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Work Beyond the Work: Amplifying How Black Women Educators Experience Teacher Preparation Programs

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WORK BEYOND THE WORK: AMPLIFYING HOW BLACK WOMEN EDUCATORS EXPERIENCE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

by

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ABSTRACT

WORK BEYOND THE WORK: AMPLIFYING HOW BLACK WOMEN EDUCATORS EXPERIENCE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

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The representation of Black teachers in the field of K-12 education has declined significantly in the last forty years (Ingersoll, 2011; Milner & Howard, 2004). Once considered a pathway to the middle class for Black Americans, teaching was a sought-after profession for Black folks for job stability (Collier, 2002). While there is extensive research on the experiences of teachers of color, and what might lead to their attrition in the teaching profession, Black women experience a specific intersection of race, class, and gender that affects their sustainability in the teaching profession that deserves exploration.

This qualitative research study examined the lived experiences of Black women educators in their teacher preparation programs and how their program experiences influenced their approaches to the classroom. The purpose of this study was to amplify the lived experiences of Black women that have so often been erased from the historical narrative. As a framework, Black Feminist Thought was utilized to better understand how the intersection of race, class, and gender plays a role in the unique experiences of Black women educators by intentionally pushing their identities, experiences, and ideas to the center of analysis (Collins, 1986, 2000, 2009).

Three major themes emerged from the findings: 1) The struggle to build community in teacher preparation programs, 2) teacher preparation not being preparation for all student experiences, and 3) the concept of the *work beyond the work* that unpacks the unacknowledged and uncompensated labor of Black women educators in teacher preparation programs and

professional settings. Implications in the study suggest that there are real opportunities for teacher preparation programs to engage Black women's culture as a mechanism for recruitment and retainment, to engage Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as a tool to support Black and non-Black educators to support the needs of the increasingly diverse student population, and to offer Critical Professional Development to engage educators in professional development uniquely tailored to their learning curves and offer Black women educations some reprieve from the expectation of the work beyond the work without training to support diverse student groups.

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmothers, Victoria Elizabeth Jackson (1928-2022) and Lelia Ware Jackson, and my mother Raynell Vesselles Jackson – the Black women who raised me and instilled in me a love for God, myself, and my education. This doctorate is for you, just as much as it is for me. I am you. And I will carry you with me forever in name and action.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"*Radical simply means grabbing things at the root*." – Angela Davis

Background

Creating civic-minded citizens through the teaching of dominant culture and social responsibility has been a consistent thread at the core of the establishment of the public schooling system in the United States (Berkman, 2009; Brick, 2005; Detelfsen, 1998; Dotts, 2012; Fels, 1967; Groen, 2008; Litz, 1975; Warren, 1988). However, a consistent thread in public schooling for Black Americans has been exclusion and inequity; attaining access to equitable education has been a fight for the Black community in the United States since the end of the Civil War (Anderson, 1988; Collier, 2002; Tillman, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2005). While enslaved people were denied formal education, they worked to creatively and courageously pursue English literacy (Mitchell, 2008). During the Reconstruction period, Black folks in the south made significant strides, organizing to create education opportunities for southern Black folks through the establishment of many all-Black, public elementary and secondary schools. At one point between Reconstruction and the *Brown vs. The Board of Education* (374 U.S. 483) decision, there were over 82,000 Black educators teaching over two million Black students in the south alone (Collier, 2002; Ethridge, 1979; Hawkins, 1994; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2013). These all-Black schools were built and run by Black folks, and consistently met harsh opposition from white southerners, including resistance to state funding of resources (Anderson, 1988; Vaughn, 1974).

Teaching was a profession where Black women were elevated as leaders within their communities long before broader career opportunities were made available to them and before

teacher preparation programs were fully available to them (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004; Fultz, 1995; Tillman, 2004). While Reconstruction led to an influx of Black educators within the public school system, the *Brown vs. The Board of Education* decision would drastically change this trajectory (Bell, 2005; Collier, 2002; Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014; Tillman, 2004). The *Brown* decision overturned the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (163 U.S. 537) decision of 1896 that deemed *separate but equal* facilities constitutional and instead, *Brown* declared that separate facilities were inherently unequal (Bell, 2005). However, because of violent, southern opposition, the *Brown* decision of 1954 was executed in two critical moments: Brown I in 1954 and Brown II in 1955 (Bell, 2005). Brown II served as a second warning to southern states resisting desegregation, urging them to do so with "with all deliberate speed" (Bell, 2005; Epps-Robertson, 2016). However, this second decision still granted the southern states latitude to interpret what "all deliberate speed" meant (Bell, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2004). While *Brown* was the culmination of many cases for educational equality following the Civil War (Bell, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2004), the potential of *Brown* did not match the impact that the decision had on public education for Black Americans, both students and adults. Ladson-Billings (2004) suggests that a more responsible way to examine this legislation is to examine the costs of the decision. Those costs, according to Ladson-Billings, were:

> Job loss and displacement over time, the re-inscription of Black inferiority, the rise of the segregation academies, the missed opportunity for working-class white and Black coalitions to work together for quality education, and the focus on race over quality education (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 9).

State-led desegregation resulted in the closing of Black schools and the displacement of Black students into existing white schools (Tillman, 2004; Weissman, 2019). Also not included

in the legislation was the integration of Black educators into white or mixed-race schools. Black educators would essentially be consigned to all-Black schools, which were quickly ceasing to exist as desegregation took hold (Anderson, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 2004). Unprotected from school desegregation, Black educators were displaced, fired, or told that their education certifications were not up to standard in comparison to those of their white peers (Ladson-Billings, 2004). When addressing the absence of language in the desegregation legislation for the placement of Black educators, an attorney at the time communicated that, "in a war there must be some casualties, and perhaps the Black teachers will be the casualties in the fight for equal education of Black students" (Ethridge, 1979, p. 220). In the decade following the 1954 decision, over 38,000 Black educators in the seventeen southern states lost their jobs (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Tillman, 2004). As a profession with many Black women in leadership, this decision negatively impacted access to gainful employment for Black women educators (Collier, 2002; Lash & Ratcliffe, 2004).

One of the most significant instances of southern resistance to desegregation came in the form of Massive Resistance[1], a plan implemented by Virginia Senator Harry F. Byrd in direct opposition to school desegregation (Epps-Robertson, 2016; Nelson, 2013). This resistance led to the closing of an entire school district, Prince Edward County Public Schools in Virginia, for five years. This history of resistance to desegregation in Virginia is ironic considering that today, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), Virginia ranks in the top five states in the country for having the most Black students enrolled in their teacher preparation programs at four-year higher education institutions. This dichotomy between the historical reluctance of the

[1] After the *Brown v. The Board of Education* decision by the United States Supreme Court, US Senator Harry F. Byrd called for "Massive Resistance" in opposition of school desegregation. This opposition would eventually lead to the closing of Prince Edward County Schools in Virginia (Epps-Robertson, 2016).

state of Virginia to desegregate and its relatively high population of Black future educators pushes me to further explore how teacher preparation programs in Virginia intentionally prepare teachers for their roles within Virginia public schools. More specifically, I am interested in learning more about how Black women educators experience these Virginia teacher preparation programs. Stories of resistance to desegregation in Virginia are representative of the resistance to desegregation throughout the south; this resistance and non-compliance with desegregation policies in the south would deny equitable educational access to millions of Black folks and the impacts would be felt for generations to come (Bell, 2005).

Problem Statement

For decades, scholars have discussed the decreasing numbers of Black educators in the classroom and the potential impact on school communities as a result of this trend (Fairclough, 2004; Farinde et al., 2015; Kohli, 2012, 2014; Kohli & Pizarro, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2011). Commentary surrounding the impact of the Black educator decline tends to focus on how this deficit affects the academic, social, and emotional development of Black students (Gasman et al., 2017; Mahatmya et al., 2016; Neal-Jackson, 2018; Tillman, 2004). However, this commentary does not address what is contributing to Black educators not being retained in the field.

The representation of Black teachers in the field has declined significantly in the last forty years (Ingersoll, 2011; Milner & Howard, 2004). Once considered a sure pathway to the middle class for Black Americans, teaching was a sought-after profession for Black folks for job stability (Collier, 2002). Today, however, Black educators only represent approximately 7.7 percent of the teaching population, with Black women educators representing a majority of that 7.7 percent. The education profession is overwhelmingly dominated by white women,

representing over 83 percent of the national, K-12 teaching workforce, even though students of color represent over 51 percent of the public-school student population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). While the disparity between Black women and Black men educators might communicate to education thought leaders the need to focus recruitment efforts on Black men, this research study aims to amplify the voices and experiences of existing Black women educators by examining the historical role of Black women educators and their present-day experiences in teacher preparation programs.

While there is extensive research on the experiences of teachers of color, and what might lead to their attrition in the teaching profession, Black women experience a specific intersection of race, class, and gender that affects their sustainability in the teaching profession that deserves exploration. To take this idea a step further, I believe that Black women experience a phenomenon I refer to as the *work beyond the work.*[2] Ladson-Billings (1998) says that Black educators are expected to "propel students to excel academically, enhance student awareness of their cultural heritage and their ability to challenge prejudice and discrimination, and empower students to address social inequities" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 262). Butchart and Rolleri (2004) state that Black women were thought to be able to "go where white ladies cannot" in reference to their teaching Black students in areas that white folks dared not go. Often, Black educators are positioned as experts on creating equitable experiences for students even if they are not trained to do so (Farinde et al., 2015; Gasman et al., 2017; Kohli, 2009; Ladson-Billings; Pham, 2018).

[2] I define the *work beyond the work* as the expectation placed on Black educators to support the cultural education of their white peers and the emotional and social development of students of color, while simultaneously excelling in the profession as a teacher.

