "uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure" (B. Brown, 2012, p. 34). She advocates that to begin to tackle complex problems, understanding one's self and how one responds to people around them is foundation to the process.

This approach identifies three levels of collective care: individual, intrapersonal, and institutional (S. A. Ginwright, 2022). Individual care focuses on concern for the self and the preservation of one's own desires. The next level, interpersonal care, brings in relationships and connectedness and draws from the South African term "ubuntu" which means that one's humanness is found through service and engagement with others, and "the very concept of what it means to be human is viewed as our connection, care, and concern for other people" (S. A. Ginwright, 2022, p. 329). The final level of care, institutional care, is made of the values and rules that society enacts that focus on the collective good rather than individual rights, which can include laws or policies. These three levels of care will be explored in this study, and human connection and engagement will be pivotal.

Drivers: Well-being through Compassion

Compassion and care for students is a huge part of the teaching profession, so the Compassion Fatigue-Compassion Satisfaction (CF-CS) theory is a helpful indicator of teacher well-being and will be utilized as the primary driver for teacher well-being. As previously mentioned, teachers and school leaders referred to care and love for students as a large part of why they stay in the education profession. A healthy and caring student-teacher relationship has many positive effects for the student but also for the teacher, and Compassion Satisfaction (CS)

is the descriptive term for the pleasure that one derives from doing work with people who need care (ProQOL, n.d.). On the other side of that, much of the research done by Charles Figley (1995), a pioneer of this theory, suggests that those who work closely with traumatized individuals begin to exhibit some of the same characteristics as their patients, becoming traumatized by learning about the traumatic event or working with someone who has experienced the traumatic event, and he notes that "those who have enormous capacity for feeling and expressing empathy tend to be more at risk of compassion stress," which is reminiscent of the qualities of most teachers (p. 1). Those experiencing Compassion Fatigue (CF) may have elevated blood pressure, emotional dysregulation, interference with home life, may begin to become apathetic to the experiences of those they are helping, or their work performance may begin to suffer (Figley, 2002), and repeated exposure to CF could lead to burnout (Stamm, 2010). Having experienced these effects myself and knowing many other teachers who have also experienced and are currently experiencing them, creating environments that will increase teachers' Compassion Satisfaction, while mitigating the effects of Compassion Fatigue, could lead to teachers improving their overall well-being. Increasing teachers' levels of CS while lowering their CF and Burnout is a primary driver to boost teachers' well-being and keep them in the profession.

Figure 3.2

Theoretical Model of Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue (Stamm, 2010, p.11)

Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL)

Theoretical Model of Compassion Satisfaction & Compassion Fatigue

Work Environment

Client (Person Helped) Environment

Person Environment

Compassion Satisfaction (ProQOL CS)

Compassion Fatigue

Exhaustion

Frustration/ Anger

Traumatized by Work

Depressed/ Distressed by Work Environment (ProQOL BO)

Secondary Exposure (ProQOL STS)

Primary Exposure

With the exacerbated inequities and trauma that the pandemic caused, teachers need ways to explore their well-being through the lens of compassion for their students. As seen in the image above, The Professional Quality of Life Theoretical Model outlines the positive and negative outcomes experienced by those in the helping profession. The Model acknowledges that professionals do not only exist within the workplace as workers, but they are shaped by their own environment, just as their clients, or in this case students, are shaped by their own environment. The positive effect that comes from altruistic work results in Compassion Satisfaction, while the negative leads to Compassion Fatigue. This model will be used to look at teachers' experiences of well-being and frames the design of this dissertation.

Inclusive well-being

As a part of healing, both individual and collective, well-being opportunities should be informed by all, especially those who have suffered the most systemic harm. As mentioned in Chapter ?: Knowledge Review, opportunities for maintaining well-being, especially within the healthcare system, may be limited to systemically underserved populations. By including more inclusive well-being practices that are informed by voices from the populations themselves, accessibility becomes possible.

Increasing Self-efficacy

Increasing teacher self-efficacy will contribute to teachers' feelings of Compassion Satisfaction; therefore, opportunities to support teacher self-efficacy must be created. As mentioned in the Knowledge Review, self-efficacy is simply one's belief that they have the tools to succeed, and increasing self-efficacy has been linked to many benefits to daily life, including resilience to adversity and stress, healthy lifestyle habits, improved employees performance, and educational achievement (*Self-Efficacy Theory | Simply Psychology*, n.d.). Many teachers felt stressed and overwhelmed about the changing policies during the pandemic, so building up teachers' capacity to handle that stress is a key lever to boosting their well-being (Yang, 2021; Zee & Koomen, 2016). One study found "teachers need to feel efficacious in what they do in order for there to be a positive effect on work satisfaction from their strong values" (Song et al., 2020). Self-efficacy is a major component of Compassion Satisfaction, so creating opportunities for teachers to build their belief in themselves can help schools retain employees and improve performance.

Change Ideas

The idea of social support consistently emerged throughout the process; including an opportunity for teachers to engage with one another became the basis of this intervention. Combining the experiences of caring professionals in the medical and psychology fields with those of educators, it is clear that connecting with those who have shared experiences or expertise is a beneficial coping and healing mechanism when working with someone who has experienced trauma. Participatory Action Research can provide a structured way to explore teacher well-being and to highlight and elevate teacher voices.

Through the social and communal aspects of Participatory Action Research (PAR), this method in itself is a way to help teachers connect and may improve their well-being. Also, bringing teachers together to share their experiences and perceptions of their environment can help to build connection between them and affirm or challenge their aforementioned beliefs, which is an important first step in community-based problem solving (Bennett, 2004; Cahill, 2007; Gill et al., 2012; Wessels & Wood, 2019). The pandemic created an opportunity for growth, and the problems it caused necessitate both bottom-up and top-down solutions, along with empirical and theoretical advances to develop complex theories of action and change. Participatory Action Research creates opportunities for those solutions to be created (Lawson, 2015).

Figure 3.3

Theory of Change
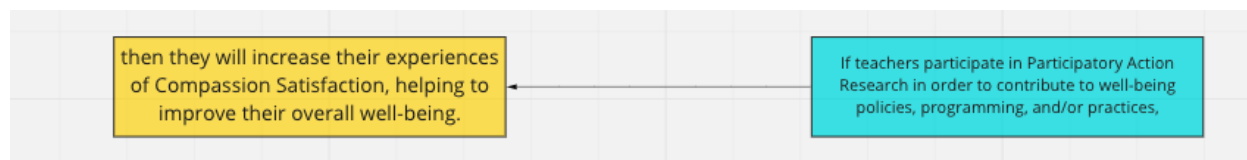
Theory of Change

Putting this together leads to the Theory of Change for this dissertation:

- If a group of teachers participates in a Participatory Action Research project aiming to identify barriers to and supports for their well-being and are able to contribute to the process of well-being programming, policy, or procedural development,

- Then teachers will experience a higher sense of self-efficacy and structured social support, which will lead to an overall better perception of their own well-being.

Too often, the voices of those affected by policy change are left out of the policymaking process, and meaningful change can only happen when opportunities are created for those voices to be heard. Elevating teachers, especially historically underrepresented teachers, is the purpose of this study, with the aim to create a safe space and platform for their voices.

CHAPTER IV: INTERVENTION

This research simply started with a question: How do and can schools support teacher well-being? To look at this question, I split the research process into three phases to explore the nuances of the question, such as identifying supports and barriers to well-being, accessibility of well-being programming or practices, what teacher-designed policy, procedures, or programming could be created, and the effects of Participatory Action Research on teacher well-being. This study aimed to identify the environmental factors that affect a teacher's well-being along with determining if Participatory Action Research can improve a teacher's perception of their own well-being. The study was intended to be conducted in three phases, each phase beginning with an inquiry-based action.

Phase 1: What factors do teachers name as barriers or supports of their well-being?

- As one indicator of well-being, what are the current levels of teachers' Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue?

- How do the different aspects of one's identity, including race, gender, and years of experience, affect a teacher's perception of well-being?

Phase 2: What kind of well-being programming could teachers design after participating in Participatory Action Research?

Phase 3: How can Participatory Action Research contribute to teachers' experiences of well-being?

In the following section, the original plans for the intervention are explained.

Population

This dissertation began as an addition to a program called the HOPE (Health and Physical Education) Model, which studied and supported student well-being but was searching for ways

to support teacher well-being. During the 2018-2019 school year, DCPS Director of Health and

Physical Exercise, Miriam Kenyon, implemented the HOPE model (Health and Physical

Exercise) with one elementary school, concentrating on student health, with programming such

as exercise blocks in the morning for all students, guided meditation practices, and nutrition and

healthy eating seminars. As part of this program, they also recognize the importance of the health

of the adults in the building, stating:

"Regularly active adults are healthier and happier people, including:

- o Improved muscular and respiratory fitness improve bone and functional health,

- o Lower rates of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, cancer

  and depression

- o Improved all-around mental health" (HOPE Model Schools, 2019, p.1).

The interventions implemented for teachers that year included flexible start times optional free

exercise classes (one at a cycling studio and yoga classes at the school), and the option of a

workout room at the school. Through surveys, DCPS found that teachers most appreciated the

extra time, such as the option to come in an hour late on professional development days, but they

did not take full advantage of the other exercise related opportunities (M. Kenyon, personal

communication, August 5, 2021). The most cited reasons for that behavior were scheduling

and/or not wanting to exercise in front of colleagues. Director Kenyon acknowledged the need

for more teacher support, and that is when a partnership with American University began.

American University and DCPS have partnered together in support of healthy schools in

the past, so once I knew my focus would be teacher well-being, my dissertation chair, Dr. Sarah

Irvine-Belson, was able to leverage this connection. I presented my ideas to Dr. Belson and two

professors from the College of Arts and Sciences Department of Health Studies, and together we

co-wrote a HOPE Model Expansion Proposal, which detailed the plan, rationale, and budget for this process. Once submitted, we awaited DCPS approval and the dispersion of funds. The original proposal included a timeline, which will be further explained in a following section.

The participants in this study were to be teachers, though at the time, it was unclear how many teachers or schools would be participating. Director Kenyon had been making connections with elementary, middle, and high schools, and was also working with both public and charter schools, so the initial plans presented were designed to be flexible and responsive to the diverse groups of participants.

Method: Participatory Action Research

As a researcher, I am aware of the power and privilege the position holds, so in an attempt to overcome some of the challenges of creating research equity, I aimed to employ a community-based research approach. Participatory Action Research (PAR) allows researchers and communities to come together to work towards a common goal (Muhammad et al., 2015; Oldfield & Patel, 2016). That goal is not created by the researcher but co-created with the community and allows chances for follow up, feedback, member checks, and new suggestions, from the community themselves (Ravitch & Carl, 2019; Vanner, 2015). PAR involves two important roots:

Participatory: Participatory research serves to elevate participant voices in the research process in order to ensure the appropriateness of the methodology and the relevance of the outcomes. The participants are seen as researchers, and every action step is owned by the participant-researchers.

Action: Action Research is something teachers engage in frequently as they teach their students. It is the process of uncovering problems or strengths that could be used to better

develop a service or organization. The process discovers a problem, tests out an intervention to the problem, reports the findings, and then adds time for reflection before trying another intervention or continuing to improve the previously tried intervention (Danley & Ellison, 1999).

Because this project strove to elevate systematically oppressed voices and bring more voice and power to the community, this research intended to employ Participatory Action Research (PAR). By recognizing the participants as researchers, the aim was for an epistemological shift in agency and power to help decolonize the research process, allowing for shared power between all in the research process (Cahill, 2007; Gill et al., 2012). Through this process, people band together to explore their current reality, and dialogue between researchers is a large part of this process (Freire et al., 2014). Paulo Freire describes two states in which one must engage to be free from oppression and oppressive teachings:

> In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. In both stages, it is always through action in depth that the culture of domination is culturally confronted. (Freire et al., 2014, p.54)

By engaging in this process, the intention was for teachers to begin to unveil the barriers they face that have led to inequitable access to well-being opportunities and to find this commitment to transforming the systems that uphold that inequity. To allow teachers the space to focus on their well-being, physically, mentally, communally, and all other ways, is acknowledging their humanity and allowing them to reach their full potential.

Case Study

Because of the nature of this dissertation process and the uniqueness of the era and location of this dissertation, a case study made the most sense in regard to method. Studying teacher well-being during an unprecedented school year makes the barriers and supports available to teachers unique to the time, and opportunities to explore these phenomena had to be made during this process. As Robert Yin says, "The more that your questions seek to *explain* some contemporary circumstance (e.g. 'how' or 'why' some social phenomenon works) the more that case study research will be relevant" (Yin, 2018, p. 4). This dissertation is bounded by both time and place, and how the time and location of this dissertation affect the problems and solutions is critical for revealing important contextual conditions while also creating an antiracist research opportunity to explore policies and practices that have contributed to that context (Yin, 2018). Many of the studies explored in the Knowledge Review chapter of this dissertation revealed that Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue are better explored and explained when coupled with qualitative research and opportunities for narrative and voice.

Reflexivity

Because of the qualitative nature of this study, and the focus on antiracism, this process included opportunities for reflexivity. As the primary instrument in this research, I knew I needed to acknowledge the ways that I would influence the questions asked, methods used, and data collected throughout the process. Researcher reflexivity is the systematic assessment of one's identity, positionality, biases, assumptions, values, and subjectivities and entails active self-reflection on how the researcher's biases may be affecting the different aspects of the ongoing research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). As someone committed to antiracist practice, I knew, especially as a White researcher, I needed to build in structured opportunities for

reflexivity, to explore how aspects of my identity or positionality may be affecting the work (Barnard, 2019; Gordon, 2005; Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

In order to connect the research processes and track ongoing thinking, researcher memos were used as a tool for structured reflexivity. As Ravitch and Carl (2019) explain, memos are a way to capture and process ongoing ideas, discoveries, challenges, and sense-making over time. I utilized researcher memos to track the research process and to examine my own positionality throughout the process, as Ravitch and Carl suggest, to push critical dialogue around identity and positionality. In the memos, I tended to use informal writing, such as bullet points or outlines, and these memos also helped communicate ongoing thinking with my dissertation committee.

<div align="center">

Intervention Plan

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The plans made for this intervention followed the different aspects of community-based PAR, in hopes that the action would be to create well-being programming for teachers. There were to be three stages in the research project, each one exploring a certain inquiry question. Participants of this study were to be gathered from the ProQOL survey, as it included a question asking teachers if they would be interested in participating in five hour-long sessions to support teacher well-being at their school. As seen in Figure 7 below, each stage included its own measures and analysis, which would involve the teacher-researchers in different ways. The following section details the stages, measures, data collection tools, and analyses that was to be conducted, and the table below shows the initial breakout of the three stages, their measures, and plans for analysis.

Figure 4.1

Stages of the initial intervention plan

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Description	Baseline Levels of Compassion Fatigue and Compassion Satisfaction present in the school	Invite group of teachers to participate in an environmental scan of the school	Co-design a model with teachers that will help support their well-being to be implemented schoolwide
Measures	ProQOL Survey of CF/CS	RISE Index (the tool to help schools assess, prioritize, and plan key activities that promote the social-emotional health of staff and students)	Individual Teacher Interviews (If time permitted, maybe participation rates)
Analysis	Descriptive Statistics, quantitative analysis	Focus Group observations and coding	Coding of interviews

Stage 1: Needs assessment and the Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

In order to fully understand a problem, a baseline needs assessment had to be conducted, so the first phase was to identify the levels of Compassion Fatigue and Compassion Satisfaction. Problem identification and understanding is an essential part of the Improvement Science process as well, as the work of improvement focuses in on a specific problem to be solved, and the defining characteristics of this problem are "anchored in a deep understanding of people actually engaged in the work," which in this case are teachers (Perry et al., 2020, p. 65). To uncover certain aspects of these teachers' experiences, the Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) was to be distributed to a large group of teachers in order to look at baseline levels of these phenomena. The ProQOL is a well-accepted measure of three things: Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout, and Secondary Traumatic Stress. The survey was entered into Qualtrics, along with questions that addressed identity or demographic information to discover any inequities. In quite a few studies, noted limitations were that the ProQOL survey did not allow for teacher voice or narrative explanations or experiences of teachers, so though a baseline was provided, the next

step would be to expand the story of compassion through teacher voice (Fox et. al, 2020; Buehler, 2019).