This *work beyond the work* is not often acknowledged or considered a value-add to school communities, but rather an expectation that is rooted in the stereotypical portrayals and roles of Black women in their communities. Research suggests that this extra responsibility is one that Black educators are not prepared for in their teacher preparation programs and understandably, this makes the field of education less sustainable for Black teachers than it is for their white peers who are not expected to carry this extra responsibility (Kohli, 2009, 2012). This understanding led me to wonder about the experiences of Black women educators in their teacher preparation programs and what insight can be gleaned from these experiences. How does the history of education connect to the present-day experience of Black women educators and the roles they are expected to take on within their educational environments? Does the lack of educator diversity within the K-12 setting mirror the lack of diversity that we see within teacher preparation programs, or are Black women not being retained in the field of education after graduating from teacher preparation programs?

To best understand the experiences of Black women educators, and to answer the many questions that I have about the teacher preparation experiences of Black women, I will utilize Black Feminist Thought (BFT) as the theoretical framework for this research study (Collins, 1986, 2000, 2009). Black Feminist Thought recognizes the historical erasure of Black women and their experiences and intentionally pushes their identities, experiences, and ideas to the center of analysis (Collins, 1986, 2000, 2009). Angela Davis reminds us that radical simply means "grasping things at the root." As a critical social theory, the BFT framework will help me to examine the experiences of Black women in an "at the root," holistic way by taking into account the historical experience of Black women existing at the intersection of race, class, and

gender in their personal and professional settings. This historical experience has present-day implications for Black women educators.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

Black women educators have been an integral part of developing the racial identity of Black students within classrooms in the South since Reconstruction (Clayton & Peters, 2019; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2013). Black women educators have also operated as "hidden actors" for generations, advocating for equitable access to education for Black students and themselves at both the local and national level, while simultaneously educating (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004; Fultz, 1995; Walker, 2013). The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of Black women educators educated in teacher preparation programs at four-year universities. More specifically, I will examine the experiences of Black women educators at teacher preparation programs in Virginia. The battleground of Massive Resistance, Virginia is an ideal location for me to examine the efforts of teacher preparation programs to support Black women educators as they prepare to support all students, but especially students of color, in their educational environments. The research questions below center the voices and lived experiences of Black women educators:

Research Questions

1. How do Black women educators who completed teacher preparation programs in the state of Virginia describe their experiences while enrolled in those teacher preparation programs?
2. In what ways have the teacher preparation program experiences of Black women educators who completed their teacher preparation programs in the state of Virginia influenced or not influenced their pedagogical approaches?

The first goal of this research study is to amplify the voices of Black women educators in K-12 classrooms and their experiences with teacher preparation programs. The second goal of this study is to explore how the teacher preparation experiences of Black women influences their pedagogical approaches. The third goal of this study is to provide qualitative data that can support the creation of teacher preparation curriculum and practices that are specifically geared towards supporting Black women and the sustainability of their work, while also training white and non-Black future educators to be allies in the field of K-12 education. The role of teacher preparation programs, as the learning ground for the majority of K-12 educators in the United States, is a critical piece to this research. Through this research, I hope to glean what support is needed for Black women educators from their teacher preparation programs and to shed light on the nuanced experiences of Black women educators in the K-12 educational setting.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it aims to discuss with intentionality the preparation of Black women educators for their roles as both teacher and the bearer of the *work beyond the work* as educators within their school environments. This study can contribute to the conversation that higher education institutions have about their ability to support more equitable experiences for future Black women educators in the United States. Understanding the Black woman teacher experience in their teacher preparation programs can shed light on the work to be done within said programs to better support these educators before they head to their school placements. This study will assess the current teacher preparation programs in Virginia specifically as experienced by Black women educators. This research is an opportunity to examine how to best support Black women as they take on the *work beyond the work* within their

schools and to discover the ways that Black women need support in their teacher preparation programs so that they are sustained in the field of education.

Methodology Overview

Because this study aims to explore the nuanced experiences of Black women educators in their teacher preparation programs and how it affects their approaches to the classroom, qualitative inquiry is the most appropriate method of inquiry because of its "holistic approach that often values subjective meaning of a research problem and context as well as collaboration between researcher and participant in constructing and understanding knowledge" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 33). This study used a multiple case study approach (Yin, 2018). More intentionally, Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 1986, 2000, 2009) was the theoretical framework that I evoked to better understand how the intersection of race, class, and gender played a role in the unique experiences of Black women educators. For this study, I collected data through one-on-one interviews and document review. Participants for this study were recruited using criterion sampling; I specifically engaged Black women educators who currently teach in K-12 schools in Virginia who also graduated from teacher preparation programs at four-year higher education institutions in Virginia. This study also used snowball sampling as I hoped to make connections with Black women educators that would lead me to other Black women educators that fit the criteria for the study. To recruit participants, I created a graphic explaining the study and disseminated the graphic via my professional and personal networks. Black women educators who met the criteria were encouraged to fill out a Google Form that collected their contact information so that I was able to gather their information in one, centralized location. Prior to data collection, the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Limitations

This study will not be without limitations. A potential limitation is the specific focus on four-year teacher preparation programs at higher education institutions in Virginia. By focusing the study specifically on institutions in Virginia, the researcher excludes sixteen other southern states from exploration in this study. Teacher preparation programs are not the only pathway to the classroom for Black educators; therefore, only focusing on teacher preparation programs in Virginia means that those that have taken non-traditional pathways to education are not represented in this study. The COVID-19 pandemic is also another limitation to this study as the research needed to be conducted in a virtual setting, not allowing the researcher to gauge nonverbal communication as an in-person observer. Although there are limitations, the findings of this study can help to shape the discussion regarding how to create a more equitable experience for Black women educators than the current experience of the *work beyond the work.* Making adjustments in the overall structure of the teacher preparation experience can contribute to sustaining Black women educators in the field.

Delimitations

This study is intentionally limited in scope to examine the specific experiences of Black women educators in their teacher preparation programs. Even more specifically, this study only examined the experiences of Black women who attended a teacher preparation undergraduate program in one of the many public or private higher education institutions in Virginia. This intentional effort is an attempt to add to the literature exploring the intersection of race, class, and gender as it pertains to the unique experiences of Black women as teachers. In addition, the focus on Virginia is also significant because Virginia ranked within the top five states in the United States for educating Black students in their teacher preparation programs.

Summary

As teacher preparation programs continue to train educators, it is important to critically examine how these programs serve all of their students. Given the intersection of race and gender, Black women educators have unique experiences within K-12 education that deserve to be explored in depth. Through qualitative inquiry, more specifically a case-study approach, this research aimed to shed light on the experiences of Black women educators in *the work beyond the work* and support the sustainability of the teaching role for these educators.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brief History of Public Education in the United States

Throughout the history of education in the United States, scholars have outlined various arguments about its purpose and influence in shaping society (Adams, 2014; Berkman, 2009; Brick, 2005; Dotts, 2012; Litz, 1975). In all of its forms, one consistent purpose of education since its establishment has been to create civic-minded citizens through teaching dominant cultural and social responsibility (Berkman, 2009; Brick, 2005; Detelfsen, 1998; Dotts, 2012; Fels, 1967; Groen, 2008; Litz, 1975; Warren, 1988). Scholars suggest that behind the push for the establishment of the common school system in the mid-nineteenth century was the belief that education would fix all of the social ills facing the United States by assimilating all learners with the teaching of dominant cultural and religious values (Berkman, 2009; Dotts, 2012; Litz, 1975; Weissman, 2019). A century before, George Washington shared what he thought was instrumental to maintaining a strong democracy; he proposed "the assimilation of the principles, opinions, and manners of our countrymen… from every quarter… The more homogenous our citizens can be made in these particulars the greater will be our prospect of permanent union" (Dotts, 2012, p. 223). The social ills that many political leaders referred to in the nineteenth century reflected concerns about the impacts of diversity of thought, religious practice, and cultures on the 'civilized' society they hoped to build (Berkman, 2015; Dotts, 2012; Warren, 1988).

Before Horace Mann and the Whig Party reframed the purpose of education in national discourse, education reformers like Thomas Jefferson believed that education did not create ability; rather, it enhanced the ability that people were born with (Berkman, 2015; Brick, 2005;

Dotts, 2012). According to these reformers, those born with natural abilities should be educated so that their abilities can be molded (Berkman, 2015; Brick, 2005; Dotts, 2012). However, in the Jefferson era only the children of wealthy white landowners were considered to have the natural abilities to warrant their being educated (Berkman, 2009; Brick, 2005; Litz, 1975). Mann, an education reformer known as the father of the common school movement, advanced the idea that education could "unite all citizens of varied religions, ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic levels, and professions into one community, educated in the values of a basically white Protestant society" (Berkman, 2009, p. 253). This attempt to unite all citizens came at a time in the history of the United States when migration to the United States was increasing, cities were expanding, and people from diverse cultures and religions were merging. The Whig Party feared the effects that the rapidly changing demographic makeup of the United States would have on political practice (Dotts, 2012; Warren, 1988). Framed as the great equalizer amongst the white elite and the white lower class, public education was communicated to the masses as an opportunity to lessen class tensions and social differences by providing a standard level of education to all people regardless of their socioeconomic status. Mann believed that schools were pathways to social mobility (Fels, 1967; Groen, 2008; Warren, 1988).

Mann, along with other members of the Whig Party, considered education the opportunity to "save souls". They believed that the real issue plaguing the country was an absence of morality and respect for authority; to them, dissenting opinions symbolized a disrespect of authority (Dotts, 2012; Groen, 2008; Finkelstein, 1990). Scholars suggest that the real reason that Mann, and other members of the Whig Party, rallied around a unified system of education had very little to do with creating equality between social classes and much more to do with establishing social control (Dotts, 2012; Groen, 2008; Weissman, 2019). Mann saw

common schools as places to develop the moral and social behaviors in citizens that were beginning to fall by the wayside (Copeland, 2009; Dotts, 2012; Goldin & Katz, 1999; Litz, 1975). Born amidst political conflict, common schools were created to "stifle democratic conflict, stabilize a rapidly changing society, and maintain a sense of order among an increasingly diverse population" (Dotts, 2012, p. 222). This suggests that common schools were created to stifle change and individual growth in order to maintain existing social hierarchies and dominant control.