Though the ProQOL is a helpful tool, it is not and should not be used as a diagnostic tool since there are no official diagnoses of Burnout or Secondary Traumatic Stress. The ProQOL can be used to help individuals identify the next step in their diagnostic process by helping them understand the different symptoms they are experiencing. For example, since burnout is a frequent "co-traveler" with depression, if someone is consistently experiencing burnout, then they may want to seek a diagnosis tool for depression. For the purpose of this dissertation, I wanted a tool that could help separate student-induced stress from other aspects of teaching.

After receiving results of the survey, I was to process the scores using Microsoft Excel and present the findings to the teacher-researchers during one of the sessions, as I wanted to involve the teacher-researchers in the process of presenting the data in an accessible and easily understandable format. Descriptive statistics were to be produced and the researchers would look at any trends among the three measures and demographic information collected.

Stage 2: RISE Index Focus Group and Coding

The ProQOL offers one type of baseline that allows teachers to evaluate themselves, but to give the problem another dimension, an environmental scan of their current school would help create a clearer picture of barriers and supports to teacher well-being. To do this, the Resilience in School Environments (RISE) Index: School edition, created by Kaiser Permanente (an insurance provider for DCPS) and Alliance for a Healthier Generation, was to be utilized during a focus group in order to allow teachers to share and discuss their thoughts on the survey questions. Created to empower schools to create safe and supportive learning environments by developing policies and practices that improve the social emotional health of all students and

staff, the RISE Index would serve as a useful entry point when discussing teacher well-being, or as they are noted in the RISE Index, as Staff Well-Being (SWB), as the questions pertain to physical environments that support staff, personal wellness, and collective care. The researcher would use seven of the 10 survey questions (combining questions one and two) to engage in a dialogue with teachers:

SWB-1-2 To what extent does your staff engage in opportunities to build and maintain relationships or display gratitude with each other (e.g., activities during staff meetings, potlucks, staff outings)?

SWB-3 To what extent do staff have the opportunity to provide input on staff well-being policies and practices?

SWB-4 To what extent do staff receive professional learning on combating the impacts of compassion fatigue and burnout or planning implementing, and reflecting on their own well-being?

SWB-5 To what extent does your school use a trauma-informed lens* to implement staff well-being policies and practices, including work-life balance?

SWB-8- To what extent does your school have space(s) for staff to relax, decompress and/or build relationships with other staff?

SWB 10- To what extent does your school have a clearly defined approach to positively resolve conflicts among staff?

The conversations were to be recorded and coded for themes that emerged, specifically around the three environments for well-being mentioned in the ProQOL: one's personal environment, one's client, in this case student's, environment, and one's work environment. Presenting these questions to a group of teachers could allow for teachers' ideas to be challenged and for new

insights and revelations to be identified.

Stage 3: Co-Designing and testing through PAR and Design Thinking

Within this dissertation process, I was introduced to the Design Thinking process as a quick, strategic way to test ideas, get results, and respond to those results. Because of the reality of restrictions and timelines within real life, especially in this dissertation, the process of a design thinking process is not open-ended and ongoing, but instead has a clear beginning, middle, and end (T. Brown, 2019). Though the challenges of teacher well-being will not be solved within a constrained timeline, the goal would be for the teacher-researchers to determine a specific leverage point based on the data collected and then engage in problem solving around that leverage point. After examining the baseline scores of Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout, and Secondary Traumatic Stress, along with the results of the environmental scan the RISE Index, ideation of how to solve the problem would occur by combining Participatory Action Research with Design Thinking.

Figure 4.2

PAR and Design Thinking combined

Design Thinking and Participatory Action Research are complementary processes, as seen in the image above. They both seek to understand a problem and create action to test a solution to that problem. The beginning stages of Design Thinking are covered in the Needs Assessment stage of Participatory Action Research, though Design Thinking stresses the need to empathize with the user of the product. By utilizing teachers as the researchers in this process, the user experiences are already centered, and the ProQOL and RISE Index are tools for defining the problem. Design thinking is considered a "human-centered" experience that centers empathy, acknowledging the people one is designing for can be the "roadmap to innovative solutions" (IDEO, 2015). Through the focus group, teachers would have the opportunity to add to their definition of the problem and perhaps even begin to ideate towards the solution.

Dialogic Engagement is key to the PAR process, and to move from problem to solution, teacher-researchers were to once again participate in dialogic engagement to begin ideating and testing solutions to the problem. The focus group itself was one opportunity for dialogic engagement, and the rest of the process would happen in up to two 1-hour sessions specifically focused on teachers ideating solutions to the problems they previously identified. These ideas would be tested on the small group of teachers involved in the research process with the purpose of receiving immediate feedback, so changes could be implemented and tested again. After each session of the process, teacher-researchers would fill-out a brief open-ended survey to track how or if PAR was influencing their well-being.

The final stages of the process would be to provide the intervention to all teachers at the school of study, and meaningfully reflect on the process. A plan would be presented to leadership and supports would be put in place, such as time, space, and facilitators, but through the HOPE Model, school leadership would be ready to accommodate and provide support for

such. During the implementation process, measures such as participation rates of the

programming offered, along with qualitative evidence, such as a follow-up survey, would be

collected and analyzed. Finally, at the end of program implementation, an opportunity for

reflection was to be created, and a thorough evaluation completed to ensure accessibility and

equitable benefits to all teachers. The plan for the intervention, along with the data collection

measures are laid out in the following table. The highlighted text reflects the colors from the

Figure 8.

Table 4.1

Draft Intervention Plan

	Draft Intervention Plan		
Session	**Format**	**Content/Activities**	**Measures**
Week of May 9-May 13	**Before this session, researcher will collect CF/CS Surveys (Have teachers fill out at the beginning of their LEAP session)**		
1	In-person or virtual meeting	Explain PAR and purpose of study then discuss RISE index questions	Focus group coding
2	In-person or virtual meeting (Focus Group)	Researcher will present focus group findings to teachers	Post survey to be coded for themes
	Before this session, researcher will code Focus Group for themes.		
3	In-person or virtual meeting	Researcher will engage in problem definition ideation with the rest of the participant researchers; decide on next steps	Post survey to be coded for themes
4	In-person or virtual meeting	Teachers test out some of the ideas on the group of teacher-researchers	Post survey to be coded for themes
5	In-person or virtual meeting	Put plan together to submit for approval from leadership (could be done by researcher) and Present to leadership and other relevant stakeholders	Post survey to be coded for themes
	Implement interventions for 1-2 weeks.		Participation Rates, observations

6	In-person or virtual meeting (Possibly just 1-2 interviews)	Review and reflect on progress, make any changes if necessary	Post survey OR follow-up interviews to be coded for themes
	Implement interventions for 1-2 weeks.		

Plan of Analysis

Once the data was collected, the analysis would happen according to the research questions, and different combinations of datapoints could be used to explore those questions. The raw data was to provide a quick snapshot of the current context of the research setting, but to tie it all together would create the story about teachers' experiences of maintaining their well-being and how empowering teachers and allowing them to have voice in the process of well-being programming would be more effective than what is currently being done.

Analytic breakdown by Research Question

Research Question 1 and its two sub-questions would be answered by a combination of the focus group and the ProQOL measures, as it pertains to both the levels of Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue and also the supports and barriers in place in regard to demographic factors. The ProQOL Manual states "One of the rewarding aspects of the ProQOL is that it provides a platform for change. It can lead to introspection and to brainstorming about what is right and what can be made better and what is wrong and cannot be made better" (Stamm, 2010, p. 24). Along with the survey itself, opportunities for self-reflection and more context were created, so those opportunities were to be coded for themes directly related to these phenomena. Also, for PAR to be effective, platforms for historically underserved populations must be represented and elevated, so tracking the number of times participants spoke during the focus group was intended to reveal whose voice is being heard most often.

For Research Question 2, ideation was to be key and was to be thoroughly researched and analyzed. The purpose of the HOPE Model was to offer teachers programming to help boost their well-being, and those ideas should come from teachers. Capturing teachers' ideation during the focus group could help reveal what teachers may prioritize in regard to their well-being.

Finally, the hypothesis is that PAR may offer an opportunity for teachers to build community with one another and be introduced to differing opinions. Even though PAR would be a collaborative effort, I wanted to know how each participant perceived the experience, and also how it affected participants in regard to their identity. The post survey could be used as a reflection point and would have one open-ended question: "How has this experience affected your well-being positively or negatively?" The question would allow teachers to write more on one topic and give them an opportunity for self-reflection.

There was also room for other points of data throughout the process to be collected. For example, once programming was to begin, the intention was to track participation rates and overall satisfaction with the programming. Tracking attendance with each of the offerings and providing a follow up survey or opportunity for feedback would be important formative data that could be utilized to make changes when necessary.

Table 4.2

Analysis plan by research questions and datasets

	ProQOL Measures	**Survey Open Ended Question**	**Focus Group**	**Post Survey**	**Combined Interpretation**	**Possible other points of data**
RQ 1: What factors do teachers name as supports of their well-being?			X Themes in regards to supports and barriers			Existing structures, interview with principal, memo on own experiences
RQ 1a: As one indicator of well-being, what are the current levels of teachers' Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue?	X		X Themes in regard to CS and CF		X	Existing survey data

RQ 1b: How do the different aspects of one's identity, including race, gender, and years of experience, affect a teacher's perception of well-being?	X		X Themes in regard to Demographics Frequency of participation by demographics		X	Participation rates, positionality memo
RQ 2: What kind of well-being programming could teachers design after participating in Participatory Action Research?			X Themes by type of programming			
RQ 3: How can Participatory Action Research contribute to teachers' experiences of well-being?				X Themes in regard to experience; Numbers positive and negative by demographics		Participation rates, Personal reflection memo

Conclusion

The intention of this intervention was to provide space and agency to teachers to improve or help them maintain their well-being. By creating the opportunity for communication and connection between teachers while they discussed barriers and supports to their well-being, their sense of self-efficacy would grow, along with the researchers' own self-efficacy as well.

CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS

This dissertation process involved many pivots, adjustments, and changes. The intervention plan described in the previous chapter never came to fruition; instead, something else, deeply personal and detailed, came out of the process. Though many changes were required due to time constraints, I never strayed from the inquiry question that began this process: How do schools support teachers' well-being, and are well-being supports accessible to all teachers? This next chapter details the evidence to date and the analytics of the data collected.

First attempt: Local High School (LHS) Study

When I learned that the HOPE Model money was delayed, one of my committee members, DCPS Chief of School Improvements and Supports Dr. Bren Elliott, suggested that I look into the work of Local High School was doing, specifically their redesign process. The name of the high school has been changed. As I reviewed their plans, I realized that they were familiar with Design Thinking and had recently utilized that process to make systemic changes, it could be a great opportunity to continue my research. I was introduced to the principal of the school and was granted permission by DCPS to continue my research at Local High School.

Data Collection Tools

Using Qualtrics, I created a survey composed of three parts: demographic questions, the ProQOL scale, and an open-ended question, as well as a request for volunteers for PAR. The demographic questions covered gender, race, years of experience, years of experience at their current school, subject taught, and grade level. Following the demographic questions, respondents were taken to the ProQOL. The ProQOL was entered into Qualtrics as a Likert Scale, as it is typically presented, and totals 30 questions. Following the ProQOL was the open-ended question, "At your school, what supports have you received when it comes to maintaining

your well-being?" The final question was about volunteering for PAR and left space for teachers

to leave their name and email.

Recruitment

There were a few different efforts made for recruitment. A weekly all-staff email is sent

by the principal with updates and school information; on March 6, 2022, the following

information was sent out in the all-staff email, to include a link to the survey:

> Hello all! My name is Amanda Tatum, and as a doctoral student at American University
> and a teacher, myself, I am interested in learning more about how to support teachers'
> well-being. We, as teachers, are asked to support our students' well-being, and though
> our love of our students keeps us going, sometimes the trauma they have experienced will
> begin to disrupt our own wellness, not to mention the added stress and exacerbated
> inequities the pandemic has caused. First, I am asking that you please fill out this survey
> that will help to measure the wellness levels at your school. At the end of the survey, it
> asks if you are interested in participating in a project that will combine Design Thinking
> and Participatory Action Research in order to help support teachers' well-being.
> Participants who complete the study will be given a $100 school donation in their name
> to be used for classroom supplies. Thank you, be well, and if you have any questions,
> please reach out: at0324a@american.edu (A. Tatum, personal communication, March 6,
> 2022).

By March 21, 2022, there were 3 completed survey responses. I sent Principal Haith a flier to

post in the office, and I came to the school with individual flyers to distribute as teachers signed

in each morning. After that, 12 more teachers began, but did not complete, the survey; teachers

had answered the demographic questions, but the next section which included the ProQOL

questions, was left unanswered.

Researcher Role and Positionality

When reflecting on my own positionality, I had to consider the ways in which I would be

both an insider and outsider in this research setting. On the surface, it could be argued that I am

an insider, since I am also a teacher in the same district as the teacher-participants. Being an

insider can have its advantages, such as an understanding of DCPS structures and the culture of

teaching in DCPS, but it can also present challenges, such as assumptions that my own experiences are the same as other teachers in the district. Mostly in this setting, I believed I was an outsider and should consider the advantages and disadvantages of being an outsider (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Bridges, 2001). As an outsider, an issue to consider is the power and positionality of researchers, especially if they align themselves with leadership at the school. Teachers may be less likely to open up or volunteer if they believe that their opinions could put them at risk with their administrators. Through the PAR process, I thought I would get the chance to mitigate the outside effect, though with no social capital or connections to the staff, I did foresee the challenges and tried to plan for that as effectively as possible.

LHS Evidence to Date

The data collected at LHS could help to answer two of the research questions:

- **RQ 1:** What factors do teachers name as supports of their well-being?
    - **RQ 1a:** As one indicator of well-being, what are the current levels of teachers' Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue?

Though the evidence collected does identify gender and race as factors, the survey itself and the low number of responses is not enough to fully answer RQ 1b.

RQ 1 Evidence for LHS

The three survey participants offered insight into Research Question 1-What factors do teachers name as barriers or supports of their well-being? This was shared through their responses to the open-ended question included in the survey. Since that question only asked respondents to name the supports, I was expecting evidence exclusively focused on supports. However, the responses also named barriers, so I coded based on those two aspects: supports and barriers.

Table 5.1

LHS Themes from Survey: Supports and Barriers

Theme 1: Supports	Theme 2: Barriers
Theme 1a: Wellness centered Professional Development - "A Time to Heal" - "A PD day once a month on wellness" **Theme 1b: Administration and Leadership** - "My administrators are really good about giving us the days off we ask for without asking questions" **Theme 1c: Days off** - "My administrators are really good about giving us the days off we ask for without asking questions"	**Theme 2a: Stress and workload** - "Due to over-worked/stressed teachers" **Theme 2b: Lack and infrequency of Support** - "Not much" - "Sometimes" - "Once a month"

Support Themes

Supports were categorized into three themes: Wellness-centered Professional Development (PD), Administration and Leadership, and Days Off. Wellness-centered Professional Development was mentioned, specifically an event unique to Local High School. On one of the days specified for professional development, LHS offered wellness opportunities and choices for their staff through a programming day they named "A Time to Heal". The survey participants named that day specifically and also mentioned "a PD day once a month on wellness." Participants also identified administration in a supportive way, specifically understanding about taking days off. Those two things - supportive administration and days off - are two supports that could help teachers maintain their well-being.

Barrier Themes

Though the question did not mention barriers, survey participants included them in their responses, creating two new themes: Stress and Workload and Lack or Infrequency of Support. Though days off are a support that teachers can use, one participant mentioned that teachers need

them "due to [being] over-worked/stressed teachers." They also mentioned a lack of support, with each participant using negative or time specific terms when talking about well-being supports, such as "Not much," "sometimes," and "once a month." Stress and workload could be the underlying challenge of maintaining well-being; not feeling supported at the work environment can contribute to those feelings.

RQ 1a Evidence

To score the ProQOL, I followed the procedure outlined in the ProQOL manual. First, I downloaded the scores from Qualtrics to an Excel spreadsheet, where I then reverse scored the appropriate items. After that, I created an Excel formula to sum the indicated items to find the three levels that ProQOL measures: Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout, and Secondary Traumatic Stress, the latter two comprising Compassion Fatigue. I completed this process twice to ensure accuracy and cross-checked to ensure the same results.

Table 5.2

Breakdown of CS, BO, and STS scores and level by participant

	Compassion Satisfaction	Level	Burnout	Level	Secondary Traumatic Stress	Level
Participant 1	27	Moderate	27	Moderate	**30**	Moderate
Participant 2	**34**	Moderate	**24**	Moderate	***32***	Moderate
Participant 3	**26**	Moderate	***35***	Moderate	***32***	Moderate

*__high__ and **low**

As seen in the table above, the data revealed that all three participants perceived their experiences of Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue, or combined levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress and Burnout, at moderate levels. The Secondary Traumatic Stress level had the lowest range of scores, but the Burnout and Compassion Satisfaction scores had a higher range, as 8 and 11 respectively, as seen above.

Analytics of LHS and Lessons Learned

To analyze this data, I rooted myself once again in the research questions, trying to use the data I had to answer them. I also considered this initial research as a pilot for the next step in the process, and I identified lessons learned, choosing to learn from these experiences of failure in order to carefully plan next steps. This analysis took information from both the survey measures, the open-ended survey question, conversations with the principal, and other understandings of DCPS as a system. Looking at data from the survey, which included both the levels of CS, BO, and STS, along with the open-ended answers to the question about supports from the school, the following can be determined.

Figure 5.1

Compassion Satisfaction breakdown by level from ProQOL manual

The sum of my Compassion Satisfaction questions is	And my Compassion Satisfaction level is
22 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Moderate
42 or more	High

Compassion Satisfaction

As previously discussed,, Compassion Satisfaction is the pleasure one derives from being able to do their work well, such as helping others. Feeling positively about work colleagues and the ability to contribute to the work setting can contribute to this feeling. The breakdown of the scores is seen to the left here and is the same for all categories in regard to the numbers that reveal Low, Moderate, or High. As indicated in Table 4, participants 1 and 3 were very close to falling into category of finding problems with their jobs (Alpha scale reliability 0.88). They both

used temporal words such as "sometimes," and "not much" when talking about the support provided by the school for maintaining their well-being. This suggests they identify a lack of support rather than a presence of support.

Burnout

As one of the dimensions of Compassion Fatigue, burnout involves gradual feelings of hopelessness and difficulties dealing with work and doing one's job effectively (Alpha scale reliability 0.75). Participant 3 was at the highest risk for burnout, but Participant 2 may have more positive feelings about their effectiveness at their work. Participant 2 named "a PD day once a month on wellness," as a support, which leads me to believe that this PD day is a successful support for this teacher.

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

STS refers to the specific interaction, in this case, between teacher and students. All three scores were Moderate and close together (range=2), which raises a question about the prevalence of trauma among the students these specific teachers teach.

Summary and Lessons Learned

Utilizing this data, I found connecting the survey question to the experiences of CF and CS provided rich insight, so I knew that including a qualitative component moving forward was crucial. I also noted the power of requiring teachers to participate in a Professional Development day that centered healing and how this could be an effective tool to help teachers maintain well-being.

In the recruitment phase, I learned about the complications of recruiting participants from an unfamiliar space, where I had no connections to the actual participants. Since I had no social capital at this school, it was difficult to recruit participants, even only for the survey phase. I

discovered that the promise of a $100 donation to their classroom was not enough to incentivize teachers to give more of their time. A challenge also arose with the survey itself, and I continued to wonder why people started and stopped the survey. From my own teaching experience and conversations with the principal of LHS (W. Haith, personal communication, January 27, 2022), I realized teachers are busy and do not have the time to do something in which they have no investment. To that effect, I realized that I either needed to find a shorter, more precise survey, or I needed to create an opportunity for teachers to have the time to fill out the survey.

The HOPE Model

As described in the Intervention section, the first opportunity I identified to conduct this research was as an additional component to an existing program called the HOPE (Health and Physical Education) Model, which studied and supported student well-being but was searching for ways to support teacher well-being. They had partnered with American University to begin a Teacher Well-being Pilot program, and I had helped to write the proposal. Though the HOPE Model had been on hold, on March 22, 2022, the proposal submitted in August was finally approved and funded for $53,000. The budget included money to provide lunch for teachers as they filled out the survey and for research assistants to visit the schools and help input the data. The team who submitted the original proposal re-convened and created a new plan of action. One team member explained that DCPS seemed to have gotten to the end of the school year, and, realizing that teachers needed support, finally approved the project. A new plan was made which included four participating schools; data collection was to begin the week of May 2, 2022, with the surveys and lunches provided for teachers, would continue with the focus groups the week of May 16, and would end with the coding of focus group data the week of May 30, 2022.

Evidence to Date for the HOPE Model

After quickly completing the plan to move forward in March, on May 6, 2022 I learned that although the award money was approved, it still had not been released. One team member encouraged me to activate other pathways for completing my dissertation and another explained this type of delay was "true to form for DCPS" (anonymous, email message to the author, May, 2022). Reflecting on this process, I decided to write a memo, capturing my thoughts.

Analytics of the HOPE Model

Invested in this project, I was very disappointed and frustrated with the slow pace and delays; teacher well-being will continue to suffer if it is not prioritized at a systemic level. As I reflected on the process, I wrote:

> This experience has taught me that teacher well-being can be a priority and sounds like a great priority, but this issue is more systemic than anything. The pandemic has revealed a need for more mental health and well-being support, and yet the reality is that well-being is rarely prioritized. Attempting to begin something at the end of the school year is problematic because of how busy schools and the district become. Well-being is not something that should only be addressed at the personal level, but it should also be a leadership, organizational, and regional initiative. If it is not supported at all levels, then initiatives with good intentions, such as the HOPE Model, will not have the opportunity to succeed.

This setback can be described in terms of the Systems Thinking archetype, "Fixes that Fail" (Kim, 1994). Through my attempt to try and help teachers maintain their well-being by mitigating their experiences of Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue, I created the unintended consequence of adding another burden to teachers by asking them to complete the survey. I

intended to use the survey and PAR experience as a "Fix," but in order to fix the challenges of maintaining teachers' well-being, the whole system needs to change. At this point, school systems are designed to place stress and burden on teachers, so policies that uphold that stress must be strategically and systematically challenged.

Figure 5.2

"Fixes that fail" diagram

Fixes That Fail
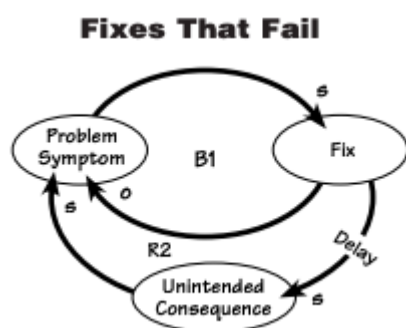
The Final Pivot: Researcher's Workplace

When I realized that both LHS and the HOPE Model were not going to allow me to finish my dissertation on time, I pivoted once again to my own school. Though there are complications with the process of being an insider in a research space, there are also important benefits, and I realized my knowledge of the structures of the school day and my existing relationships with administration and with teachers could help me complete this process and deliver immediate feedback on my own workplace to helpful parties. I also had the opportunity to edit my research questions based on lessons learned, so I made the following changes:

RQ 1: What factors do teachers name as supports to their well-being?

- By positively framing this question, I hoped to spark some interest in teachers, while also knowing that some teachers may still mention barriers even when asked about supports,

as I discovered from the LHS participants. I also wanted to ensure I was targeting work environment supports as opposed to the personal and student environments.

RQ 1a: As one indicator of well-being, what contributes to the current levels of teachers' Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue? (no change)

RQ 1b: How do the different aspects of one's identity affect a teacher's perception of well-being?

- I wanted to make this a more phenomenological question to allow the interviewed teachers to reflect on their own experiences with their identity and well-being, so I did open this up to not be only about gender and race, though the data from the ProQOL will only be identified by those factors.

RQ2: How can talking about well-being contribute to teachers' experiences of well-being?

- Since teachers did not participate in PAR, it would have been difficult to address the previous RQ2, which asked about programming teachers could create through their participation in PAR. I also realized that programming could be considered a support to well-being, so some of the supports suggested became ideas for programming. Also, I realized that though there were not going to be multiple sessions of PAR for the interviewed teachers, there is value in allowing a reflective opportunity for participants. I wanted to understand how this survey, or any other well-being survey for that matter, could allow a teacher to better understand themself and if talking to another teacher about their experiences could be helpful.

New Triangulation

Figure 5.3

Nested Case study design
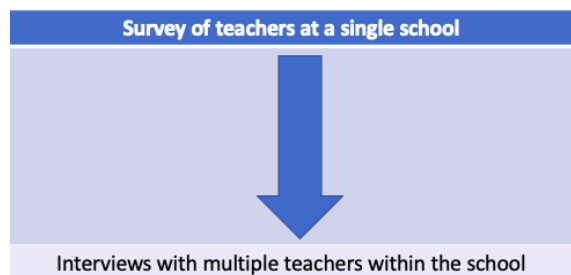
Once permission was granted to continue researching at my own school, I realized that changes needed to be made to the original intervention and method plan, based on time constraints and the new setting. One major change made was to go from focus groups to interviews. Many of the articles published using the ProQOL scale discussed a limitation being the lack of qualitative or anecdotal evidence to accompany the numbers. Qualitative interviews can provide deep, rich, individualized, and contextualized data, and bring forth individuals' lived experiences. When interviewing multiple people, if done well, people's perspectives are able to be fully explored within and across individuals and groups, while keeping the lines of questioning the same or similar. Qualitative interviews are intentionally partial and give light to a specific snapshot in time (Ravitch & Carl, 2019), much like the ProQOL survey. Beginning with the survey and then allowing people to open up and add meaning to the survey's phenomena through speaking about their experiences was an efficient pairing. Since the previous methodology involved a similar design, this methodology is still a nested case study, but instead of a focus group, it used interviews to provide a deep understanding into the interviewees' experiences and context.

The role of the interviewer is key to creating meaningful interview experiences, which is why I first decided to interview myself, as part of the data triangulation process. From the beginning I knew this dissertation was going to be deeply personal, and by allowing myself into the process, I was trying to mitigate some of my own biases and experience what the

interviewees would be experiencing. I asked Dr. Tomiko Ball, an Instructional Coach at my school, to conduct a Researcher Interview (Ravitch & Carl, 2019) using the Interview Protocol I developed for use with research participants. By having Dr. Ball conduct the interview, I was able to experience what power dynamics could be at play, simply from having someone who works in the same space as you interviewing you about your experience in that space. I also strove to begin constructing my understanding of my own reality before I engaged with the interviewees, because "in qualitative research, an ontological assumption is that there is not a single 'Truth' or reality. Researchers, participants, and readers have differing realities, and a goal of qualitative research is to engage with, understand, and report these multiple realities" (Ravitch & Carl, 2019, p. 6). Through my own interview process and by using memos before and after the experience, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of my reality and my interview protocol, making adjustments as needed.

Figure 5.4

Data Triangulation Model
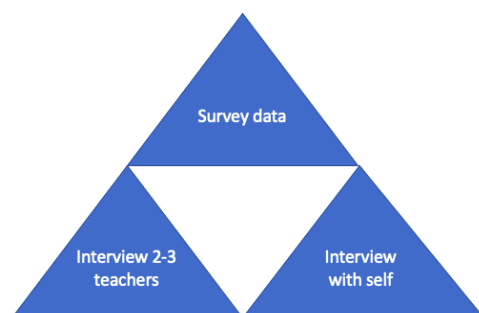
Survey Recruitment

In response to the low participation rates from the Pilot Study and because of my insider knowledge of the structures of communication at this school, recruitment methods were changed. Instead of the principal dispersing the survey, I targeted each Grade Level Lead, the teacher who

is responsible for communication and collaboration amongst their Grade Level Team. The

following email was sent the week of May 16, 2022:

> Hi all! As y'all may know, I am getting my doctorate at American University right now, and I am studying teacher well-being, trying to figure out what teachers need for healing and wellness. I am asking that you take about 10 minutes to fill out a survey that will help me determine levels that pertain to our well-being through the lens of compassion- as a big part of our job is the compassion we hold for our students. At the end of the survey, it asks if you are interested in participating in a focus group to discuss environmental factors that support or are barriers to our well-being. The focus group will be about 30-45 minutes and will be held at your convenience. 🙂
> Thank you, be well, and if you have any questions, please reach out: at0324a@american.edu
>
> Survey Link: https://american.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3LatMn7O5NAauUe

The same survey format used with LHS was used again, but adjustments were made to address

the issue of time and number of questions.

Survey Participants

Out of the 25 surveys received, five surveys were incomplete, which left 20 surveys

completed for analysis, including the researcher's, as my experience with teaching is also to be

considered. Five people volunteered to participate in the Focus Group (which changed to

interviews), and 17 of the 20 participants completed the open-ended question. The breakdown of

race and gender is provided in the following table and discussed further in the following sections.

Table 5.3

Final data set breakdown of participants by race and gender

Participants by Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	17	85%
Male	3	15%
Total	**20**	**100**
Participants by Race	**Number**	**Percentage**
Asian	1	5%

Black or African American	5	25%
Black or African American and Native American	1	5%
Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, White	1	5%
Hispanic, Latina/o/x and/or of Spanish origin	2	10%
Hispanic, Latina/o/x and/or of Spanish origin and White	1	5%
White	9	45%
Total	**20**	**100**

Interview Participants

Teacher time is valuable, so I selected those who were willing to participate in the Focus Group when I considered whom to interview, assuming those who volunteered felt they had the time to give. I ruled out two people because of the nature of our relationship; because I had worked closely with them before, I wanted to maintain distance between myself and the interviewee, so as to mitigate bias and assumption. When considering talking to the outlier who was experiencing Low Compassion Satisfaction and High Compassion Fatigue, I thought about how this score reveals that this person may be overwhelmed, and I considered how talking to me about their experiences, seeing as I am not a mental health professional, could be harmful. Because of this, I decided not to ask this person to participate. That left two people, a Black or African American and female identifying teacher who was experiencing High CS, Moderate BO and Low STS and a White and female identifying teacher who also had High CS, but Low BO and Moderate STS. These interviewees could provide two different perspectives, and along with the interview of the researcher, allow the exploration of these experiences and a deeper

understanding of context. These teachers will be referred to as Teacher 1 and Teacher 2, as this was the order in which I interviewed them.

Evidence to Date

The evidence is broken down into three datasets: the ProQOL measures, answers to open-ended survey question, and interviews. The interviews and survey question were coded for themes, while the ProQOL Measure was considered a quantitative measure utilizing descriptive statistics for trends and outliers to spark moments of inquiry.

Data Set 1: ProQOL Measures

After following the same procedure utilized for the LHS data (downloading the data from Qualtrics, reverse scoring the appropriate items, then adding the appropriate items to reveal the levels; and repeating this process 2 times for reliability) I began by examining the data in the order of highest Compassion Satisfaction to lowest, and then looked at their level of Compassion Satisfaction compared with the two other measures. As seen in the table below, nine of the teachers surveyed were experiencing High CS and Moderate to low CF, (BO and STS), while half of the teachers surveyed (n=10) were experiencing Moderate CS and Moderate to Low CF. There was one outlier: a teacher experiencing Low CS and Moderate to High CF. These data profiles were used to examine the data across gender and race as well. In the following sections, I break down each racial identifier by their CS-CF Profiles and then do the same for gender.