Between 1840 and 1865, Mann was instrumental in a period that saw significant innovations in education, including the advancement of the concept of holistic education (Finkelstein, 1990; Groen, 2008; Winship, 1924). Winship (1924) argues that Mann offered three of the most significant contributions to American education: public support and appreciation of schools, public responsibility in educating teachers, and administrative oversight both within and outside schools. Mann's case for the public-school system included six fundamental propositions:

> That a republic cannot long remain ignorant and free, hence the necessity of universal popular education; 2) that such education must be paid for, controlled and sustained by an interested public; 3) that such education is best provided in schools embracing children of all religious, social and ethnic background; 4) that such education, while profoundly moral in character, must be free of sectarian religious influence; 5) that such education must be permeated throughout by the spirit, methods, and discipline of a free society, and hence harsh pedagogy in the classroom is undesirable; and 6) that such education can be provided only by well-trained, professional teachers who have mastered their subject matter and their pedagogical arts as well. (Fels, 1976, p. 67)

Public schools were seen as spaces that could both cultivate intellect and serve as the foundation for learning about civic responsibility (Finkelstein, 1990; Litz, 1975). This quarter-century saw the establishment of teacher education programs to ensure the quality of curriculum and teaching, the creation of kindergarten as a pathway between the home and primary education for students, the examination and rewriting of textbooks and literature, and the creation of public libraries (Fels, 1967; Winship, 1924). This period of time laid the foundation for what we know as the K-12 education system in the United States today (Brick, 2005; Finkelstein, 1990).

John Dewey would later introduce an education philosophy that would expand the role of education to not only include the needs of the democratic society but also consider the personal growth and development needs of each individual. Schools would then be charged with providing individualized curricula to meet the different needs of students so that individual growth could be actualized (Goldin & Katz, 1999; Groen, 2008; Winship, 1924). Dewey saw education as a tool of social reform by tending to the social and emotional needs of each student. As the founder of multicultural education and social-emotional learning, Dewey expanded education to be a tool to correct "unfair privilege and unfair deprivation, not to perpetuate them" (Detelfsen, 1998; Dewey, 1916). Although they had different educational philosophies, Dewey, Mann and Jefferson each believed that people could improve if given the right conditions to do so and that the role of education was ultimately to ensure the proper development of citizens who could positively contribute to a democratic society (Brick, 2005).

While the intention of the common school movement on the surface was to ensure that all students received an education no matter their socioeconomic status, it is important to discuss that none of these educational efforts included enslaved or free Africans (Mitchell, 2008; Weissman, 2019). Weissman (2019) notes that while the common school movement quickly

gained momentum in the Northern states after getting its start in Boston, Massachusetts, it took significantly longer to take root in the Southern states. In fact, some scholars suggest that the impetus to educate poor, white laborers in the South only arrived after the Civil War and the emancipation of the enslaved spurred white elites to establish a hierarchy separating the poor, white Southerners from the now-freed Black population (Watson, 2012; Weissman, 2019). Scholars assert that establishing this hierarchy would serve to foster a sense of superiority among poor, white people that would perpetuate the Southern status quo and ultimately help to maintain the Southern social order and wealth of Southern elites (Allen, 2006; Watson, 2012; Weissman, 2019). Wealthy landowners in the South feared what the freedom of the formerly enslaved would mean for their social and financial capital. By giving poor, white citizens access to education, wealthy landowners in the South could create a racial hierarchy that would lead to poor, white people aligning themselves with wealthy, white landowners to oppose educational opportunities and social advancement for Black Americans (Allen, 2006; Watson, 2012; Weissman, 2019). This orchestrated deprivation of educational resources and social advancement for Black Americans would follow them throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into the present day.

At its core, the United States education system looks much like it did when it was established in the nineteenth century. The issue with this reality, however, is that the shapers of this system did not develop it with the intention of meeting the needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). The existing pillars of the American public school system, from how they are financed and zoned to how decisions are made about curricula, all trace their origins to the earliest years of education establishment, which was not intended to sufficiently educate non-white peoples (Dotts, 2012; Goldin & Katz, 1999).

When I consider the foundations of the institution that we have come to know as our public education system, I wonder how anyone could ever expect schools to be places where non-white students can experience equity. The United States education system, at its core, was established to reinforce a social hierarchy that has negatively affected the lived experiences of Black Americans in their pursuit of educational attainment for generations. From the original attempt by the Whig Party to impose social order among culturally and politically diverse people to the Southern commitment to common school as a means to establish a racial hierarchy, the United States has historically utilized education as a tool to maintain dominant culture. Black exclusion from education has its roots in enslavement. Black exclusion from education in the South has significant implications for the struggle that Black women, and students, face in education today.

Black American Exclusion from Public Education in the United States

"The bare name of educating the colored people, scares our cruel oppressor."

- David Walker 1830

Enslavement

Throughout the institution of enslavement, opinions differed on whether to educate the then-enslaved Africans of the South. Scholars suggest that while there were many opinions on whether or not to allow enslaved people access to literacy, there was one unifying thought among white opponents to literacy and white advocates of educating enslaved Africans: if the enslaved were to be educated, they would be educated for the sole purpose of being of better service to white people (Anderson, 1998; Copeland, 2009; Mitchell, 2008). Scholars suggest that white supremacy was the root of the decision to allow or deny enslaved peoples' access to literature (Copeland, 2009; Mitchell, 2008; Vaughn, 1974; Weissman, 2019). White landowners in the

South who opposed literacy for the enslaved successfully advocated for laws prohibiting access to literature and education opportunities for the enslaved. The consequences for breaking those laws were harsh for the enslaved and for any non-enslaved persons found to be an accomplice (Mitchell, 2008).

Slave owners feared that literacy would give enslaved people access to abolitionist literature and increase the likelihood of uprisings on plantations (Mitchell, 2008; Vaughn, 1974; Weissman, 1974). As abolitionists increased production of abolitionist literature in the nineteenth century, opponents to literacy attempted to seize control over private spaces that could be used for learning. In 1804, all nighttime religious meetings were prohibited; in 1819, all meetings for educational purposes were prohibited for enslaved folks and freedmen; and in 1831, any assembly with the intention to read or write was prohibited in the South (Mitchell, 2008; Vaughn, 1974).

White landowners were also aware that the economic institution of enslavement heavily depended on the physical and mental control of the enslaved people (Mitchell, 2008; Vaughn, 1974; Weissman, 2019). In order to maintain dominance over enslaved people, slave owners inflicted terror physically and mentally through the cultivation of the *slave mentality* (Mitchell, 2008). Slave owners employed literature to establish a slave mentality that would serve to deAfricanize the enslaved by ripping away their historical memory and identity (Mitchell, 2008; Weissman, 2019). Scholars suggest that the Bible was used by slaveowners to Christianize the enslaved, further erasing their connections to their native religions and peoples. By erasing the religious cultures of the enslaved, white Southerners could force assimilation (Mitchell, 2008; Weissman, 2019). Weissman (2019) states,

> The small number of instances of some masters, preachers, and other whites who secretly educated slaves in reading, writing, and religious teachings often highlighted the role of education as a way to further subordinate Blacks and send slaves submissive messages about obedience to their masters. (p. 704)

This intentional deployment of education by slave owners to control the enslaved highlights a known connection between education and freedom. This connection between education and freedom foreshadows the fight Black Americans fought for educational attainment in the decades to come. In fact, United States lawmakers would not consider educating Black people through the burgeoning common school movement until Reconstruction, even though they were freed a decade prior (Watson, 2012; Weissman, 2019).

Reconstruction

Four million Black Americans were freed after the Civil War, and within 15 years of this freedom, over 120 secondary schools and higher education institutions were established by freedmen and other supporters of education for Black people (Butchart & Roller, 2004; Walker, 2019). This period of Reconstruction afforded Black people in the South an opportunity to quickly master the basic writing, reading, and arithmetic necessary to begin secondary education (Butchart & Roller, 2004; Vaughn, 1974). Vaughn (1974) suggests that while Reconstruction was thought to do much in the United States for racial justice, it did very little for education equality. The federal government allowed each state government to decide whether to integrate educational spaces after the Civil War. Because the federal government did not take any responsibility for education, the education systems in the South continued to be run by white elites interested in maintaining the status quo. Even schools created specifically for *racial mixing* such as the Freedmen's Bureau Missionary Schools remained segregated because

Southern opposition was so violent (Urban, 1975; Vaughn, 1974). Education reformers from the North and South looked to the United States Congress to provide hands-on support for desegregation at the state and local levels, but Congress did not approve (Urban, 1975; Vaughn, 1974). Scholars suggest that the absence of federal support for desegregation, which maintained unequal access to resources for Black schools, led Black people to pursue equal access to resources through litigation.

In the antebellum South, it was uncommon for white laborers to be educated. While the North moved to a public education model in the mid-nineteenth century that allowed white people of all socioeconomic statuses access to a common education, the South lagged long behind the efforts of the North to educate its citizens (Anderson, 1988; Mitchell, 2008; Vaughn, 1974; Weissman, 2019). White landowners did not think it was necessary to educate white laborers (Anderson, 1988; Mitchell, 2008; Vaughn, 1974; Weissman, 2019). As the Civil War drew closer, efforts increased to create a common form of schooling for white laborers in the South, but even after the end of the war white primary schools in the South did not open their doors to Black people (Anderson, 1988; Mitchell, 2008; Vaughn, 1974; Weissman, 2019).