Table 5.4

ProQOL levels by Compassion Satisfaction

CF-CS Profile	Number
High CS and Moderate to Low BO and STS	9
Moderate CS, Moderate to Low BO and STS	10
Low CS and Moderate to High BO and STS	1

ProQOL Measures by Race. Well-being opportunities have often been limited for historically underserved populations, so I began looking at the data aggregated by race and to assess the representation of each racial group. In the survey, participants were asked to choose the racial designation that best describes them, with the option of selecting multiple races and also the option to self-describe if preferred.

Table 5.5

CS-CF Profiles by CS Level and Race

CS-CF Profiles by Race	Asian	Black or African American and Native American	Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, White	Black or African American	Hispanic, Latina/o/x and/or of Spanish Origin	Hispanic, Latina/o/x and/or of Spanish Origin and White	White
High CS and Moderate to Low BO and STS	**1**	**0**	**0**	***3***	**2**	**0**	**2**
Moderate CS, Moderate to Low BO and STS	**0**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**0**	**1**	***6***
Low CS and Moderate to High BO and STS	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**
Total Number	**1**	**1**	**1**	**5**	**2**	**1**	**9**

As presented in the table above, only one participant identified from the following groups: Asian; Black and Native American; Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and White, and Hispanic, Latina/o/x and/or of Spanish Origin and White. Five participants identified as Black or African American, two participants identified as Hispanic, Latina/o/x and/or of Spanish Origin, and nine participants identified as White. In the following sections, I discuss findings about the different races represented.

Representations with only one participant. There was only one participant that identified themselves as Asian. This participant experienced a High level of Compassion Satisfaction, Low Burnout and Moderate Secondary Traumatic Stress. The participant identifying as Black and

Native American experienced a Moderate level of Compassion Satisfaction and Moderate level of Compassion Fatigue, as did the participant who identified as Hispanic, Latina/o/x and/or Spanish Origin and White. The participant identifying as Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and White experienced a High level of Compassion Satisfaction and a Moderate level of Compassion Fatigue. All participants in these categories of only one representative were experiencing a Moderate level of either Burnout or Secondary Traumatic Stress.

Black or African American. Those who identified themselves as Black or African American experienced a range of scores. Three out of five teachers identifying as Black or African American (60%) experienced High levels of Compassion Satisfaction at the time, while the other two were Moderate, (40%) as seen in the table below. What is notable is that four out of five (80%) of these teachers experienced Moderate levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress at the time of the survey, and all in this group were experiencing a Moderate level of Burnout (100%).

Table 5.6

CS-CF Profiles of Black or African American identifying teachers

CS-CF Profile of Black or African American identifying teachers	Number
High CS and Moderate to Low CF	3
Moderate CS and Moderate to Low CF	2
Low CS and Moderate to High CF	0

Hispanic, Latina/o/x and/or of Spanish Origin. The two teachers identifying as Hispanic, Latina/o/x and/or of Spanish Origin, were experiencing High CS and Moderate to Low

CF (100%). One of the teachers had the ideal experience of High CS and Low BO and STS, while the other was experiencing High CS, Low STS, but Moderate Burnout.

Table 5.7

CS-CF Profiles of Hispanic, Latina/o/x and/or of Spanish Origin identifying teachers

CS-CF Profile	Number
High CS and Moderate to Low CF	2
Moderate CS and Moderate to Low CF	0
Low CS and Moderate to High CF	0

White. Teachers identifying as White were the most represented population, which is representative of the staff demographics. Out of the nine teachers surveyed, including the researcher, six reported only Moderate levels of CS (67%), two reported High levels of CS (22%), and one reported a Low level of CS (11). The outlier in this group, the teacher with Low CS and High CF will be discussed further in the analytics section.

Table 5.8

CS-CF Profiles of White identifying teachers

CF-CS Profile	Number
High CS and Moderate to Low CF	2
Moderate CS and Moderate to Low CF	6
Low CS and Moderate to High CF	1

Summary. There were a few items of note regarding this data. First, every teacher to identify as Black or African American, including teachers who identified as more than that one race, were experiencing Moderate Burnout, and six of the seven were experiencing Moderate

Secondary Traumatic Stress., Yet, the majority, or four out of seven (57%), were still experiencing High Compassion Satisfaction. Also, more than half of the White identifying teachers were experiencing Moderate Compassion Satisfaction, as opposed to High, but overall lower levels of Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress. Further connections will be made in the analytics portion.

ProQOL Measures by Gender. With such a large majority of this dataset identifying as female, it is difficult to identify comparative data. However, there were some trends within the dataset by gender. Overall, when looking at the male identifying teachers, there was one from each CS-CF Profile. There were no other notable trends, as each male profile was unique. Though all female identifying teachers were experiencing Moderate to Low Compassion Fatigue, looking at Compassion Fatigue for its two counterparts, Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress, can provide a bit more insight into trends. Eleven of 17 (65%) female teachers represented were experiencing a Moderate level of Burnout at the time of the survey, and nine of 17 (53%) teachers were experiencing Moderate levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress. I then looked for any overlap, seeing if the teachers who were experiencing Low BO were also experiencing Low STS and if the teachers experiencing Moderate BO were also experiencing Moderate STS. There was more overlap at the Moderate Level (n=6) than at the Low Level (n=4). That breakdown is seen in the table below.

Table 5.9

CS-CF Profiles by Gender

CS-CF Profiles by Gender	Female	Male
High CS and Moderate to Low BO and STS	8	1
Moderate CS, Moderate to Low BO and STS	9	1

Low CS and Moderate to High BO and STS	0	1
Total Number	17	3

Table 5.10

Breakdown of Compassion Fatigue (BO and STS) for females

Females Identifying Compassion Fatigue (BO and STS)		
	Burnout	**Secondary Traumatic Stress**
Moderate	11	9
Low	6	8
Both Moderate	6	
Both Low	4	

Dataset 2: Open-Ended Question Themes

Through inductive coding and based on prior experience coding the survey question from the LHS study, themes emerged that identified supports for teacher well-being. The first read of the questions was conducted to find evidence for Supports and Barriers to teacher well-being; the second read and coding was conducted to identify references to the different environments mentioned in the Compassion Fatigue Theoretical Framework: personal, client, and work or in this case, personal, student, and school. I then narrowed those to themes that related to identified supports, to help answer the first research question. The following themes are discussed in the next sections: Support from Coworkers, Professional Development and Coaching, Supports outside of the Work Environment, and Lack of Support and Appeals for Support.

Figure 5.5

Open-Ended question from survey coding plan
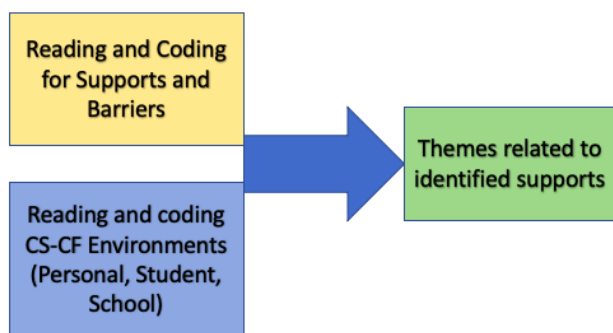
Out of the 20 teachers who participated in the survey, 17 provided answers to the question, "At your school, what supports have you received when it comes to maintaining your well-being?" Some excerpts from participant responses are included in the next section to support the creation of codes and themes.

Theme 1: Support from Coworkers. Five out of 17 teachers (29%) who provided an answer to the open-ended question mentioned talking to colleagues or coworkers as a support that helps them maintain their well-being. One teacher mentioned "positive co-teachings relationships that make me feel like I'm working alongside someone else" has been a tool for them to maintain their well-being. Another mentioned "Veteran teacher colleagues just being there to vent and give advice" as a support. This type of social support among teachers can be a helpful tool to be leveraged in schools.

Table 5.11

"Support from coworkers" theme evidence from survey

Theme	Evidence
Support from coworkers	"helpful co-workers" "Coworkers" "Veteran teacher colleagues just being there to vent and give advice" "talking to colleagues"

	"positive co-teachings relationships that make me feel like I'm working alongside someone else"

Theme 2: Professional Development and Coaching. Another support mentioned by five of the 17 teachers (29%) was Professional Development and Coaching. There are two items mentioned in regard to these supports: instructional support and wellness-specific support. For some it is unclear as to which they mean or if it is both, for instance when one teacher wrote, "School led PDs have helped me tremendously." For wellness specific supports, two teachers mentioned "workshops around maintaining our well-being" and "wellness coaching from

instructional coaches and administration."

Table 5.12

"Professional Development and Coaching" theme evidence from survey

Theme	Evidence
Professional Development and Coaching	"We have received only couple workshops around maintaining our well-being." "Wellness coaching from instructional coaches and administration" "Additionally, some years instructional coaches have been very helpful, this year they've been ok, but not as helpful as I would like." "Every now and then during PD, they may have a brief moment "School led PDs have helped me tremendously."

Theme 3: Supports outside of the Work Environment. Teachers also mentioned supports outside of their work environment, supporting the Compassion Fatigue Theoretical framework, which acknowledges that teachers are not only influenced by their work environment, but also their personal environment. Thirty-five percent of teachers (6 of 17) named a support outside of the classroom, and the most mentioned was family or a certain family member, such as "My spouse is my main support." One teacher mentioned doing things "outside of work and those things help me to maintain my well-being," while another mentioned therapy and religion as supports for their well-being.

Table 5.13

"Supports outside of the Work Environment" theme evidence from survey

Theme	Evidence
Supports outside of the Work Environment	"Support from family" "My spouse is my main support."

	"Family" "I do things I enjoy outside of work and those things help me to maintain my well-being." "I have a therapist. My religious beliefs also help me." "Family"

Theme 4: Lack of Support and Appeals for Support (Barrier). Though I asked the question in a way that would allow teachers to name the supports in place, some participants replied that there were no supports and a few went further to comment on the quality of such supports or to make an appeal for support. Putting together the responses of "none" and N/A, there were five of 17 (29%) responding that they have received no supports to help them maintain their well-being. Two of these teachers provided more detail regarding the state of the support they are receiving by saying the support one received from instructional coaches this year was "not as helpful as I would like" and one mentioned, "There needs to be more support systems in place for teachers." This lack of support can be seen as a barrier to teacher well-being.

Table 5.14

"Lack of support and appeals for support (Barrier)" theme evidence from survey

Theme	Evidence
No support and Appeal for Support	"None" (4) N/A (1) "but not as helpful as I would like." "There needs to be more support systems in place for teachers."

Data Set 3: Interviews Themes

The interview protocols (Appendices B and C) that were developed were created utilizing the RISE Index's questions (Appendix A) that address Staff Well-being and also by using my own inquiry points and research questions. Also, I wanted to directly address the survey data and

the participant's response to their own scores, allowing them the opportunity for self-reflection and to give context to and make meaning of their scores. I also created an opportunity for reflexivity for myself by first asking another researcher and colleague to interview me with my own questions. I asked for feedback after the process, allowing time to adjust any of the questions as needed.

To code the interviews, I used a reflexive thematic analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2019) to first familiarize myself with the data and then develop the themes. First, I used an inductive approach similar to the one used for the survey question. After sharing with the interviewees their scores on the ProQOL and the explanation from the ProQOL manual on what the scores mean, I wanted to give them the opportunity to ask questions, self-reflect, and provide context or feedback about their scores. In that vein, I coded first for the three measures of the ProQOL: Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress. Next, much like the survey question, I coded for the three different environments from the Theoretical Model as it pertains to teachers: School, Personal, and Student.

I realized I needed to focus on strategically mitigating my biases, so I completed a third read of the interviews, looking for useful quotes from all three interviews and grouping related quotes together. After grouping the quotes and naming the themes amongst similar quotes, I utilized NVivo to organize the data and view it by hierarchy, seeing which themes were most mentioned and important. I identified the following themes and subthemes from least mentioned to most mentioned, as seen in the table below. In talking about the Interviewees, I use the code

names, Teacher 1 and Teacher 2, and when quoting myself, I will use first person.

Table 5.15

Interview Codes from NVivo

Name	Files	References
Suggested and existing supports	3	35
How students affect teachers' well-being	3	18
Identity	3	10
The effect of coworkers	3	9

Suggested and Existing Supports. What got teachers talking the most was when they were either examining existing supports or when they were thinking about what other ideas could be in place to help support their well-being. Teachers were willing to offer and ideate on a number of suggestions, and even while naming problems, they were willing to seek solutions as well. The following solutions are in order from most mentioned to least.

Most mentioned: School Based Support and Knowledge of Leadership. When asked what could be done with the survey data, the three interviewees mentioned different stakeholders at the school needing to know this information about their teachers and ideated on how they could use this information, including checkpoints at multiple points during the school year. Specifically for Burnout, Teachers 1 and 2 mentioned the importance of leadership being aware of how staff are feeling throughout the year. Teacher 2 and I suggested this type of survey could be used multiple times in a year, and Teacher 2 mentioned using it in a proactive way, saying, "If they get the historical data, they can kind of see like, what times a year are our teachers most likely burnt out [and] what times a year we need to do something extra special for the teachers?"

Teacher 1 echoed the sentiment, and stressed the importance of the burnout questions:

> I think the burnout questions are really important, especially for leadership. [...] I think
> that the burnout question and the stress is something that they should ask the staff as well
> and yeah figure out what's going on, because there's a lot of teachers that I think would
> score a very high amount in the burnout. [...] So I think admin this, as someone above us
> would be able to reflect.

Both Teachers 1 and 2 also mentioned the Staff Wellness Committee and school-based mental health professionals using this information, especially the levels of teachers' Secondary Traumatic Stress, Teacher 1 mentioning reaching out to the counselors to receive support for families and Teacher 2 mentioning the counselors "can know how to help us [as teachers] heal ourselves and make sure we're good, so we can then continue to support our kids." As for Compassion Satisfaction, Teacher 2 mentioned how the school does well with praising and expressing gratitude to the staff, so that could be an opportunity for praise or gratitude.

 Space for teachers. One of the questions from the RISE Index directly asks about spaces that teachers have to decompress or to socialize, so that same question was posed to interviewees, who did mention existing spaces and room for improvement in creating spaces. The teachers mentioned three spaces: tables outside and in the teacher lounge (Teacher 1) and a bench by the windows upstairs, (Teacher 2). Though these spaces exist, both teachers mentioned privacy being an issue in those spaces, and Teacher 2 mentioned wanting "a place in the school I could go where I felt [comfortable]... I like my privacy. So like, if I'm trying to just decompress, or if I want to shed a quick tear, you know, and get myself back together [...] Like, I want to do that without thinking, 'Oh, someone's gonna walk through the door real quick', or 'Oh, someone's gonna ask me what's wrong or something.' Like, I just want to go and be." Though

Teacher 1 mentioned the teacher's lounge as a space where too much negativity happens, she mentioned a coffee room where she had worked previously that was for teachers to gather with guidelines of "no negative talk"; Teacher 2 ideated spaces where teachers could gather, like a Zen Space for teachers, such as the spaces often created for students to support their mental health. Both teachers smiled and began speaking faster when thinking about spaces they could picture for teachers to help support their well-being.

     Nutrition and Exercise. Nutrition and exercise are known factors when it comes to one's well-being, and all three teachers mentioned this in some capacity. Both Teachers 1 and 2 mentioned personal commitments to fitness and how that has affected their well-being:

- Teacher 2: I'm on my fitness journey. And I think always exercise because the body is the temple. And like, when I say that, I noticed that I behave a lot better, for lack of better words, but I just have a better grasp of my emotions, and I mean, who I am when I exercise consistently. So [...] I think that will be beneficial.

- Teacher 1: I mean maybe it's because I'm trying to get into a healthy kick but, I know, like when people do healthier things, yeah there you know it's like the endorphins, like you're just like automatically uplifted. Yes, I think some of the well-being could be options for fun workouts.

Teacher 2 reminisced about her previous school, saying "they'd have fitness challenges and things going on, that they do with staff [and they'd] actually put money behind it" and Teacher 1 suggested "a group walk" or "Zumba one day." Another idea that sparked interest was the mention of meal prep or the school providing meals for teachers. I mentioned, during my interview, "You know, teacher appreciation week was awesome because they gave us lunch, a couple of times. What if schools just give us lunch every now and then? It's just something

simple like that to - it would show appreciation and just take one thing literally off and on our plate," and Teacher 1 smiled and laughed as she said, "Oh my God, yeah can you imagine if our school provided meal prep meals for teachers? I swear, I didn't even think of that until I read that. Oh, my God that would be amazing if we came in, it was like 'What would you like? Would you like salad today?'" Exercise and nutrition were two factors mentioned that could help support teachers' well-being.

Breaks. The teachers interviewed mentioned the importance of supports that were already in place, in regard to breaks during the day and having days off. Both Teachers 1 and 2 mentioned the importance of their breaks, though in different ways. Teacher 2 mentioned her appreciation for having so many breaks throughout the day saying, "The fact that we have so many, like, legit, I have a lunch break, I have a specials break, [...] and when meeting times aren't actually filled with meetings, which is like, awesome. So that makes me feel really happy," while Teacher 1 mentioned her frustrations when her breaks are interrupted such as when specials teachers take days off because of the pandemic, so she loses her break. Teacher 2 also mentioned her appreciation for having some Professional Development days off acknowledging "other schools don't have that rule. So if we didn't already have it, that would be my suggestion, but the fact that we already have that built in, I think it's amazing." That appreciation for supports that are already in place is important to note, as it seems to have a direct impact on these teachers' perceptions of their well-being.

How students affect teachers' well-being. Teachers' direct experiences with students can impact them in many ways. All three interviewees mentioned the effect their students have on their well-being and how teaching students can be joyful, uplifting, and sustainable, and also how working with students can be tiring, draining, or frustrating, which is how I further broke

down this theme.

Negative student effects. All three interviewees mentioned that interactions with students can have a negative effect on their well-being, both due to teaching frustrations as well as how students' environments may impact them. Teacher 2, specifically, shared experiences about teaching frustrations, saying:

> When they're just not grasping the concept, and yeah, that just bothers me. I don't see any teacher that wasn't like that. But you know, that's, that is the one thing that's probably the only thing that really makes me sad [...] it just kind of that it really bothers me. It bothers me when like I feel like I've done my best. I'm pouring my heart out and trying to teach them [...] and they just flopped. That affects me. [...] I want to pour more into some of my students. And I want them to get some more support, some more services, things like that.

Teacher 1 also mentioned "I noticed for me like I've had to front load a lot more than I usually do [...] but they need this information," in regard to having to fill in learning gaps that students have experienced because of the pandemic. I also mentioned the students with which I work, but more about their behavior than academics, saying:

> As a teacher [...] working with students who either are, like, experiencing delays or like behavioral delays or students who have experienced trauma and they start throwing things and trying to climb your furniture like that, I mean it definitely takes a toll like it can be really tiring.

These responses were given in regard to things that have negatively impacted teachers' well-being, and all three teachers mentioned students in response to that question.

Also mentioned was the effect that students' environment can have on the students themselves, in turn affecting the teachers. Many students at this school are emerging bilingual students, or as many districts classify them, "English Learners," so Teacher 2 did mention the language barrier that may affect students' understanding of content and instructions. Teacher 1 was particularly affected by her students' experiences they bring from outside school, and when asked about her response to the survey, particularly her Compassion Fatigue scores, she explained:

> If it wasn't during the pandemic […] I think it probably would have been a little bit less. This is my first year, where in 18 years of teaching, I've had so many outside situations with my students that do affect me, way more than ever. So I think that I'm just curious what this would have been like another year, you know, because I know I go home with a lot on my head and I always do that, [...] I mean I know their fourth graders [,] but they're too young to be dealing with some of the situations they're being dealt with. You know, like just their family life affects me, I would definitely say, it brings on stress because I'm a fixer and there's certain things I cannot fix and that's hard for me.

She mentioned, in particular, a student who recently lost their mother and was experiencing grief and the helplessness she experienced in not knowing exactly how to help them, saying "It's just like, what do you do when the kid is crying, 'I just want my mommy.' It's like you know, like, I mean, I did what I thought was best but what the real answer is, I don't know." This particular instance was given when asked about Secondary Traumatic Stress and mentioning the need for more supports when it comes to supporting students experiencing trauma.

Effect of the pandemic on students. The teachers interviewed expressed concern about how the pandemic's effect on student learning could lead to lower test scores, which will also

impact their own teacher evaluation scores, which in this district is called IMPACT. For example, in my interview I said, "The fact that most students on my caseload aren't here today, mostly because of quarantining… I'm just like it makes me feel a little bit of anxiety because I'm still going to be held to like the standards of IMPACT and trying to get students to meet their goals, but how can I do that when they're not here?" Teacher 2 mentioned, though not as a big concern, "The only time that it kind of stressed out a little bit, was thinking about them taking their like the PARCC [the standardized test students take], and whatnot," with the realization that "how on all in the same breath, I need to acknowledge that they are two years behind in a sense." The teachers interviewed also see the pandemic as a barrier because the 2020-2021 school year was virtual, which caused an interruption in their progress and gaps in their learning, such as when Teacher 1 said:

> Well yeah but now we all have IMPACT test testing. Yeah and I mean some teachers still have not been evaluated, I guess, for their second round [...] I think that pressure is real, that and the fact that [the students] they're behind, I think IMPACT, you know, I do pretty good on IMPACT, but I think it's unnecessary for this year, I think, teachers are trying to grasp like how do I just move the students? I noticed for me like I've had to front load a lot more than I usually do, and in the back of my head I'm like man, if I was being observed at this very second it probably wouldn't go so well but they need this information. I think, I think that's a stressor, IMPACT and, you know, motivating kids. That and the fact that we can't do certain things like we typically would.

This connection to Teacher 1, who mentioned outside situations with her students had been affecting her, connection how students' lives affect teachers, not just academically.

Positive student effects Though there were negative effects, positive effects were also mentioned, including the joys and happiness that these teachers feel when working with their students. All three teachers mentioned the joy that can come from working with students as evidenced here:

- Researcher: "Working with kids, I mean, it can be a lot of fun and, you know, like, I definitely get joy [...]

- Teacher 2: "When my kids understand that is like it makes I literally jumped over the moon like literally, I'd be in the clouds dancing, like okay, we got it. [...] so that's what brings me, like, a lot of joy."

- Teacher 1: "I know personally, like, I'm really happy being a teacher because I love it and I'm passionate about it."

Another way they mentioned students is that students being motivation for teachers, such as when I said, "For the most part it's [students], you know, that's the thing that has kept me going," and when Teacher 1 explained, "You as a teacher do not need to have favorites, then you need at least those one or two kids that you know will motivate you to continue to keep on moving [...] because I'm like I need to be the best that I could be for this kid here." These are examples of how students have positively affected the interviewed teachers' well-being.

The effect of coworkers. All three of the teachers interviewed, including myself, mentioned coworkers playing a role in their well-being, and stressed the need for personal and professional relationships with colleagues. While this idea was mentioned more often, there were also times when teachers mentioned a lack of community and the negative effects of coworkers. Because of the duality of this issue, I further broke it down into the two following themes.

Supportive team and coworkers. All three interviewees mentioned coworkers,

colleagues, or their team, playing a part in their own well-being. Teacher 1 specifically stressed, "I think, just talking to other people is so important and, like, sharing resources, and it can make your job so much easier if you have a supportive team," and "I love my team. I think it's really important to have a strong team, because you need - If it's not a strong team, you need at least someone in the school that you can go to be like when I need a 'woosah' moment. If you do not have that I can imagine it to be a very big challenge [...] But I know, for me, my team has been helpful." When I was interviewed, I also mentioned the importance of having someone in which to confide if there is something stressful happening, saying, "if at work like, if there's something negative or stressful happening, I think it's just [I] talk to colleagues or my coach, but mostly like my team or the person I share an office with are who I talk to." Teacher 1 echoed this sentiment when asked about what she does in a stressful situation saying, "I would definitely say, sometimes I even go straight to one certain coworker who I know, could be like 'Okay stop take a breath if I haven't done it already and just help me keep it moving,'" and Teacher 2 mentioned going across the hall to talk to two specific teachers, though she does go further to explain that the relationship is more superficial than not, which brings me to the next theme.

   Lack of community and negative effect of coworkers. There were times when the interviewed teachers either pointed to a lack of community or the negative effect coworkers can have on one another. When asked about suggestions for well-being programming, Teacher 2 mentioned:

>   I think that's something that our school doesn't seem to have the strongest sense of - like
>
>   we have a decent community. Everyone's very, like, kind and respectful, I should say. It
>
>   doesn't feel like a culture community […] Sometimes I go across the hall to [two specific
>
>   teachers] I mean, but nothing, nothing deep and personal. That's just like superficial stuff.

I don't feel comfortable talking to anybody at school with anything like deep and

personal. [...] I haven't established deep relationships like that at the school.

Even Teacher 1, who had pointed out so much about how helpful her team is, mentioned, "I do

feel bad for some of the newer teachers, because they may not know who to turn to - even the

teachers that were hired last year. They're like I haven't met anyone! This year we haven't really

had a chance to, I guess, like, bond in a way," also demonstrating a lack of overall community.

Since the previous school year was virtual, and this school year has involved many policies

prohibiting large gatherings, less opportunities for community building have been offered, as

evidenced by what these teachers said.

The final theme that surfaced, specifically with Teacher 1, is how coworkers can

negatively affect one another. When asked what has negatively affected her well-being, Teacher

1 mentioned seeing other teachers who have negative attitudes and the effect it has on her:

One thing that personally really upsets me is when… Our staff is really, but that doesn't

mean you can't meet someone and be nice. [...] I think there's cliques at our school that

are unnecessary. I'm walking down a hallway, you should be able to say hello, and not

worry about like, "Did I do something to make them mad? Like, why are they not even

looking up?" For me personally, that really upsets me, I would say, and does frustrate me

because that could be an easy fix. Yeah but people I think are sometimes so caught up in

grudges and things from the past, they just can't move on. Yeah and I've been at the

school for 10 years and it's just like some people are still in the same funk every day. It's

like, get out of it! Like get a copy of your survey, and if you're burned out every day,

maybe this isn't the career for you.

She goes further to explain the effect that other teachers' attitude can have on her and on

students, such as when another teacher is mad or upset, and her worry about the effect it can have on the students they teach. Finally, when we talked about spaces in the school that Teacher 1 could go to decompress or have a quiet moment, she mentioned the negativity in the teachers' lounge and hearing teachers vent, making the teachers' lounge not a relaxing or quiet place for her. This, paired with lack of community, are two barriers these interviewed teachers are facing when it comes to their well-being.

Identity and the effect of coworkers. The last two themes, as they are directly related to the research questions, will be discussed more in the analytics section, as I attempt to connect these themes with the measures of the ProQOL and survey responses.

From Evidence to Analytics

Moving from Evidence to Analytics, I used a combination of Thematic Analysis and Phenomenology to help shape the narrative of interpretation. After I identified the themes from the interviews, I revisited Ravitch and Carl's text (2019) and wrote a memo in which I identified methods of analysis that would be helpful:

- Phenomenology: Focus on the experiences of the participants in an examination of shared experience; analysis remains as close to data as possible
- Thematic Analysis: Develop themes to answer research questions; used in multiple methodological approaches

Though I assumed this entire process would involve a Thematic Analysis, I realized the experiences of Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue are phenomena that were being experienced in varying levels by teachers, and in the previous section, I attempted to describe the themes as close to the data as possible. Though I know I cannot remove myself from this dissertation, the semi-structured interview I gave attempted "to obtain descriptions of the life

world of the intervieweee with respect to interpreting the meaning of described phenomena"
(Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 150) and to make meaning of the Compassion Fatigue and
Compassion Satisfaction phenomena that teachers were experiencing or not experiencing at the
time.

The Analytics bring us back to the research question and how each of the datasets pertain
to the research questions. From the beginning of this journey, I have been considering how
schools can support teacher well-being, because all too often the responsibility of dealing with
unfavorable conditions lies with the teacher and their ability to cope with those conditions. By
creating more optimal conditions for Compassion Satisfaction, teachers could be more likely to
thrive in their position and continue delivering quality instruction and care for their students.

Table 5.16

Modified Analytics of research questions by data set

	ProQOL Measures	**Survey Open Ended Question**	**Interviews**	**Combined Interpretation**
RQ 1		X	X	X
RQ 1a	X	X	X	X
RQ 1b	X	X	X	X
RQ 2			X	

Limitations of the Analysis Approach

The people who volunteered to be interviewed were limited, as was the time in which to
complete the interviews and the dissertation; representation was not as thorough as I would have
hoped, especially in regard to the selected school. Ninety percent of students at the school are
Hispanic/Latinx. I hoped that I would be able to elevate the voice of a Hispanic or Latinx
identifying teacher, but I decided to go with teachers who expressed they had the time and
interest to participate. In the analytics section and in response to RQ1, since I only had

participants who identify as White and who identify as Black or African American, I focused on those two racial designations in the analytics process. Also, even though the participants spoke of aspects of their identity as part of their experiences with well-being, they are only one representative of that group and do not represent all people who identify a such. The answers given need to be placed within the time and place of their setting as a part of the participant's reality, so these interviews aimed to be a verified snapshot of certain teachers' experiences at a certain time.

RQ 1: What factors do teachers name as supports to their well-being?

With this question I wanted to prove my hypothesis that teachers can identify supports for their well-being, either that exist or that they would like to see exist, and not every teacher needs the same thing. For this question, I turn to two datasets for support: the survey's open-ended question and the interviews. Utilizing the themes created through coding, I saw I could separate the two themes into "supports suggested" and "existing supports." The supports suggested entirely came from the interviews because those teachers had the chance to engage in conversation with the interviewer around suggestions for maintaining well-being; however, the existing supports came from both the survey and the interviews, as the survey's question only asked about support the school provided. There were three themes of note that spanned both datasets, discussed below.

Table 5.17

Existed and Suggested supports from Data Sets 2 and 3

	Supports suggested	Existing Supports
Survey Question		Professional development and coaching
Interviews	Administration and leadership knowledge Space for teachers Nutrition and exercise	

	Diversity and choice	
Overlap		Breaks Supportive team and coworkers Supports outside of the work environment

Existing Supports from Survey. The survey provided some existing supports, but with more probing and conversation, I was able to discover more from the teacher interviews. In the survey, as previously mentioned, the supports identified were Professional Development and Coaching and Supports Outside of the Work Environment. Surprisingly, neither of the interviewees mentioned Coaching or Professional Development, though they did call for administration and leadership support in regard to well-being.

Suggested Supports: Administration and Leadership Knowledge. When asked what could be done with the survey data, the three interviewees mentioned different stakeholders at the school needing to know this information about their teachers and ideated on how they could use this information, including checkpoints at multiple points during the school year. Specifically for Burnout, Teachers 1 and 2 mentioned the importance of leadership being aware of how staff are feelings throughout the year. Teacher 2 and I suggested this type of survey could be used multiple times each year, and Teacher 2 mentioned using it in a proactive way, saying, "If they get the historical data, they can kind of see like, what times a year are our teachers most likely burnt out [and] what times a year we need to do something extra extra special for the teachers?" Teacher 1 echoed the sentiment, and stressed the importance of the burnout questions:

> I think the burnout questions are really important, especially for leadership. [...] I think
>
> that the burnout question and the stress is something that they should ask the staff as well
>
> and yeah figure out what's going on, because there's a lot of teachers that I think would
>
> score a very high amount in the burnout. [...] I mean, I see it, and it's hard it's hard to

motivate and I'm just a coworker. So I think admin this, as someone above us would be able to reflect.