Toward the end of the Civil War, there were more discussions than ever taking place at the federal level about the education of Black people in the United States (Anderson, 1988; Vaughn, 1974). There were over four million formerly enslaved persons in the United States and lawmakers expressed concern about their integration and its effects on the social fabric of the United States (Vaughn, 1974). While there were some organizations established during the Civil War to help educate Black people in Union-occupied spaces, many of these organizations withdrew their support of education for Black people after the Civil War because of severe Southern opposition (Vaughn, 1974). Southern opposition to educating Black people was a very

real danger stemming from white supremacy and the needs of the white elite to maintain the social hierarchy (Allen, 2006; Weissman, 2019). Southerners despised the Northern public-education system and feared, as they had historically, that knowledge for Black people would only challenge the social order of the South (Allen, 2006; Weissman, 2019). While some Northern education reformers argued that Black people in the South should have had access to common schools as early as the start of the Civil War these efforts were thwarted because of the fierce opposition of the South, particularly through the political sphere (Weissman, 2019). However severe the opposition, Black people still created educational spaces for themselves. From the beginning of the Civil War to the end of Reconstruction, over 120 secondary and higher education institutions were created for and by Black people (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004).

Brown vs. The Board of Education & Its Impact

The Reconstruction era brought about significant growth for Black primary and secondary schools in the segregated South that were built and run by Black folks themselves (Butchart & Roller, 2004). Scholars note that before the *Brown vs. The Board of Education* (374 U.S. 483) decision of 1954, there were over 82,000 Black educators teaching over two million Black students in the southern United States (Collier, 2002; Ethridge, 1979; Hawkins, 1994; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2013).

Black educators in this period were not only responsible for teaching students; they were also involved in local advocacy for access to educational opportunities for their Black students (Collier, 2002; Walker, 2003). While the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was seen nationally as representing the education needs of Black students and educators in different areas of the South, scholars acknowledge that Black educators advocated for the rights of their students long before the NAACP and other larger organizations were

involved (Collier, 2002; Walker, 2013). According to the NAACP, segregation in the South served to reinforce the second-class citizenship of Black Americans in the United States, so they set out to change the landscape of the South and demand equal access to opportunities (Epps-Robertson, 2016; Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014; Nelson, 2013; Walker, 2009). Local Black educators and activists feared that the educational goals of the NAACP did not always align with the goals identified by local organizations. Black educators understood the widespread influence of the NAACP, but also worried about the national movement discounting their needs (Walker, 2013):

> The leadership of educators is often omitted in communications from the national office. Instead, overtly negative statements about educators are sometimes made, and the NAACP expresses a clear preference that educational matters be harnessed under the umbrella of the national office. (Walker, 2019, p. 216)

While co-dependency was required between local organizations and the NAACP to take legal action against school districts or even state boards of education, this was not an easy space to step into. For example, a former president of the Georgia Teachers and Education Association (GTEA) referred to the NAACP as an "outside" group seeking to claim the work local educators had been doing for years.

Before the landmark *Brown* decision, there were other lawsuits filed in support of desegregation in states like Delaware (*Gebhart v. Belton,* 1952), the District of Columbia, Kansas, South Carolina (*Briggs v. Elliott,* 1952) and Virginia (*Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County,* 1952), that ended with state courts determining that the separate but equal ruling was not a violation of the 14th Amendment (Young et al., 2015). The NAACP appealed each of these decisions and sought the Supreme Court to hear the cases, with Thurgood Marshall serving as the head NAACP counsel in the *Brown vs. The Board of Education of*

Topeka, Kansas case specifically (Bell, 2005; Epps-Robertson, 2016). In 1952, the Supreme Court agreed to hear all five cases and in 1954 declared separate facilities inherently unequal, in effect ruling that segregation was unconstitutional. Education was the cause at the forefront of this effort to integrate (Bell, 2005). After Southern school systems refused to comply with the original ruling, the second *Brown* ruling of 1955 called on the states to integrate with "all deliberate speed" (Bell, 2005; Epps-Robertson, 2016). Many states and localities opposed and resisted desegregation, but one of the most noted examples of Southern opposition took place in Virginia from 1954 to 1964 and is now referred to as "Massive Resistance."

Massive Resistance in Virginia

In 1954, Virginia was arguably the most aggressive of the Southern states in its opposition to desegregation (Epps-Robertson, 2016). In fact, Virginia politicians responded to the *Brown vs. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision by rallying support for the Southern Manifesto: a document denouncing desegregation that was backed by political leaders and ultimately submitted to Congress (Epps-Robertson, 2016). Senator Harry F. Byrd was at the forefront of this movement to maintain segregation in the South and deliberately worked against desegregation efforts by utilizing racial ideologies and language to argue against the citizenship of Black Americans (Epps-Robertson, 2016; McGee, 1980; Walker, 2009). Research suggests that Byrd, along with an organization known as the Defenders, used his positional power to defend the South while using language that articulated to white people that desegregation was an infringement of the federal government on states' rights (Epps-Robertson, 2016). By doing so, the Southern Manifesto made its way to the United States Congress and legislation was passed in 1956. The Southern Manifesto, and other intentional legislative tactics, became known in Virginia as Massive Resistance (Epps-Robertson, 2016). This movement created pathways for

segregated schooling by granting tuition support for white families to send their children to segregated, often private, schools, and increased the positional power of the governor's office by giving the governor full control over funding for schools that attempted to integrate (Epps-Robertson, 2016). If Massive Resistance attempted to maintain and protect the power and position of white people in Virginia, then it is clear that white leaders saw a connection between educational access and power (Allen, 2006; Epps-Robertson, 2016; Nelson, 2013).

The limited Southern support for desegregation that did exist was shaky. An example of this inconsistency was Governor Thomas Stanley of Virginia's initial response to the *Brown* decision and support of desegregation. It was only a matter of weeks, according to Epps-Robertson (2016), before he renounced his support of desegregation and stood in solidarity with other Southern governors against desegregation. This effort, along with many other efforts to stop desegregation, would later become known as Massive Resistance under the leadership of Senator Harry F. Byrd (Epps-Robertson, 2016; Nelson, 2013). The Southern Manifesto of 1956 was a statement of intent among Southern politicians to subvert the ruling of *Brown vs. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas.* Epps-Robertson (2016) argues that much of the rhetoric associated with Massive Resistance in Virginia communicated to white Virginians that segregation was the only way to live in harmony with Black citizens. Virginia leaders were able to change the narrative of the intention of desegregation by creating a false sense of urgency connected to government interference in states' rights. Virginia leaders were also able to change the narrative regarding white Virginians', specifically poor white folks, understanding of desegregation. This resistance would culminate with the closing of Prince Edward County Schools for five years from 1959 to 1964 under the leadership of Senator Harry F. Byrd. Massive Resistance would also result in the establishment of private schooling throughout the South as a

means to remove white children from the public school system and to divert funding from the public school system into private education (Epps-Robertson, 2016; Rubin & Elinson, 2018). This privatization of education and funneling of state and federal funding to private tuition grants, continues to shape school access in the South (Rubin & Elinson, 2018). This still has impacts on the geographical location of Black Americans in Virginia as Black Americans migrated in large numbers from rural to urban areas to try to access better education (Day, 2014, 2016). Stories of resistance in Virginia were representative of the resistance to desegregation throughout the South. Without compliance with desegregation policies from the South, the educational access of millions of Black and white folks would suffer for generations to come (Bell, 2004). Bell (2004) also suggests that throughout the nation's history, policy decisions were made as Interest-convergence covenants were "Black rights are recognized and protected when and only so long as policymakers perceive that such advances will further interests that are their [white folks] primary concern" (Bell, 2004, p. 49). It is imperative to examine how the sociopolitical context influences policy decisions that lead to either radical change or continued inequity.

The Impact of Brown vs. the BOE on Black Educators

It is important to be reminded of major advancements that were made following enslavement when discussing the experiences of Black students in the south during this period as to not perpetuate a misconception that because of inequitable facilities and support from local school boards, Black schools were somehow inept. When historical scholars examine the experiences of Black students in the South during this period, they sometimes perpetuate a misconception that because of inequitable facilities and support from local school boards, Black schools were somehow inept; however, that was not the case. After the Civil War, Black

educators were integral in not only physically building their schools, but also in funding them, filling them with Black leaders and educators, and working to change the trajectory of Black students' lives by providing them with the tools necessary to experience success in the United States (Collier, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Tillman, 2004). Education was one of the few vocations that Black professionals had access to where they could use their influence to support and uplift Black children (Tillman, 2004). Although *Brown vs. The Board of Education* determined that schools were to be desegregated, it did not address the integration of the educators within those schools (Tillman, 2004). As a result of this omission, Black teachers and administrators were intentionally removed from their roles following the *Brown* decision and white supervision of Black students and schools increased (Collier, 2002). In the decade after the *Brown* decision, many Southern schools established for Black students closed and Black students integrated historically white school systems. When this occurred, there were no protections in place to secure employment for Black educators in the new, desegregated schools. Scholars question the intention and purpose of desegregation, specifically for schools, given the barriers put in place to prevent Black educators from being in front of the classroom (Bell, 2005; Tillman, 2004). In addition to school systems firing Black educators after the *Brown* decision, Southern lawmakers began instituting policies intended to disqualify Black educators from teaching (Fultz, 1995). One of those policies, according to Tillman (2004), was the establishment of racially biased teacher competency tests in the South. These competency tests were based on historically white teaching preparation and were biased against Black educators trained in historically Black school systems. Standardized tests like the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and the National Teacher Examination (NTE) were intentionally used to screen out Black educators (Delpit, 1997; Tillman, 2004). Between 1954 and 1965, Tillman

notes that approximately 38,000 teachers and administrators in the seventeen Southern and border states lost their jobs (Collier, 2002; Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014; Tillman, 2004).

Lash and Ratcliffe (2014) discuss the sudden decline in numbers of Black educators in the United States after the *Brown* decision. In the 1950s, over 50% of Black working professionals were educators, with many Black women operating in leadership positions within those schools. Because Black educators were hired to teach Black students, education was a reliable profession for Black folks throughout the South (Tillman, 2004). However, after the *Brown* ruling, Black educators were displaced, fired, and unable to find employment as educators in the North or South (Collier, 2002; Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014; Tillman, 2004). The researchers argue that because Black educators were only allowed to teach Black children at all-Black schools in the Southern and border states prior to desegregation, they were among the most susceptible to unemployment in the nation after desegregation. Teaching was considered one of the pathways to the middle class for Black Americans, and because of limited pathways to upward social mobility, Black folks sought to be educators for job stability (Collier, 2002). This meant that after the *Brown* case, those most economically affected by the desegregation of the school systems were Black educators (Collier, 2002; Tillman, 2004). Black women in particular represented a majority of teachers and administrators in the South and therefore found themselves unemployed at extremely high rates (Collier, 2002; Lash & Ratcliffe, 2004).

The community rallied around Black schools in the South. Black educators and Black education leaders created all-Black professional networks like the American Teachers Association and the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, specifically to address the needs for educational access in the Black community. The national meetings allowed for Black educators to meet, strategize, and support one another through creating pedagogy that could lead

to social and economic freedom of Black students across the South (Walker, 2013). These all-Black organizations mirrored white organizations, but the intent and purpose of the meeting space were different for Black folks: Black educators focused on the specific needs of Black children. The pedagogical practices of these spaces are well documented and were used in Black schools to support sustained efforts to advocate for Black children (Walker, 1996, 2009, 2013).

After the Brown decision, the federal government left the responsibility of carrying out desegregation to states and local governments. School boards fired Black teachers, shut down Black schools, and demoted the existing Black schools to elementary and middle schools (Collier, 2002; Tillman, 2004). Black education leaders were not seen as competent or capable of running schools with both Black and white students, so they were also not considered for leadership positions in most spaces. The merger of Black educational organizations with white education organizations resulted in whiteness becoming dominant – the needs of white students becoming the needs of all students.

The Impact of Brown vs. the BOE on Black Students

While *Brown* called for the desegregation of public, K-12 schools and was designed to protect the interest of Black children, it protected the interests of white children (Bell, 2005; Gay, 2004; Young et al., 2015) which suggests that changes within the school culture and curriculum were not made to support the changing demographics of the student population. According to Gay (2004), Black students were required to integrate traditionally white schools without the teachers or peers from their former schools (Collier, 2002; Harvey et al., 2004; Young et al., 2015). Black students entered racially segregated, white schools and the presence of their Black bodies was considered the integration. However, it seems that these traditional white schools

refused to make space[3] for them. There is existing research seeking to better understand the impact of desegregation on the experience of Black public-school students, but what research exists to better understand the experience of Black educators? More specifically, what *space* has been made in teacher preparation programs for Black educators within higher education classrooms?

Black primary and secondary schools in the South were thriving schools, operating from a place of aspiration and advocacy (Fairclough, 2004; Walker, 2019). Black educators were intentional and purposeful in creating safe spaces for Black students that support their specific needs as a community experiencing inequities, even within the very school systems in which they existed. Interpersonal care was prioritized and the whole community supported the efforts of the school even when the local school boards refused to support (Collier, 2002; Fairclough, 2004; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2019). Black families advocated on behalf of the schools to the school board for access to resources and when that access was denied, reached into their own pockets to create opportunities for their schools. Walker (2019) suggests that, "through their educational organizations and networks, these educators generated the invisible collaborative activity that supplied money, data, and plaintiffs for the Brown v. Board of Education decision" (Walker, 2019, p. 16).

Walker (2019) also suggests that desegregation allowed Black bodies into white schools but did not consider the needs or interests of Black students. Black educators were aware of the educational and developmental needs of their Black students; culturally relevant pedagogy was developed out of Black educators having a keen understanding of their Black students and the communities from which they came. As a result of desegregation, many Black educators and

[3] For purposes of this study, *space* refers to the overall institutional structure and practices that allow each student to equitably access the educational and social capital that schools provide.

administrators across the South were not only fired but the official documentation and records for their schools were destroyed. Horace Tate, the executive director of the Georgia Teachers and Education Association (GTEA), safely kept records from their work in local and national advocacy for Black educational advancement and was able to share the records with Walker (2019) for research purposes. Culturally relevant pedagogy would continue to be utilized by Black educators throughout Black schools as a means to support Black children as they worked hard to succeed in an inequitable environment. Black schools encouraged Black students to aspire: to dream and to believe that they could do anything that they put their minds to. Resiliency building was at the core of this academic teaching and pedagogy. Black educators hoped to keep the things that they had built to build resilience and aspiration among Black students but also wanted desegregation to give their students access to the things that they had been denied, such as updated facilities, learning equipment, and buses (Walker, 2019).

The Impact of Brown vs. the BOE on Black Women Educators

Black women educators exist at the intersection (Crenshaw, 1989) of race and gender oppression that lends itself to a unique lived experience and understanding of how systems of oppression affect Black students within their communities. For example, education was a field where Black women in the South had access to influence and leadership opportunities that they did not have in other fields. Tillman (2004) suggests that the teaching profession was the most accessible profession for decades within the Black community and also where Black women were given permission to lead in professional settings (Tillman, 2004; Ethridge, 1979). The Black woman's experience lends itself to being better positioned to center the experiences of their Black students (Watson, 2017). In the years leading up to the *Brown* decision, Black women educators were essential to developing Black children in the South, implementing

culturally relevant curricula, and encouraging excellence and activism among their students (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2013; Watson, 2017).

> Black educators in this same period supplemented their local and national advocacy for education equality with a parallel pedagogical and curricular agenda designed to spur change by intentionally teaching generations of Black children citizenship, democracy, and voting as a means to confront oppression. (Walker, 2013, p. 208)

Both before and after desegregation, Black women educators challenged white supremacy and dominant narratives within educational spaces for their Black students and created opportunities for Black children to learn that they were not inferior to white people even if society positioned them in ways that led them to believe that (Beauboeuf- Lafontant, 1999; Walker, 2013; Watson, 2017). Watson (2017) contends that there is still so much to learn about the role of Black women educators, especially given the current, complex landscape. The current sociopolitical landscape mirrors that of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and therefore requires a different level of commitment from Black educators who are teaching Black students (Watson, 2017).

In the decades following emancipation, the few opportunities to serve in leadership roles within education for Black women were possible because of the education systems that were established by and for Black folks in the South (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Delpit, 2006; Watson, 2017). Education provided Black women with leadership roles that were not always available to them in other fields; therefore, job losses associated with desegregation were especially harmful to them. Without access to roles within educational leadership, Black women lost access to one of the most significant pathways to leadership and the social and economic advancement available to them at the time (Watson, 2017). Not only was this experience

harmful to Black women, but also to the students that they taught in their all-Black schools. Black women educators have been at the forefront of educational activism since the abolishment of enslavement, and as those that understood having a racialized experience in the United States, Black women educators have carried the responsibility for generations for the education of Black children, especially in the Southern states (Watson, 2017). Despite having limited access to formal teacher preparation, the educational advancements made by Black educators during Reconstruction, leading up to the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision, speak to the ingenuity and resiliency of Black folks. However, this lack of access to resources for both Black students and teachers has present-day implications for the experiences of Black women and children in K-12, public education.

The Education of Black Educators

Educational advancements made by Black Americans in the first two decades following the Civil War, including the creation of over 120 secondary education institutions such as normal schools and college preparatory schools within Black higher education institutions, demonstrates the organization and commitment of Black Americans to create educational opportunities for themselves (Anderson, 1988; Butchart & Rolleri, 2004). Black educators organized despite lacking adequate tools, training, structures and support from local governments to build and sustain their schools (Anderson, 1988; Fultz, 1995; Walker, 2013). Black educators were hidden actors advocating for equal access to educational opportunities for Black students and themselves on both the local and national levels (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004; Fultz, 1995; Walker, 2013). Black educator activism for equal educational access predates the NAACP's adoption of their official education policy positions. This Black educator-led activism included expansive strategic plans for accomplishing their specific goals. Black educators have always understood

the nuanced experiences of Black children and the tools they needed to survive life in the southern states (Walker, 2013).

During the Reconstruction period, during which the United States saw Black primary and secondary schools grow significantly in number, many white educators dared not teach in southern schools for fear of violence at the hands of white southerners who opposed desegregation. Education reformers also wanted to protect white women educators from working in Southern communities (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004); they believed that Black educators were able to "go where white ladies cannot, on the plantations, into the interior of the country, living in the negro cabins, and 'roughing it' in the most primitive way" (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004, p. 161). Even though Northern white education reformers believed that establishing schools for Black Americans required Black teachers and Black leadership (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004), many of the teacher preparation programs in the South that allowed Black folks access only sought to educate Black women as teachers (Butchart & Roller, 2004).

Teacher Preparation & Professional Organizations

Before the 1930s, public high schools educated the majority of the Black teaching force; educators would often leave their high school classrooms and transition into teaching roles at the same schools or other schools within their communities (Fultz, 1995). Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) became primary providers of teacher preparation opportunities for Black Americans. It would not be until the 1930s, however, that teacher preparation opportunities for Black Americans would expand to predominantly white institutions even though the demand for trained Black educators was high. While there were a few PWIs that began to offer Black Americans access to teacher preparation programs in the south, these opportunities were few and far between (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004; Fultz, 1995).