Both Teachers 1 and 2 also mentioned the Staff Wellness Committee and school-based mental health professionals using this information as well, especially the levels of teachers' Secondary Traumatic Stress. Teacher 1 mentioned reaching out to the counselors to receive support for families and Teacher 2 mentioned the counselors "can know how to help us heal ourselves and make sure we're good, so we can then continue to support our kids." Both teachers agreed that if the data existed, there would need to be direct follow-up action, or else the surveys would be pointless.

Space for teachers. As mentioned previously, both teachers spoke of the need for a space that teachers could use, either with the purpose of being a quiet space to decompress or a space for positive interactions with coworkers.

Nutrition and Exercise. Both teachers also mentioned the importance of fitness and its positive effects, both physically and mentally. Teacher 1 and I both mentioned how a school providing teachers with meals could be helpful.

Overlapping supports. There were three overlapping supports between the datasets: Breaks, Supportive Team and Coworkers, and Supports outside the Work Environment. These are existing supports, so it makes sense that there is overlap with the interview participants, since the survey question only asked about supports. The specific breaks consisted of time during the school day and also days off. During the workday, breaks offer an opportunity for teachers to engage in prep work, as mentioned by Teacher 1, or have a time to relax or decompress, as mentioned by Teacher 2. Both the interviewees and survey participants mentioned their coworkers or team as a key source to help them maintain their well-being. Finally, supports

mentioned outside of the work environment included people, such as family and friends, religion, therapy, and exercise. By addressing their needs outside of the work environment, the negative effects of Compassion Fatigue can be alleviated and more manageable.

RQ 1 Summary

There were both existing and suggested supports that teachers shared when asked. As teachers can identify supports for their own well-being, a platform must be made to raise their voices, and I hope that this dissertation can help do that. Some of these suggestions are doable, but they are not the only things that need to happen, especially when it comes to the systemic challenges that educators face.

RQ 1a and b: As one indicator of well-being, what contributes to the current levels of teachers' Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue, and how do the different aspects of one's identity affect a teacher's perception of well-being?

For this question, I began with a phenomenological approach, thinking about the experiences of each interviewee, how they described each phenomena, and how they addressed their scores on the ProQOL. Putting those datasets together specifically for these three participants, including myself, I sought to understand and make sense of each of their experiences in order to answer this question about what is contributing to these teachers' Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue. I also hypothesized that the levels experienced could vary due to race and gender and that most of the experiences of burnout were because of the effects of the pandemic.

CF-CS for Researcher. As the only interview participant with Moderate Compassion Satisfaction, I also had Moderate Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress, making my scores both similar and different from other participants. At this point in the school year, I had already

submitted my resignation for the end of the year, in the realization that teaching is not a

sustainable profession for me. For this reason, I was not entirely surprised at my scores. Since

my scores were all moderate, I am going to group them for discussion; they are interrelated.

Table 5.18

CS, BO, and STS for researcher

	CS	BO	STS
ProQOL Measures	**34 (Moderate)**	**32 (Moderate)**	**27 (Moderate)**
Themes from Interviews	-Positive effects of students on well-being -Supportive coworkers and team	-Pandemic ● Effect on students	-Student Environment and Families

During the interview, I mentioned the joy of working with students along with the

support of my coworkers and team, and in a researcher memo, I was able to justify why my score

was Moderate. The joy I felt working with kids and the fun that I have had in the classroom has

sustained me for the six years of my teaching career. In my interview, I reminisced at the

previous school year (2020-2021) when we were virtual and how "for the most part [...] that's the

thing that has kept me going, especially last year being digital I feel like that's what kept me

going was like just seeing kids online was really good and I felt the love through the screen."

Though there is still joy, reflecting on the definition of Compassion Satisfaction, I wrote in a

memo:

"Do your work well" - That phrase sticks with me in regard to my experience this school

year. I transitioned from being a classroom teacher, which I have been for the last 5

years, to Special Education for the first time. [...] I was looking forward to the idea of

problem solving around fewer students and exploring the neurodiversity that exists within

children. I have had the chance to do that, and I fully appreciate it and have enjoyed it,

but I did not fully appreciate the mountain of responsibilities and challenges that come

with being a Special Education teacher and Case manager. Two things have caused me to

feel completely overwhelmed and out of my depth: managing the documentation and the

service hours. (Tatum, 2022)

This new position caused my Compassion Satisfaction to lower and my Burnout to increase, but

the pandemic also contributed to both my experiences with Burnout and Secondary Traumatic

Stress. In the memo and in my interview, I expressed my frustration with the pandemic and its

effect on my students, especially in regard to their attendance, and explained in the memo:

The pandemic has made it so much more difficult to teach, seeing as students get

quarantined for days at a time. When students come back, it takes so much time to

reestablish routines so that the student can be successful, and that adjustment period can

sometimes reveal behaviors that may be caused by Trauma or Traumatic Stress, which in

turn can affect the caregiver, in this case me. (Tatum, 2022)

The ever-changing pandemic policies, coupled with beginning a new position, led me to

experience Moderate Levels of all three phenomena.

CF-CS for Teacher 1. What was notable regarding Teacher 1's interview was her emphasis on

the importance of her team and the negative experiences she has had with some coworkers. Also,

I noted her moment of self-reflection as she thought about her Secondary Traumatic Stress score

and attributing it to the pandemic and the effect it has had on her and her students. Below, I

further explore how she connected her personal experiences to the phenomena of Compassion

Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue.

Table 5.19

CS, BO, and STS for Teacher 1

	CS	BO	STS
ProQOL Measures	48 (High)	19 (Low)	26 (Moderate)

Themes from Interviews	-Positive effects of students on well-being
	-Identity and passion
	-Supportive coworkers and team
	-Suggestions
	  ● Exercise
		-Pandemic
		  ● Health concerns
		  ● Effect on students
		-Lack of community and negative effect of coworkers
			-Student Environment and Families

Teacher 1 Compassion Satisfaction. Teacher 1 had the highest level of Compassion Satisfaction

achieved by the teachers surveyed, so it was important to create opportunities for her to speak

about some of the aspects of Compassion Satisfaction. The ProQOL (Stamm, 2010, p.13)

explains:

> Compassion satisfaction is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work
>
> well. For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work.
>
> You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work
>
> setting or even the greater good of society.

Throughout the interview, Teacher 1 mentioned the joy she received working with students and

how her compassion for them sustained and motivated her. Another connection she made was

when she spoke of the importance of her relationships with her coworkers, saying "I love my

team. I think it's really important to have a strong team, because you need - if it's not a strong

team, you need at least someone in the school that you can go to." Feeling positively about

colleagues is also a marker of Compassion Satisfaction. She also talked about how she loved

teaching, and though it is a hard job, her love of being a teacher and passion for teaching, as part

of her identity, has sustained her, which also explains her high CS. Lastly, she spoke of being on a "healthy kick" and how exercising can be "automatically uplifting" with the production of endorphins. This time of self-reflection created by the interview allowed her to explore and name what has contributed to her high levels of CS.

Teacher 1 Compassion Fatigue. Though Teacher 1 had low Burnout, she was experiencing Moderate Secondary Traumatic Stress, which she attributed to the pandemic's effect on her and her students. While reflecting on her scores, she mentioned that this year, because of the pandemic, she had gone home thinking about her students more often than any other. The ongoing stress of the pandemic has contributed to her experiences with BO, but because her CS is so High, the BO is more manageable and alleviated. In regards to her STS scores, she particularly mentioned two students who had experienced trauma, and Secondary Traumatic Stress typically is "about work-related, secondary exposure to people who have experienced extremely or traumatically stressful events" (Stamm, 2010, p. 13). Because of these experiences, her STS score was Moderate, but she also did mention supports she had in place, such as her team, taking breaks, and exercise, that helped mitigate those scores.

Connections for researcher and Teacher 1 to Survey. As Teacher 1 and the researcher identify as White, I sought to make connections across race to the survey data, seeing what supports were identified. Both interviewees mentioned a supportive team and the importance of having a supportive team, and there was a significant number of White identifying participants (five of nine who answered the survey question (55%), and five of 11 who used White as a racial identifier (45%)). After that, the second most mentioned support was personal environment (44% and 36%) supports, such as family and therapy.

Table 5.20

Supports mentioned in survey response for White participants

	None	Coworkers/ Team	Coaching/PD	Personal Environment	Breaks
Identified as White	-	**5**	**2**	**3**	**1**
Identified as White and more races	**1**	-	-	**1**	-
Total	**1**	**5**	**2**	**4**	**1**

Connections for Researcher and Teacher 1 to ProQOL. Teacher 1 was one of two (22%) teachers identifying as only White that had a high level of Compassion Satisfaction, while six (66%), including the researcher, identified as Moderate CS and one (11%) as Low CS. The Researcher and Teacher 1 were the only two survey participants with a Moderate measure of Secondary Traumatic Stress, while the rest were Low (67%) and one was High (11%). The number of Burnout was evenly split between Low and Moderate (four of nine; 44%), while including the two teachers who identify as White and more racial identifiers would show that six of 11 (55%) were experiencing Moderate Burnout and four of 11 (36%) were experiencing Low Burnout.

CF-CS for Teacher 2. Teachers 1 and 2 both had high levels of Compassion Satisfaction, but their scores of Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress were swapped. Teacher 2, according to the survey, was experiencing Moderate BO and Low STS, which she partly attributed to it being so close to the end of the school year. She was quite surprised at her level of Burnout, but she was able to name some issues that affected her while at school, which I further explain below.

Table 5.21

CS, BO, and STS for Teacher 2

	CS	**BO**	**STS**

ProQOL Measures	45 (High)	25 (Moderate)	21 (Low)
Themes from Interviews	Positive effects of students on well-being Aspects of Identity Suggestions: Exercise and Therapy	Lack of community and negative effect of coworkers Pandemic: Effect on students Aspects of Identity	Student Environment and Families

Teacher 2 Compassion Satisfaction. Teacher 2 also had a High Level of Compassion Satisfaction, which according to the interview data can be attributed to the positive effects the students have had on her well-being and aspects of her identity and other coping mechanisms. Her joy was contagious when she talked about her students, saying, "When my kids understand - that is like it makes me literally jump over the moon; like literally, I'd be in the clouds dancing, like okay, we got it. [...] we have a great time [...] in our class. Yeah. So that's what brings me, like, a lot of joy." She also mentioned some supports outside of school: exercise and therapy. She mentioned she is in therapy and on a "healing journey" and had been able to successfully find a therapist with the help of a former colleague, which also opened up the conversation and I also shared about my own experiences with therapy and depression. Much like Teacher 1, exercise was also something she stressed as important, as it helps her to have a "better grasp on my emotions," along with the physical benefits. All of these factors identified contributed to Teacher 2's experiences of Compassion Satisfaction.

Similar to one of the survey participants who wrote "My religious beliefs also help me," Teacher 2 has a strong sense of faith and religion, which contributes to her well-being and relates to her High Compassion Satisfaction and Low Compassion Fatigue. When asked about the pandemic and its effect on her well-being, she replied, "Honestly, I haven't been stressed about it. I have been blessed. I think God has really, like, shielded me and given me peace in this time,

so that I'm not stressed about COVID." Her faith has acted as a shield that helps her maintain her

Compassion Satisfaction and mitigate her experiences of Compassion Fatigue. She also

explained that she does have hope and thinks her career as a teacher is sustainable, saying

"Because I really believe that this is my God given purpose. So that'll sustain me to do this, even

though I honestly don't want to anymore. But I think it's my mission in life. So, you know, and

it's really just a right now thing [...] Because I am done. Like so done. Like it's the end of the

year, and we're going until July," which shows her acknowledgement of being burnt out,

especially as this interview was given so close to the end of the school year.

Teacher 2 Compassion Fatigue. As the opposite of Teacher 1, Teacher 2 was experiencing a

Moderate Level of Burnout and low Secondary Stress. She attributed some of her Burnout level

to it being so close to the end of the school year, but she also mentioned the lack of community

at the school, the pandemic's effect on her students, and some aspects of her own identity that

could be contributing to her Burnout. Though she did mention being an "only child" has caused

her to prefer to spend break times alone in her classroom, she also did mention the lack of

community she felt and the "superficial" relationships she had with coworkers as opposed to

anything meaningful. More so than the pandemic affecting her own well-being, she talked more

about how the pandemic has impacted her students' learning and progress, as they came in at an

academically lower level than in a normal school year. She also mentioned not feeling hope for a

group of students that she has seen struggling this year, which is related to Stamm's definition of

Burnout, which is "associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work

or in doing your job effectively" (2010, p. 13). She also mentioned being a perfectionist and how

people expect her, as someone who identifies as Black, to be resilient and strong. This

connection to her experiences with Burnout led me to examine how other teachers identifying as

Black may also be experiencing Burnout and their perception of supports in place to maintain their well-being, specifically in regard to community or lack thereof.

Connection to ProQOL measures. Teacher 2 was surprised at her Moderate Level of Burnout, but as mentioned before, all participants identifying as Black or African American (even those with more than this identifier) were experiencing a Moderate Level of BO at the time of the survey. Looking for other comparisons with Teacher 2, I found that four of six (57%) teachers were also experiencing High Compassion Satisfaction, and Teacher 2 was actually the only teacher identifying low levels of STS, while the rest were all Moderate (86%).

Connection to Survey. At this point, I wanted to also try to connect some of the survey data to this teacher's experiences. I noticed that of all the teachers who identified as Black or African American, even those who identified as other races as well, none mentioned coworkers or their team as a support for their well-being. Connecting this trend to Teacher 2's experiences with not having deep and personal connections with colleagues and her observation of a lack of culture within the staff, this could show a lack of community and support for teachers identifying as Black. To the survey question, the majority (n=4) of this set of teachers replied "none," while three teachers answered with either coaching or supports from their personal environment. One of the teachers specifically identified "wellness coaching" as a point of support, as opposed to curricular support, which I believe is an important distinction. Further interviews or surveys would be needed to reveal why these teachers mentioned coaching and outside support as opposed to their team or coworkers.

Table 5.22

Supports mentioned in survey response for Black or African American participants

	None	Coworkers/ Team	Coaching/PD	Personal Environment	Breaks

Identified as Black or African American	**3**	**-**	**2**	**-**	**-**
Identified as Black or African American and more races	**1**	**-**	**-**	**1**	**-**
Total	**4**	**-**	**2**	**1**	**-**

Racial Identity further explored. Identifying as a Black woman, Teacher 2 spoke of the effects that those identity factors have on her well-being. Specifically, she said:

I was actually just talking to somebody[...] but basically being Black is exhausting. And however, people in general - I'm overly generalizing this, [...], I know I grew up and a lot of people that are Black grew up the same way: like, we had to be strong. We had to be resilient. That's like our marker. That's our thing that's like, "Oh my God, you are so strong." Like I remember when I was at [my old school], and I was having some struggles or whatever. And they were like, "Oh, you are so strong." But like, I shouldn't have to be strong [...] and because I shouldn't have to be strong, that definitely affects my well-being because I'm having to put on a show for people. When I really need a shoulder to cry on, that's not it, I'm asking anybody else if they want to cry on mine, you know.

She also mentioned, when asked about the relationship between compassion and well-being, about how difficult it is to have compassion for herself, because of being a perfectionist, and I wonder if this directly relates to the resiliency and strength societal pressures have put on her as a Black woman. When asked, Teacher 2 also explained her experience trying to find a therapist, saying, "So initially, I was trying to go through Kaiser because that was my insurance at the time. And Kaiser sucks, like, they have no black people, like, they're just terrible," and she eventually had to rely on a personal connection to find a therapist that was the right fit for her. Teacher 2 perceived her race to be a factor in maintaining her well-being, which should be

further explored.

RQ2: How can talking about well-being contribute to teachers' experiences of well-being?

In regard to this question, I made sure to include a specific question in the interview protocol: "Has talking about the survey and your wellness today made you feel better or worse about your well-being?" The response to this question was overwhelmingly positive, and each participant gave specific reasons as to why they think this experience was helpful. My response mentioned more of an immediate relief, as I said, "It's actually made me feel better. [...] it's been a hard day. It's been a really difficult week to think about, and yeah, just thinking about different things, maybe does remind me that there's ideas and maybe some hope for the future." Both Teachers 1 and 2 saw the survey and this interview as a moment of self-reflection, such as when Teacher 2 mentioned, "It makes me feel better, it makes me see some growth that I've had. [...] I can see how I'm taking mental health and well-being as the overarching umbrella, and I can see I'm taking that a lot more seriously in the way that I'm answering your questions." Teacher 1 also called the interview experience a "mini therapy" explaining, "I think it's been really better because it gives you a check and a second to reflect." Self-reflection can be an important tool to leverage when it comes to supporting teachers' well-being.

Summary

Findings support some initial inclinations and hypotheses, but also present new ideas. For RQ 1, the teachers surveyed identified a range of supports and a lack of support that existed in their school. Learning can be taken from both aspects and will be discussed further in the next section. Next, for RQs 1a and b, examining Compassion Fatigue and Satisfaction in regard to the ProQOL levels and then triangulating that with the survey responses and the interviews, revealed findings that differ across racial identifiers, specifically in regard to the interviewees' races.

CHAPTER VI: IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to elevate teachers' voices, to learn their perspectives and experiences with well-being through compassion, and to empower teachers to advocate for themselves. Though there were no changes to measure within this study, there were findings and correlations made between supports, levels of Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue, and demographic factors, which have implications for the school, the district, and the education community at large. This chapter identifies and discusses the implications of this research and includes implications for the school of study, DCPS, the education community at large, and me. These implications are framed on the three levels of *collective care* that embody a healing centered approach: individual, interpersonal, and institutional (Ginwright, 2022, p. 122).

Implication 1: Teachers have been affected by the pandemic, mostly through their students' experiences

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have not been fully processed, but this study can provide insight into how it has affected teachers directly and indirectly through their students. As mentioned in the Problem of Practice section, prior to the pandemic Black and Latinx students were already disproportionately experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) at higher rates than their White counterparts (Bradford, 2021; Coffin & Meghani, 2021; Bowman, 2018). As the majority of students in DCPS are Black (68%) and the majority of students at the researched school are Latinx (90%), it can be expected that some students are coming to school with ACEs, which can lead to Secondary Traumatic Stress for teachers. Supporting students while at the same time processing new policies and feeling worried about falling ill to COVID-19 has caused higher levels of Burnout. The Compassion Fatigue-Compassion Satisfaction Scale combined with interviews was a helpful way to capture teachers' experiences of Burnout and

Secondary Traumatic Stress because it separates the student-specific STS from the gradual burdens and stress gathered throughout the school year (BO).

In the district, the academic delays of students, pandemic-caused absences, and the added pressure of the teacher evaluation system, IMPACT, have impacted teachers' experiences of Burnout. Students have experienced delays in academic progress, nationally and specifically in DCPS, and teachers have had to find ways to bridge those gaps, as both of the interviewed teachers mentioned (DC Policy Center, 2022; Northwest Evaluation Association, 2022). The pandemic also caused increased absenteeism, for both teachers and students, and when multiple teachers are out, more responsibilities fall on the present teacher; when students are out, they not only miss academic content but miss out on the routine of the school day and socialization with peers. Many teachers and students were absent because of COVID-19 quarantining policies (Gewertz, 2022), and with that comes the pressure of enduring teacher evaluations and being held accountable for those absent students' academic gains. The pandemic has taken its toll on teachers and students, and using the Compassion Fatigue Theoretical Model, supplemented with qualitative interviews, has helped broaden the knowledge around the pandemic's effect on teachers.

Implication 2: Experiences of Compassion Fatigue, Compassion Satisfaction, and Secondary Traumatic Stress vary among teachers and can be explored further through qualitative methods

This study found trends within its small population size, such as four of five (80%) of the Black identifying teachers experienced Moderate Levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress, and six of nine (66%) of the White identifying teachers experienced only Moderate levels of Compassion Satisfaction. Previous research on how race and gender affect experiences of CF-CS

are inconclusive; for example, in a study examining Compassion Fatigue in the virtual setting during the pandemic, researchers found that White educators reported significantly higher CF than Black educators (Yang, 2021). Some studies have found minority status and resilience serve as a protective factor against CF, while a study done with genetic counselors found a correlation between non-White counselors and Higher Levels of CF (Lee et al., 2015). A recent report by the RAND corporation found that teachers of color were more likely than White teachers to report symptoms of depression, and also found that Black or African American teachers were significantly less likely to report experiencing frequent job-related stress (66%) than White teachers (74%), and Hispanic or Latinx teachers (76%) (Steiner et al., 2022). Other factors should be considered when studying CF-CS with teachers, such as years of experience, student demographic data, and organizational support, but for any of those variables, without qualitative data, it will be difficult to truly understand the trends across racial groups.

Qualitative methods are opportunities to add insight and perspective to observed phenomena and can be used as a means to support more equitable policies. Since the quantitative dataset was small in this study, it is difficult to identify any major trends. However, the interviews as a qualitative component shed light on some of the teachers' experiences, especially Teacher 2's experiences of how her race affects her well-being. It is not enough to understand the amount of Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue, but to truly inform change, qualitative research can be useful in understanding how and why a given program or intervention may or may not work as intended and how to improve that program from the perspective of a specific group of stakeholders (Goger, 2021), such as understanding the historical mistrust that systemically underserved communities have for the medical system because of discrimination from healthcare providers (López-Cevallos et al., 2014; Sheehan & Geyn, 2021). These

opportunities for connection and story-telling can lead to more transformative relationships that center care and trust (S. A. Ginwright, 2022), which needs to be felt between teachers, but also between leadership and teachers. Through understanding the experiences of teachers and how their different environments-personal, school, and student- can affect their well-being, policies for teacher well-being can lead to true healing.

Implication 3: Flexibility in the workspace can help support teachers' well-being.

Flexibility in the workspace is not a new idea, but it has gained more attention for schools and many other businesses out of necessity since the beginning of the pandemic. The National Council for Education Standards (2022) found that eighty-three percent of public school teachers reported that all or some of their classes normally taught in person were moved to online distance-learning formats during the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020. Not only were schools closed, but many other workplaces, workers, and technology had to adapt quickly to identify how to effectively work at a safe distance. That learning, paired with the identified supports of breaks and days off identified by teachers in this study, has implications for schools, the district, and the education community at large.

The pandemic caused businesses to rethink their workspace, including options for working from home and engaging in virtual work. Working from home can help employees find work-life balance and save people time from commuting, and on days when asynchronous offerings are required, people can work at their own pace. Though there are many benefits to virtual work, threats to productivity include distraction challenges at home, isolation and limits on team building, and the planning that is required to ensure that employees know how to access and finish their work (Jack, 2022; Kaushik & Guleria, 2020; Meister, 2021; Stoller, 2021). The benefits of in-person school are substantial; yet having some flexibility on certain days could be

helpful. For example, one school offers flexibility on the four designated Records Days (a day for teachers to report grades at the end of each quarter), allowing teachers the option to work virtually or to come into the school building. This simple offering for teachers has made them feel supported and trusted, while also giving them flexibility and autonomy.

Since Teacher 2 mentioned the uniqueness of this school having Parent-Teacher Conference (PTC) days off, I wanted to identify documentation regarding this policy. There are two days in the DCPS calendar outlined specifically for PTCs, and in the weeks before that day, the teachers at my school received an email (K. Gonzales, p. communication, February 11, 2022) from leadership saying:

> Please remember the following in order to have the day off 3/10.
>
> - For ECE – 2nd Grade ELL/Gen Ed teachers, you must have 85% of your homeroom completed and logged.
> - For 3rd – 5th Grade ELL/Gen Ed teachers, you must have 85% of your pod completed and logged.
> - For ECE-5th Grade SPED teachers, you must have 90% of your caseload completed and logged.
> - For SPED Teachers ONLY: Once you have met the 90% of your caseload, please screenshot your students in the database and email it to your FELT POC.
> - For everyone else, your FELT POC will be able to check the database.
> - Anyone who has completed their PTCs AND logged them to the Family Engagement Database by 4:00 PM on Tuesday, March 8th will be off on Thursday, March 10th.

Not only does this communication incentivize teachers to complete their conferences but also gives teachers a day off. That flexibility is appreciated by teachers and has become a strategy to boost employee satisfaction in other fields as well, especially since the pandemic (Jack, 2022; Meister, 2021). Since these days come at the end of quarters, this could be a beneficial and appreciated break for teachers during the school year and has implications for the education community at large.

Implications for Self: An increased capacity for failure and falling prey to White

Supremacy's "fix it" mentality

When I began this dissertation process, I wanted so badly to make things better for teachers and to give teachers the opportunities they deserve. What I realized was that not everyone's experience is the same as mine, and that a complicated problem such as teacher burnout cannot be fixed with a simple solution. I can do what I can within my sphere of influence, which I originally thought was very small. Completing this dissertation at my own school made me realize that through connecting with people and simply asking for an opportunity to share my findings with leadership, teachers can affect change and can create opportunities for one another, such as the opportunities I was able to create for teachers to self-reflect. I also will have the opportunity to present these findings to the principal of the school. At this point, I am stepping into my own power and privilege and using it to advocate for teachers.

The organization Dismantling Racism explains common characteristics of White Supremacy Culture (Okun, n.d.) which include "a constant sense of urgency," explaining that even though there is a sense of urgency to race related issues, "White supremacy culture likes to engender a culture of urgency in those of us who are working to dismantle it because it knows that living with a constant sense that everything is urgent is a recipe for the abuse of power and burnout." I realize through my experiences and push for "solutions" I must work towards better consciousness and empathy with others and that any solution or solution-seeking effort can affect those with less opportunities or access, at the same time acknowledging I do have a stake in this fight as racial inequalities affect all of our well-being and humanity. The truth is, as Dr. Ginwright says, "Care requires an emotional commitment and a psychic investment that takes time, vulnerability, and deep concern for each other" (S. A. Ginwright, 2022, p. 320), and though

I know myself to be a caring and compassionate person, I need to take a step back and consider the fight for justice is a long term fight. This process has not discouraged me; instead, it has made me even more passionate about this work and the fight for allowing others' humanity to flourish.

CHAPTER VII: RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to explore teacher well-being and the supports that are and could be available to teachers to help them maintain their well-being. In the following section, I provide recommendations to address the problems and challenges identified in the study, along with supports from the studied school that could be helpful to other schools. The recommendations address scheduling and workspace flexibility, implementing a system to measure, track, and respond to teacher well-being, including teacher voice in programming and policies, and intentional community building efforts.

Recommendation 1: Implement flexible scheduling and workspace options when possible

In both the survey data and through interviews, teachers mentioned that breaks and days off are supports to their well-being, and those should be protected. For the days off, using the studied school's policy for days off for completing Parent-Teacher Conferences could provide teachers more time to do what they need to do to maintain their well-being. The same can be said for allowing teachers the choice to be virtual during Professional Development days, and it will also support teachers' autonomy and show trust from leadership. Second, teachers' breaks should also be protected, and if COVID-19 quarantining continues, hiring substitute teachers to cover for absent teachers could help to alleviate some of the stress that teachers face. In response to the pandemic, workplace leaders have expanded well-being opportunities offered to their employees to include workplace flexibility (Jack, 2022; Meister, 2021), and there are many benefits to be explored if schools do the same.

Recommendation 2: Systematically, track, monitor, and respond to teacher well-being throughout the School Year

Much like how teachers track, monitor, and respond to their students' data throughout the

year, the same should be done in regard to teacher well-being. Whether by leadership, school-based mental health professionals, instructional coaches, or a staff wellness committee, this type of data collection and analysis could be crucial to identifying when teachers need support and with what they need support. Also, aggregating this data by race, gender, grade level, or other demographics could help reveal trends and opportunities for growth that need to be addressed. The key is to ensure the time for this type of process to happen, for example, by delegating time for teacher well-being during the weekly professional development that DCPS employees are required to attend. Better teacher well-being has been found to positively impact students as well, so this time would be well spent for both teachers and students. Though DCPS does use tools to look at staff wellness and job satisfaction at the end of the year to inform the following school year, this method does not make sense in regard to teacher turnover and unique conditions of each school year. Creating multiple opportunities to monitor and respond to teacher well-being throughout the school year would be a much more active and effective way to retain teachers and improve performance.

A systematic way of multiple check-ins on teachers' well-being throughout the year is essential and should also include qualitative data. In a study done through George Washington University, the researchers found through qualitative focus groups that teacher stress varied throughout the school year, though the quantitative survey measures used in that study did not show that variation (Fox et al., 2020). Qualitative research, such as focus groups or interviews, could add more context, since one of the ProQOL's limitations is its lack of narrative or open-ended questions. Also, since the ProQOL was not necessarily designed to account for race or gender, more information would need to be gathered or perhaps a different tool would need to be designed to account for all teachers' experiences. One benefit of the ProQOL survey is that it is

designed to measure Secondary Traumatic Stress, which involves the direct interactions between a professional and their client, or in this case teachers and students, and with the high levels of student ACEs present in DCPS, this survey could offer a view into this experience.

Recommendation 3: Include teacher voice in the development of programming or policies in regard to teacher well-being

Whether it is through a user-centered experience such as Design Thinking or a solution seeking project such as Participatory Action Research, teacher informed policies or programming need to center the voices of those most affected: teachers. The DCPS Equity Office specifies, "Equity at DCPS means creating an environment in which we eliminate opportunity gaps, interrupt institutional bias, and remove barriers to academic and social success, particularly for students of color" (DCPS, n.d.) and to create a more inclusive environment, creating opportunities for reflection after every action, whether those actions be new policies, procedures, programming, or practices, can help to identify access gaps and inequities.

Recommendation 4: Community building and intentional supports, especially for systemically underserved employees, should be prioritized

Without a strong sense of community and belonging, productivity and retention of employees will suffer. Managers and leaders maintain the responsibility to create opportunities for community building and culture development within their organization. For the studied school, it seems that teachers would appreciate a physical space to decompress: one that affords privacy for teachers and also has guidelines around positive and negative talk. One resource would be the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's guidelines for creating a staff's relaxation zone, in which they state, "One way to increase staff well-being is to provide a space where staff can decompress, connect with colleagues and rejuvenate" (Alliance for a Healthier Generation &

Kaiser Permanente, n.d.)**.** The guide provides helpful tips to create a space that works for staff.

The data gathered for Research Question 1b suggested that identity factors have an impact on how one perceives and experiences well-being, reiterating the need for social justice, specifically in the realms of healthcare and education. One step to addressing this issue is to gather more data and information; for example, the studied school should explore more data centering the experiences of their Black or African American identifying teachers to see how community and coworkers affect their well-being and how they could build a stronger sense of community within the school. Also, looking at objective measures, such as insurance claims, by race could help shed more light on systemic equity gaps. Thinking again about the Healing Centered Approach, Dr. Ginwright speaks of the power of transformative relationships, or relationships that involve true vulnerability and connection, that can lead to creating a healing centered society (S. A. Ginwright, 2022). Other helpful suggestions would be creating race-based affinity groups, creating opportunities for self-reflection (such as reflecting on their own well-being survey scores) and bias examination, encouraging staff to explore their relationships with coworkers at school, and offering Professional Development or resources around navigating conflict with coworkers (Alliance for a Healthier Generation, 2019; DCPS, n.d.).