To better understand the complexities of the Black educator experience in the South, Sociologist W.E.B. DuBois conducted a study through Atlanta University in 1901 (Fultz, 1995). In his research study, DuBois records narratives from Black educators in southern schools. Of particular interest is his account of two Black women serving as the only educators in a Southern schoolhouse. Not only did they share about inadequate buildings, supplies, salaries, and support from the local town council, but they also noted the inconsistency of the school year's duration; some school years were as long as eight months, while others were only in session for three to six months (Fultz, 1995). DuBois believed that this detailed narrative of the experience of these two Black women educators was characteristic of Black schools in the south where unkept school buildings and low-paying salaries kept the public education system in a "vicious cycle of being trapped in patterns of underachievement" (Fultz, 1995, p. 197). Charles Johnson, a Black American sociologist and former president of Fisk University, said that the "vicious cycle" led to Black teachers teaching in schools that they recently attended without the academic training or support to adequately support their students or themselves (Fultz, 1995). Even without proper support structures in place, Black schools in the south persisted. However, the need for educators was so great that in 1921, 30 of the 48 states did not even require a high school diploma for teaching (Cook, 1928; Fultz, 1995; Walker, 2013;).

Years later, Ambrose Caliver became the first Black researcher hired by the U.S. Office of Education to study teacher preparation for Black educators in southern schools (Fultz, 1995). Caliver articulated in his research that Black educators seemed to share the belief that the future of Black Americans rested on the kind of education Black students could access. Caliver suggested that the kind of education Black Americans could access depended on the quality of their teachers, and that teacher quality most heavily depended on personal character and

professional training (Fultz, 1995). In the 1931 study, Caliver reported that 35.8 percent of Black educators had only completed high school prior to teaching, in comparison to 4.5 percent of the white teacher pool (Fultz, 1995), and that many schools across the south still only had one or two teachers at best nearly thirty years after the DuBois study reported similar understaffing.

Professional Organizations

Even with very limited access to teacher preparation programs, Black educators still managed to organize and create professional organizations to support their work and professional development. These national organizations were created to support the specific needs of Black school teachers and to organize Black educators in the fight for education resources and access (Walker, 2013). Black education organizations helped to amplify the voices of Black teachers in the South and to expose the danger associated with the fight for education. Many southern, Black educators felt that the NAACP, and other national organizations, did not always fully understand that the fight for equity and civil rights in the South sometimes resulted in threats, property damage, or lynching (Walker, 2013).

In 1903, the National Association for Teachers in Colored Schools (NATCS), now known as the American Teachers Association (ATA), was founded as both a professional organization and teachers union for Black folks working in Black schools in the South (Fultz, 1995; Walker, 2013). The GTEA as also founded in the early twentieth century and established an eight-point program demanding more qualified teachers, increased salaries for teachers and administrators, improved facilities and equipment, a consistent school year across schools of at least seven months, more four-year schools, adult education, and extension agencies (Walker, 2013). National conferences and meetings allowed for Black educators to meet, strategize, and support one another through creating pedagogy that could lead to social and economic progress

of Black students across the South (Walker; 2013). Education, for Black Americans, has historically been understood within the context of freedom and liberation. Although the institutions had their different methods, the "work of emancipation" remained the same (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004).

The Experiences of Black Educators Present Day

Research suggests that teacher preparation programs at PWIs have not been successful at producing educators that are able to fully support the growth and development of Black and Brown students in the classroom, but they still produce the majority of the white American teaching workforce. Presently, HBCUs, and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), produce more teachers of color than any PWI (Gasman et al., 2017). While Black folks make up nearly 13 percent of the population, Black teachers represent approximately 7.7 percent of the teaching population. With an increasingly diverse student population, a large number of the Black students within the K-12 education sphere are being taught by white, middle-class women, many of whom have very little understanding of the cultural needs of Black students (Farinde et al., 2015). This lack of diversity among K-12 educators must mirror the lack of diversity that we see within teacher preparation programs; this absence greatly limits the possibilities to involve richer and more complex perspectives within the teacher preparation process (Ladson-Billings, 2005) and ultimately the professional settings teachers enter upon completion of their programs.

Impact of Institutional Culture

Every institution, including educational institutions, has its own sociopolitical context, as does each individual operating within the institution (Watson, 2017). Every individual who exists within that institution has their own reasons for participating and carries ideologies that guide their participation within the institution. Ideology informs everything that happens within

the context of a classroom; from the curricular approach of an educator to their methods of offering support to each of their students, who they are, and what they believe, shows up every day to work with them. To more fully comprehend how educators think about their educational practice, it is critical to understand that teaching is not a neutral profession; rather, as Watson (2017) suggests, the beliefs and experiences of people inform what they teach. The experiences of folks in teacher preparation programs vary, so what steps are in place to ensure that the goal of creating equitable educational experiences is not lost or determined on an individual basis? For teacher preparation programs to create opportunities for pre-service teachers to better understand the lived experiences of diverse student populations, they should begin by examining the experiences of diverse groups within their programs, starting with Black women.

Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2015) suggest that a different approach to teacher preparation practice and research is needed. As agents of change within their communities (Pantić & Florian, 2015), teachers are uniquely positioned to impact institutional culture and student outcomes. Although teachers of color can greatly contribute to institutional culture change, they still need training and ongoing support to do so; without it, they can unintentionally perpetuate dominant culture, just as their white colleagues can (Easton-Brook, 2014; Gomez et al., 2008; Klopfenstein, 2005; Pham, 2008; Villegas & Davis, 2008). Currently, many students on the margins, namely students of color, are being taught by predominantly white, women-identifying, middle-class teachers who advocate for colorblind classrooms and curriculum (Landsman & Lewis, 2011). Ladson-Billings (2006) suggests that school will not often meet diverse student needs because they do not provide a social context for learning that gives students access to knowledge in familiar ways. This approach to the classroom also exacerbates the *work beyond the work* for Black women educators within educational settings by further

pushing students of color to the margins with their educational settings. How can teacher preparation programs better position pre-service educators to understand the sociopolitical context of the educational field and environment they enter?

Work Beyond the Work

Educators have significant ability to impact student outcomes and to address the opportunity gap within the educational system (Hattie, 2009; Pantić & Florian, 2015). However, it is often expected that the Black educators in a school community will support the needs of the students on the margins, specifically Black and Brown students, of that community. Research suggests that teachers of color are often positioned as experts on how to create an equitable experience in the classroom for their students, but do not receive training through their teacher education programs for how to do that work (Farinde et al., 2015; Gasman et al., 2017; Pham, 2018). Black women in particular have been at the forefront of education activism for decades and still operate as activists within their educational environments today, whether they aspire to or not (Walker, 2013; Watson, 2017). As Walker (2013) shares of Black women educators,

> It was the job of the teacher to organize in her community an educational committee… it is their duty to go before the local board when it meets on the first Tuesday in the courthouse and to ask for things that are fair and just and in keeping with the needs of your schools. (Walker, 2013, p. 212)

This expectation, which I refer to as the *work beyond the work,* can drive Black women educators away from the profession when the representation of Black teachers in the teaching field has already been steadily decreasing for the last forty years (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Milner & Howard, 2004). Nationally, 83 percent of the teaching workforce in public schools in the U.S. is comprised of white women, while over 51 percent of the public-school student population are

students of color. Data show that our student population within the K-12 education system is becoming increasingly diverse, while some teacher preparation programs are still preparing their white pre-service teachers to engage homogenous groups of students (Howard & Milner, 2014; Pham, 2018). While there is no way to know the specific effects that a pre-service educator will have on their specific classroom students, fully understanding the sociopolitical contexts students exist in requires examining the training their teachers receive and understanding how their ideologies affect classroom and school culture.

Teacher preparation programs have a responsibility to consistently examine the sociopolitical contexts of their teachers in comparison to the students who they will serve. Watson (2017) and Ladson-Billings (2005) suggest that the lived experiences of educators will consciously or subconsciously affect what educators teach, how they perceive student behavior, and how they expect their students will perform (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Watson, 2017). If schools are going to pursue and retain Black women educators, it is imperative that their lived experiences are taken into account in their training; however, there is little literature that specifically explores the experiences of Black women in their teacher preparation programs. This erasure is not new to Black women and this gap in the literature led me to use qualitative inquiry to center the experiences of Black women educators. Understanding the experiences of Black women educators in teacher preparation programs is critical to ensuring that teacher preparation programs adequately prepare their teachers for the environments they will exist in.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

While scholars are right to caution school communities about the underrepresentation of Black elementary and secondary educators (Fairclough, 2004; Farinde, LeBlanc, & Otten, 2015; Kohli, 2012, 2014; Kohli & Pizarro, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2011), it is critical that school communities also prepare themselves to support and retain the Black educators who currently exist in their schools and who are yet to come. Ladson-Billings (2005) expresses the importance of not bringing teachers of color to campuses that have not yet established inclusive environments. While recruiting Black women educators to schools, it is important to remember that teachers are significant contributors to the cultures created in their schools; therefore, the training that teachers receive in their higher education institutions influences their contributions to those school cultures. Teacher preparation programs play an integral role in training teachers to create inclusive communities that welcome and value the specific and unique experiences of Black educators. Research suggests that school culture is often not supportive of Black educators, resulting in Black educators having higher attrition rates than their White peers (Ladson-Billings, 2006). For the Black educators who do stay in the field, the burden is great.

One of the traditional pathways to the classroom for teachers is through teacher preparation programs at four-year higher education institutions. This study will explore these teacher preparation programs from the perspectives of Black women educators who have attended and completed them. More specifically, this study will examine teacher preparation programs in Virginia. Home to the capital of the Confederacy, Virginia opposed desegregation in the 20th century through a form of opposition referred to as massive resistance (Allen, 2006; Epps-Robertson, 2016; Nelson, 2013). Even though Virginia has a history of opposing

desegregation, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), Virginia ranks in the top five states in the U.S. for most Black students enrolled in teacher preparation programs. Through this study, I hope to better understand how teacher preparation programs can make space in their curricula and cultures to meet the needs of Black women pre-service teachers and, ultimately, Black women in the classroom.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the lived experiences of Black women in teacher preparation programs at four-year, higher education institutions in Virginia. Hays and Singh (2012) assert that not only does qualitative inquiry explore phenomena within their contexts instead of at a distance, but within educational settings, this kind of inquiry also "opens a window to greater understanding of these phenomena with an in-depth richness that otherwise may not be possible" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 22). For this reason, a qualitative approach was used for this study. Overall, this chapter provides detailed information outlining how I will approach and design this study. This research is grounded in a social constructivist epistemological perspective that led to the selection of Black Feminist Thought as the theoretical framework. There are four sections to this chapter: the introduction, epistemology, theoretical framework, and research design.

Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge (Collins, 2000). When engaging in qualitative research, researchers operate through paradigms. These paradigms are beliefs that are brought to the research process by the researcher that ultimately guide the way the research is conducted (Creswell & Poth, 2019; Hays & Singh, 2012). There are multiple interpretive paradigms through which research can operate including post-positivism, social constructivism, transformation, and postmodernism (Creswell & Poth, 2019). These paradigms can also be

theories rooted in social justice or advocacy that are aimed at addressing social injustice (Creswell & Poth, 2019).

For this study, I acted through a social constructivist paradigm. A key component to social constructivism is the fusion of the inquirer and the inquired to create meaning and findings. It is this joint creation of meaning between the researched and the research that can bring about new knowledge. In this case, the researcher is shaped by lived experiences that will inform and shape the research being conducted and the experience of those involved (Creswell & Poth, 2019; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). The social constructivism paradigm creates an opportunity for the researcher to "focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants" (Creswell & Poth, 2019). An important function of the social constructivist paradigm is the desire of the researcher to better understand the world that they live and operate within (Creswell & Poth, 2019). As an epistemological perspective, social constructivism positions the researcher to explore the experiences of Black women educators knowing that what they have come to know about their experiences is likely influenced by their intersecting identities. To better understand the lived experiences of Black women, it is critical to engage a theoretical framework that centers the voices and experiences of Black women.

In order to best understand the complexity among "all that exists" (Stake, 1995, p. 37) this study used a theory that helps address the intersection of oppression, specifically the sexism and racism that shape the lived experiences of Black women educators. Examining the experiences of Black women educators in their teacher preparation programs and allowing these

educators to “name their realities" contributed to a larger discussion on how to create equitable experiences for Black women educators that will increase their retention in the field.

Qualitative Inquiry

For this study, I utilized a qualitative approach to better understand the experiences of Black women educators in Virginia teacher preparation programs. As described by Hays and Singh (2013), qualitative research is “the study of a phenomenon or research topic in context” (p. 4). Stake (1995) identifies three notable differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies that expand the definition of qualitative research. According to Stake (1995), these differences are: (1) the distinction between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry; (2) the distinction between a personal and impersonal role for the researcher; and (3) a distinction between knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed (p. 37).

Hays and Singh (2012) suggest that qualitative inquiry is a “holistic approach that often values subjective meaning of a research problem and context as well as collaboration between researcher and participant in constructing and understanding knowledge” (p. 33). Bhattacharya (2017) is critical of the idea that qualitative inquiry is holistic and instead says that the researcher does the best that they can “documenting what we are able to understand, gather, interpret, analyze, in the moments of time we have shared with the participant…” (p. 191). Qualitative inquiry considers the importance and role of context to make meaning (Hays & Singh, 2012). Because qualitative research is “emergent and flexible, responsive to changing conditions of the study in progress” (Creswell & Poth, 2019, p. 170) it was the most appropriate method for this study aiming to understand the experiences of Black women educators in their teacher preparation programs at four-year Virginia higher education institutions.

There are many ways to use qualitative inquiry to approach understanding a phenomenon including, but not limited to, narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, oral history, and autoethnography (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Compared to other forms of qualitative research, an important focus of case study research is particularization. Stake (1995) suggests that case studies "take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does" (p. 8). The emphasis on uniqueness is important to the study of Black women educators, whose experiences are often unique and ignored. The purpose of this study was to explore the nuanced experiences of Black women educators in their teacher preparation programs and how it affects their approaches to the classroom, therefore a multiple case study approach was the best approach for this study (Yin, 2018). Stake (1995) notes that case-study methodology is one of the most common ways to conduct qualitative research. Case study is defined by Merriam (1998) as a "thing, a single entity, a unit" (p. 191), that "could be a person such as a student, a teacher, a principal; a program; a group such as a class, a school, a community; a specific policy and so on" (p. 192). Merriam (1998) also suggests that "the case study focuses on holistic description and explanation" (p. 192), and Yin (2018) adds that case studies allow you to focus in-depth on a 'case' and to retain a holistic and real-world perspective. According to Stake (1995), a case study is "expected to catch the complexity of a single case (p. xi). In case-study research, the phenomenon is studied in context (Stake, 1995). This methodological approach required that the researcher enter the environment with sincere interest in learning how the case functions in its normal environment without any presumptions (Stake, 1995). Case study research, more than other research methods, requires inquiry throughout the data collection process; therefore, developing effective questions is an important precursor for case study

research (Yin, 2018). My research questions served to evoke rich description as the intention of this study is to create rich dialogue. My research questions were:

1. How do Black women educators who completed teacher education programs in the state of Virginia describe their experiences while enrolled in those teacher education programs?
2. In what ways have the teacher preparation program experiences of Black women educators who completed their teacher education programs in the state of Virginia influenced or not influenced their pedagogical approaches?

Through these research questions, I aimed to center the voices and lived experiences of Black women educators in Virginia. The first goal of this research study was to amplify the voices of Black women educators in K-12 classrooms and their experiences with teacher preparation programs. The second goal of this study was to explore how the teacher preparation experiences of Black women influences their pedagogical approaches. The third goal of this study was to provide qualitative data that can support the creation of teacher preparation curriculum and practices that are specifically geared towards Black women and the sustainability of their work – while also training white and non-Black future educators to be allies in the field of K-12 education. The role of teacher preparation programs, as the learning ground for a majority of educators in the United States, is a critical piece to this research. Ultimately, through this research, I hoped to glean the support that Black women need from teacher preparation programs and shed light on the many unique teacher preparation program experiences of Black women educators.

Theoretical Framework

Critical theory as a theoretical perspective provides a lens through which researchers can focus on the role of oppression in the lives and lived experiences of people (Bhattacharya, 2017). Critical theory examines the experiences of participants in relation to social injustice and critical theory perspectives work to empower folks to "transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender" (Creswell & Poth, 2019, p. 28). Critical theory researchers, interested in critiquing society and imagining new ways of existence, often explore themes that include the exploration of the social world and the historical experiences of oppressed people (Creswell & Poth, 2019).

As a critical social theory, Black Feminist Thought (BFT) was created out of an examination of the experiences and intersecting identities of Black women. BFT recognizes the historical erasure of Black women from feminist movements that have focused on white women and their relationship to white men (Collins, 2000). Black feminist thinkers acknowledge feminism and feminist theory; however, BFT also recognizes the historical centering of white middle-class women in the feminist movement, which does not consider the lived experiences of women of color and therefore isolates and marginalizes their perspectives (Collins, 2000, 2009; Guy-Sheftall, 1993). At the helm of the feminist movement is the work and writing of Betty Friedan with the book *The Feminine Mystique.* In her take on the plight of women in the United States, Friedan centers the lived experiences of white, college-educated, middle-class women that she saw being victimized by sexism and confined to domesticity. Friedan contends that the experience of white women is synonymous with the experiences of all women in America but does not consider the additional impact or intersection of race or class on the experiences of women (Guy-Sheftall, 1993). BFT challenges the notion that the experiences of white women in

the United States can accurately represent the experiences of all women in the United States. BFT also recognizes the historical erasure of Black women from the Civil Rights Movement where Black men are often hailed as leaders in the fight for justice while Black women are often the unsung heroes of the movement who are unnamed and unknown (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003). BFT pushes Black women, their identities, experiences, and ideas, to the center of analysis (Collins, 2000, 2009). Historically, Black women have not benefited from "womanhood" in the ways that white women have. Advocating for the rights of women in 1851, at a convention for women, Sojourner Truth shared her reality as a Black woman in the United States in her speech, "Ain't I a woman?" She shared,

> That man over there says women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the last as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? (Loewenberg & Bogin, 1976, p. 235)

Numerous scholars have advanced the work of Black Feminist Thought, including but not limited to Angela Davis (1980), Alice Walker (1983), bell hooks (1981), Audre Lorde (1984), Patricia Hill Collins (1986, 2000, 2009), and Beverly Guy-Sheftall (1995). In her work with Black Feminist Theory, Collins (1986, 2000, 2009) suggests that there are three key themes of Black Feminist Thought that I believe are connected to the *work beyond the work* of Black

women educators: self-definition and self-valuation, the interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of culture for Black women.

Self-definition and self-valuation. Collins (1986) shares that "self-definition involves challenging the political knowledge-validation process that has resulted in externally-defined, stereotypical images of Afro-American womanhood" (p. 16). As Collins (2000) describes, Black women have been subjugated to four stereotypical narratives that include, but are not limited to, mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas. The mammy is typified the "faithful, obedient domestic servant" (p. 72). The mammy might be well-loved within their role in service to white folks; however, she is very aware of her place within the larger societal context, especially in relationship to white men and women (Collins, 2000). The matriarch is represented as the "overly strong Black woman" that is "less desirable than White ones because we are too assertive" (p. 77). The welfare mothers are considered "poor, working-class Black women who make use of social welfare benefits to which they are entitled by law" (p. 78). The hot momma is classified as being a "sexually aggressive" woman (p. 81) that "just can't get enough" (p. 83). Collins (2000) asserts that the historical and present-day controlling images of Black women "are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life" (Collins, 2000, p. 69). It is these stereotypical portrayals of Black women that help justify the oppression which Black women experience. At its core, Black Feminist Thought seeks to challenge these controlling images and to make room for Black women to tell the stories of Black women in America (Collins, 2000). Black women defining themselves challenges the misrepresentation of Black womanhood by replacing the stereotypical images with authentic images of what it means to be Black women (1986). Self-definition often happens through storytelling and communication.