Recommendation 5: Researchers, especially doctoral students, should utilize structured reflexivity to strategically explore their positionality and identity throughout the research process, as part of ongoing antiracist work

This recommendation, aimed towards the doctoral and education community at large, is for researchers to utilize researcher memos or other tools to engage in structured reflexivity throughout their dissertation or research process. The role of researcher causes a power imbalance, and if the researcher has other societally privileged identities, such as my own

Whiteness, that power imbalance needs to be addressed and examined. As the primary

instrument of data collection and interpretation, exploring my own identity, positionality, and

biases, helped me address, identify, and plan for how to best mitigate those power dynamics

(Ravitch & Carl, 2019; Yin, 2018). Engaging in structured reflexivity, such as Researcher

Memos, can allow a researcher to examine their own ongoing thinking and how and why their

thinking may have changed. Reflexivity should also be done collaboratively, either with a

researchers' peers, such as fellow doctoral students or their dissertation committee, and if not a

participatory research study, should involve stakeholders in checking data, interpretations, and

analyses, to achieve validity (Ravitch & Carl, 2019; Yin, 2018). The support offered by my

dissertation committee and cohort members were crucial, and Researcher Memos allowed me

ways to strategically communicate my ongoing process.

Connecting this to antiracism, as part of reflexivity, vulnerability was used in this

dissertation to build relationships with the participants and to hold the researcher accountable to

addressing my own biases. First, the interviewed teachers expressed their appreciation for the

opportunity to self-reflect, and in each interview, we all had opportunities to engage with our

vulnerability, such as when Teacher 1 and I both realized we taught siblings who had lost their

mother and how that may have accounted for our Secondary Traumatic Stress scores or when

Teacher 2 shared about her healing journey which included therapy, allowing me to open up

about my own experiences with depression. Researcher and participant relationships can be

fortified with vulnerability, as "vulnerability is also the only way to form true transformative

relationships because it raises the emotional stakes and creates a sacred agreement that what you

just shared will be held and protected with tender care, without judgment" (S. A. Ginwright,

2022, p.130). Finally, by critically reflecting on the influence of one's own positionality and

identity, researchers can begin to acknowledge the politics involved in vulnerability because some people, due to power and privilege, can afford to be more vulnerable than others (S. A. Ginwright, 2022), which is crucial to antiracist research and practice. Critically and structurally reflecting on one's own positionality and identity and how it affects their research and engagement with their participants is one way that researchers can begin to fight for social justice and equity. This work should be required for doctoral students, especially in those programs that are committed to furthering antiracist work.

Conclusion

This research was a deeply personal process, as I was a teacher studying teacher well-being, at my own school. Try as I may to mitigate the effects of my positionality as a researcher and a White woman, I recognize that those two identifiers bring unearned power and privilege that are impossible for me to break down in the length of one interview. To address those issues, I did use more open-ended questions in the interviews and surveys and utilized a Member Check, in which I allowed the interviewees to read my analysis before presenting it. Throughout the process, I also had to recognize that as the interpreter of this data, I had to make opportunities for my own self-care and healing.

Appendices

Appendix A: RISE Index Staff Well-being Questions

School Well-Being (SWB): Questions pertaining to building the resilience of staff with focus on physical environments for staff, personal wellness and collective care.

SWB 1: To what extent does your staff engage in opportunities to build and maintain relationships with each other (e.g., activities during staff meetings, potlucks, staff outings)?
FULLY IN PLACE Staff (including non-instructional staff*) engage in relationship-building activities with each other at least quarterly.
MOSTLY IN PLACE
PARTIALLY IN PLACE
NOT IN PLACE Our school does not provide opportunities for staff to build and maintain relationships with each other.

SWB 2: To what extent does your school provide opportunities for staff to recognize accomplishments and display gratitude toward each other?
FULLY IN PLACE
Staff (including non-instructional staff*) recognize accomplishments and/or display gratitude toward each other at least monthly.
MOSTLY IN PLACE
PARTIALLY IN PLACE
NOT IN PLACE Our school does not provide opportunities for staff to recognize accomplishments or display gratitude toward each other.

SWB 3: To what extent do staff have the opportunity to provide input on staff well-being policies
and practices?
FULLY IN PLACE Staff (including non-instructional staff*) have opportunities to provide input on staff well-being policies and practices at least annually.
MOSTLY IN PLACE
PARTIALLY IN PLACE
NOT IN PLACEOur school does not provide opportunities for staff to provide input on staff well-being policies
and practices.

SWB 4: To what extent do staff receive professional learning on combating the impacts of compassion fatigue and burnout?
FULLY IN PLACE Staff (including non-instructional staff*) receive continuous professional learning* opportunities, including training and coaching, on combating the impacts of compassion fatigue and burnout.
MOSTLY IN PLACE
PARTIALLY IN PLACE
NOT IN PLACE Our school does not provide professional learning on these topics.

SWB 5: To what extent do staff receive professional learning opportunities on planning, implementing and reflecting on their own well-being?

FULLY IN PLACE Staff (including non-instructional staff*) receive continuous professional learning* opportunities,

including training and coaching, on planning, implementing and reflecting on their own well-being.

MOSTLY IN PLACE

PARTIALLY IN PLACE

NOT IN PLACE Our school does not provide professional learning on these topics.

SWB 6: To what extent does your school use a trauma-informed lens* to implement staff well-being

policies and practices?

FULLY IN PLACE Our school implements staff well-being policies and practices using the 6 Guiding Principles

to a Trauma-Informed Approach* (i.e., safety; trustworthiness & transparency; peer support; collaboration & mutuality; empowerment & choice; cultural, historical & gender issues).

MOSTLY IN PLACE

PARTIALLY IN PLACE

NOT IN PLACE Our school does not use a trauma-informed lens* to implement staff well-being policies

and practices.

SWB 7: To what extent does your school administration reinforce expectations related to work-life balance?

FULLY IN PLACE Our school administration regularly communicates policies and procedures related to work-life

balance to staff at least twice a year.

MOSTLY IN PLACE

PARTIALLY IN PLACE

NOT IN PLACE Our school administration has not established expectations related to work-life balance.

SWB 8: To what extent does your school have space(s) for staff to relax, decompress and/or build relationships with other staff?

FULLY IN PLACE Our school has easily accessible space(s) that encourage relaxation and positive staff interactions.

MOSTLY IN PLACE

PARTIALLY IN PLACE

NOT IN PLACE Our school does not have any spaces for staff to engage in such activities.

SWB 9: To what extent does your school have a clearly defined approach for staff to take breaks when feeling overwhelmed at work?

FULLY IN PLACE Our school has a clearly defined protocol for staff to take breaks when feeling overwhelmed at

work that is reinforced to staff.

MOSTLY IN PLACE

PARTIALLY IN PLACE

NOT IN PLACE Our school has not established a clearly defined approach for staff to take breaks when feeling

overwhelmed at work.

SWB 10: To what extent does your school have a clearly defined approach to positively resolve conflicts among staff?

FULLY IN PLACE Our school has a clearly defined protocol to positively resolve conflicts that is co-created by

staff and includes agreed upon norms, open communication, and alternative dispute resolutions options (e.g., mediation, facilitated conversation).

MOSTLY IN PLACE

PARTIALLY IN PLACE

NOT IN PLACE Our school has not established a clearly defined approach to positively resolve conflicts

among staff.

Appendix B: Researcher Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol: Survey Follow-up and Teacher well-being (Interview with the researcher)

Basic Interview information:

Time of Interview	2:00
Date	May 26, 2022
Place	
Position of Interviewee	Teacher and Researcher
Recording/Storing information about Interview	Recording will be stored by the researcher, on the researcher's password protected computer

Introduction
As you already know, this research is attempting to understand how and in what ways schools can support teachers' wellbeing. I just want to double check that I have your informed consent and permission to record. *wait for acknowledgement* I am going to be asking you a few questions about your experiences with wellbeing at your school.

Interview Content Questions
1. What is your definition of well-being?
   a. Do you think compassion is related to your well-being?
2. The survey you took measured three things, and your scores are found on your paper.
   a. Compassion Satisfaction- Moderate (in the midrange); Burnout- Moderate (in the midrange); Secondary Traumatic Stress- Moderate (low end)
   b. What are your initial thoughts?
   c. Possible probe: Is there anything that stands out?
   d. Do you think this information is useful, and how do you think it could be used?
   e. What could leadership or administration do with this type of information?
3. Do you think your identity has shaped your understanding or experiences with well-being?
   a. If yes, how?
   b. If no, why?
4. What affects your well-being when you are at work? Positively or negatively?
   a. What do you do when you're feeling stressed or having a negative experience?
5. Do you feel the school environment is a healing environment? Why or why not?
6. How do your students affect your well-being?
7. In the survey, you said support you receive involves some touchpoints during PD and talking to colleagues. Can you say a little more about that?
8. Do you think teachers should have input on well-being programming, policies or procedures?

      a. Why or why not?

      b. What kind of programming do you think would be most useful for you?

9. What are your hopes for the future?

      a. Possible probe: Yours or your students?

10. Has talking about the survey and your wellness today made you feel better or worse about your wellness?

Probes:

Can you tell me more?

What is an example of that?

What did you mean when you said ____?

Closing:

Thank you _____ for participating, and just a reminder that this interview will stay confidential. (Any other follow-up instructions)

Appendix C: Adjusted Interview Protocol

Basic Interview information:

Time of Interview	
Date	
Place	
Position of Interviewee	Teacher and Researcher
Recording/Storing information about Interview	Recording will be stored by the researcher, on the researcher's password protected computer

Introduction

As you already know, this research is attempting to understand how and in what ways schools can support teachers' wellbeing. I just want to double check that I have your informed consent and permission to record. *wait for acknowledgement* I am going to be asking you a few questions about your experiences with wellbeing at our school.

Interview Content Questions
1. What is your definition of well-being?
   a. Do you think compassion is related to your well-being?
2. How do you identify? *(One way to think of identity is the Big 8 categories: Identity can include race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, ability, religion, nationality, socioeconomic status)*
   a. Do you think your identity has shaped your understanding or experiences with well-being? If yes, how? If no, why?
3. Well-being can also involve healing, physically, mentally, emotionally, and healing is defined as the transcendence of suffering, but healing is also a part of social justice work. Shawn Ginwright explains, in his book, The Four Pivots, Healing involves more than repairing the deep wounds of racism, sexism, or easing the pains of poverty. Healing is the capacity to restore our humanity and care for ourselves and others even in the midst of our fear.
   a. How do you feel about that definition of healing?
4. The survey you took measured three things, and your scores are found on your paper.
   a. Compassion Satisfaction- Moderate (in the midrange); Burnout- Moderate (in the midrange); Secondary Traumatic Stress- Moderate (low end)
   b. What are your initial thoughts?
   c. Possible probe: Is there anything that stands out?
   d. Do you think leadership, whether its administration or the district, could use this type of information?
      i. How could they use it?
5. While you're at school, I am wondering what affects your well-being.

    a. In the last two weeks, what affected your well-being positively when you were at work?

    b. In the last two weeks, what affected your well-being negatively when you were at work?

        i. How has this school year been different from others?

6. Do your students, their environment, and community affect your well-being? If so, how?

7. What do you do when you're feeling stressed or having a negative experience?

    a. What do you do in the moment of a stressful situation?

    b. What do you do afterwards to help you process or cope?

    c. Are there spaces in or outside of the school that you feel more comfortable?

8. In the survey, you said …. Can you say a little more about that?

9. Do you think teachers should have input on well-being programming, policies or procedures?

    a. Why or why not?

    b. Out of the following what kind of programming do you think would be most useful for you: nutrition (meal prep or providing meals), cultivating meditation or gratitude practices, support groups such as affinity groups, navigating insurance, exercise?

10. Do you feel hopeful for your future as a teacher?

    a. For the future of your students?

    b. For this school and school community's future?

11. Has talking about the survey and your wellness today made you feel better or worse about your well-being?

Probes:

Can you tell me more?

What is an example of that?

What did you mean when you said _____?

Closing:

Thank you _____ for participating, and just a reminder that this interview will stay confidential. (Any other follow-up instructions)

Appendix D: Precoding Researcher Memo

Purpose: capture what you learned from the processes of precoding your data; useful as you continue the analysis process and to refer to if you think your analyses are straying too far from the actual data (Ravitch & Carl, 2019)

- Emerging Learnings: What stands out? Seems noteworthy? How do the data relate to the research questions?
  - Teachers have ideas and have identified ways to make the school environment more workable for them. They are solutions oriented and willing to engage in the conversations.
- Lingering questions: What data may you still need to collect? What are the limitations of the data?
  - I realize I did not exactly or explicitly name in my questions supports and barriers, and both the teachers interviewed are staying next year, and I wonder if I should have added that as a question in my survey: if the teachers plan to stay or leave.
- Reactivity: How am I, as the researcher, influencing the data? How can I address that? How do I see my presence/influence in the data?
  - I am humbled by the fact that I got data I did not expect to get. I probably did talk a little much about the different aspects of the survey or the justifications about my process, but I believe it is because I wanted so badly to do PAR, but did not get the chance to, so this was my only real interaction with the participants.
  - Neither of the participants have engaged in doctoral work, though they do both hold Masters. They both did volunteer to participate, so I am grateful for that. I did realize that the experiences of the Black teachers were not as relatable for me, especially in regard to when she spoke of how her identity affects her well-being. Though they were not relatable, by not interrupting and having more open-ended questions, I was surprised and grateful for how open she was about her experiences.
- Ideas on potential codes: Emic or etic? Inductive or deductive? Related to theory?
    - Emic (specific to one culture): Black women and perfectionism, Language barriers of students and their families
    - Etic (cross cultural): Navigating insurance, effects of the pandemic, use of therapy, coping strategies, social support, need for community building

Appendix D: Researcher Memo: Reflections on my Scores

CS	BO	STS
34	32	27

For the most part, I am not surprised at my own scores and go back to thinking about my own stress and how I have already resigned for the end of this school year, no longer wanting to be a teacher.

What did surprise me is the Moderate Compassion Satisfaction score because I really do enjoy my work with the students. The ProQOL manual defines CS as:

> Compassion satisfaction is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well. For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work. You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society

"Do your work well"- That phrase sticks with me in regard to my experience this school year. I transitioned from being a classroom teacher, which I have been for the last 5 years, to Special Education for the first time. I knew I wanted a change, and as part of my teaching program, I did receive my Masters and have my License as a Special Education teacher, so I was looking forward to tapping into that expertise. I was looking forward to the idea of problem solving around fewer students and exploring the neurodiversity that exists within children.

I have had the chance to do that, and I fully appreciate it and have enjoyed it, but I did not fully appreciate the mountain of responsibilities and challenges that come with being a Special Education teacher and Case manager. Two things have caused me to feel completely overwhelmed and out of my depth: managing the documentation and the service hours. The amount of hours that some of my students had was huge, and on top of that, I was expected to somehow push-in to all 4 1st grade classes to service the rest of the students on my caseload. I had no time in my schedule to delegate time for paperwork, meetings, or student observations, like most Sped teachers are able to do; therefore, I found myself drowning sometimes in preparing for meetings or in meeting follow-up. There were two people who were very helpful when I needed support, but they were also very busy, and I was offered no formal coaching. Even the PD offered by the district was not very helpful to me, so I do believe that this year, I have had very few times where I actually felt like I was doing my work well and felt confident in my own abilities.

As far as my Compassion Fatigue goes, I am not so surprised about that, especially working with students who thrive on routine, and yet are missing so much school. The pandemic has made it so much more difficult to teach, seeing as students get quarantined for days at a time.

When students come back, it takes so much time to reestablish routines so that the student can be successful, and that adjustment period can sometimes reveal behaviors that may be caused by Trauma or Traumatic Stress, which in turn can affect the caregiver, in this case me. Though nothing stands out, I wonder what exactly had happened that day or what I was experiencing the day I took the survey.

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