Interlocking nature of oppression. Black Feminist Thought examines the historical experiences of Black women and how the stigmatizing identities of race, class, and gender do not exist in a hierarchy of oppression; rather, they intersect to create a unique lived experience for Black women. Addressing the realities of the oppressed means also acknowledging the experience of existing at the intersection of multiple oppressions. In this way, Black women were able to identify that only addressing one area of oppression would only lead to the amplification of other areas of oppression in equally dehumanizing ways (Collins, 1986). The Black feminist perspective allows for consideration of the links between systems of oppression rather than thinking the "fix" is in the explication of different oppressing elements (Collins, 1986). Collins (1986) asserts that the duality of white vs. Black and man vs. woman pits Black women at the inferior side of both dichotomies. Black women understand that the solution to oppression lies in solidarity with humanity because of this interlocking nature.

Crenshaw (1989) developed the theory of *intersectionality* in 1989 to further explore and acknowledge the role of gender, race, and class in the heterogeneity of the experiences of Black women. Furthermore, Crenshaw urges researchers to explore this intersecting of identities, specifically as it relates to the erasure of Black women and Black womanhood from the discussion of civil liberties, discrimination, and social movements despite the significant contributions Black women consistently make to those movements (Collins, 2000). Audre Lorde, a Black, queer activist, and scholar, asserts that "I am a Black Feminist, I mean I recognize that my power as well as my primary oppressions come as a result of my blackness as well as my womaness, and therefore my struggles are inseparable." Black Feminist Thought recognizes the power of intersecting identities, specifically as it pertains to Black women, in ways that other theoretical approaches do not.

The importance of Black women's culture. The culture of Black women is socially and collectively constructed (Collins, 1986). To help describe the culture of Black women, Collins (1986) uses the definition of culture by Mullings (1986). Mullings describes culture as,

> the symbols and values that create the ideological frame of reference through which people attempt to deal with the circumstances in which they find themselves. Culture. . . is not composed of static, discrete traits moved from one locale to another. It is constantly changing and transformed, as new forms are created out of old ones. Thus culture . . . does not arise out of nothing: it is created and modified by material conditions. (p. 13)

The culture of Black women develops in social institutions where Black women exist, such as churches and in families, while also emerging in the arts and political and economic activity (Collins, 1986; Guy-Sheftall, 1993). While this culture is derived through shared meaning and experiences, it is not a monolith and Black women, depending on their identities, can have different experiences of and with Black culture. Collins (1986) suggests that there is a need to further explore the culture of Black women as it relates to sisterhood and the interpersonal relationships between Black women and their children (both familial and non-familial).

When examining the historical and present-day roles of Black women educators in the classroom, it is critical that we understand the historical portrayals and images of Black women to give context to their experiences, and the expectations others have of them, within current educational settings. These historical portrayals of Black women as mammies, matriarchs, welfare mothers and hot mommas affect the experiences of Black women educators in the K-12 setting. Specifically, the "mammy" role for Black women has historical connections to the labor of Black women as domestic workers, specifically at the service of white people. While Black

women are no longer limited to only “mammy” or “domestic” work, the expectation that Black women will “still do a remarkable share of the emotional nurturing and cleaning up after other people, often for lower pay” (Collins, 2000, p. 45) has followed them into other career fields. These stereotypical roles play a part in how teacher preparation programs, and ultimately school systems, serve or do not serve Black women. Collins (2000) shares that the dominant (white) culture has socially constructed womanhood and left out the experiences of Black women that exist at the intersection of multiple oppressions. The impacts that the erasure of the Black woman experience has on the educational experience for students and education professionals illustrates the importance of considering how the present-day *work beyond the work* in educational settings is connected to historical portrayals and expectations of Black women. In this study, I define the *work beyond the work* as the expectation placed on Black educators to support the cultural education of their White peers and the emotional and social development of students of color, while simultaneously excelling in the profession as a teacher. The unacknowledged and uncompensated roles of Black women to care for and take on the responsibility of both children and adults in an environment is a part of the *work beyond the work.* This understanding of Black women, rooted in white supremacy, is designed to make the *work beyond the work* seem like a normal, inevitable role of Black women educators in schools. However, Black Feminist Thought pushes back at this standpoint through emphasizing self-definition and resisting domination (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1993).

Black Women Standpoint

When considering the perspective of Black educators, and other educators of color, Turner and colleagues (1999) share that these perspectives “are especially valuable because they

speak from uniquely unrepresented and revealing vantage points. As our study shows, many faculty of color perceive subtle and persistent racism that others seemingly have a stake in not noticing or in explaining away" (p. 54).

Black Feminist Thought asserts that Black women should be positioned as the authorities on their own experiences (Collins, 1986). BFT recognizes that Black women do not share just one lived experience, but there are commonalities in the experiences of Black women who are shaped by history, white supremacy, and a patriarchal society. Black Women Standpoint suggests that the Black women that experience, understand, and feel the effects of a phenomenon are the best positioned to explore, evaluate, and make meaning of a phenomenon given the unique standpoint of Black women that have not historically been fully included (Collins, 1986; Guy-Sheftall, 1993).

This "outsider-within" experience is not new to Black women (Collins, 1986). Collins (1986, 2000, 2009) refers to the historical "outsiders-within" marginality of Black women that has given Black women a distinct perspective on many happenings, especially within white spaces where they might be unseen or unnoticed. This perspective, or viewpoint, is especially significant in academic spaces, and within these spaces on the margins, Black women are often able to produce "distinctive analyses of race, class, and gender" (Collins, 1986, p. 15). The ability of Black women to recognize the oppressive systems operating within educational settings gives them the unique ability to critically examine how to dismantle those oppressive systems. Collins (1986) suggests that Black feminists have creatively used their *outsider within* status to resist domination and create new knowledge. Having this new knowledge is vital to evaluating and disrupting oppressive systems, such as those interlocking systems of oppression that create *the work beyond the work* for Black women educators in their educational settings.

Because Black women experience oppression holistically, the development of Black Feminist Thought embraces a holistic analysis of oppression. Gist (2016) shares, "reading life through the lens of Black feminism offers the reader an analytical framework for interpreting the social world" (p. 245). Black women are uniquely positioned within their educational settings to observe and understand their learning communities better than those who are of the dominant culture. This study requires an approach that aims to uncover and interrogate the specific and unique experiences of Black women educators. Bhattacharya (2017) suggests that qualitative studies that seek to interrogate are "usually conducted to highlight issues of inequities and marginalization, often with ideas for solution" (p. 69). Engaging in a holistic approach to understanding the phenomena that Black women in their educational settings experience is critical to this study and can also lead to developing workable solutions for teacher preparation programs that support pre-service Black women educators.

Research Design

Participant Selection

The participants for this study were selected through purposeful (or purposive) sampling (Merriam, 1998). Purposive sampling is used when the researcher is looking to gain particular insight and therefore must select participants from which that insight can be best gleaned (Merriam, 1998). The Black women educators were asked to participate in this study "because of their special experience and competence" (Chein, 1989, p. 440). Purposive sampling requires identifying a specific list of attributes that are essential to the study and then pursuing participants who possess those attributes (Merriam, 1998). Using this criterion-based approach, I specifically engaged educators who: 1) identify as Black, 2) identify as women, 3) are currently teaching in a Virginia public school classroom, and 4) graduated from a teacher preparation

program at a four-year higher education institution in Virginia. Snowball sampling served as a secondary recruitment method for this study. As the most common form of purposive sampling, snowball sampling involves the researcher asking participants to refer other participants who meet the specific criteria for this study (Merriam, 1998).

Bhattacharya (2017) and Yin (2018) suggest that the use of power analysis in determining the sample size for a multiple case study is irrelevant and suggests that each participant be a "representative of the issue under investigation and information-rich sources" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 192). However, "the number of replications depends upon the certainty you want to have about your multiple case results" (Yin, 2018, p. 59). Therefore, eight to ten "information rich" (Creswell & Poth, 2019, p. 159) participants were selected for this study to ensure a "higher degree of certainty" (Yin, 2018, p. 59).

Participant Recruitment

To begin the recruitment process for this study, I crafted an email that shared who I am, explained the goals of this research study, listed the specific criteria for participation and included a link to a Google form that had to be completed to be considered for participation. The Google form helped me collect more specific information from potential participants. Virginia is ranked within the top five states in the United States for educating Black students in their teacher preparation programs, therefore this email was shared with schools of education at higher education institutions in Virginia, requesting that they share it with their current student and alumni listservs. This email was also distributed by me via email to Black educators who I know in Virginia who could refer other prospective participants to me. I also used Canva to create a simple graphic to share with my personal and professional networks via social media.

Data Collection

Hays and Singh (2012) suggest that qualitative research requires extensive time for the researcher to gather and analyze data. The key characteristics of qualitative research include: (1) Inductive and abductive analysis; (2) Naturalistic and experimental settings; (3) The importance of context; (4) The humanness of research; (5) Purposive sampling; (6) Thick description; and (7) Interactive, flexible research design (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 5). According to Yin (2018), there are six sources of evidence (data) collection: (1) documentation, (2) archival records, (3) interviews, (4) direct observations, (5) participant-observation, and (6) physical artifacts. While each source has its purpose, for this multiple case study, I collected data through interviews and document review. Using more than one source of evidence gathering is the best way to ensure that the case study is both in-depth and valid (Yin, 2018).

Case study research requires that the researcher is thoughtful and inquisitive throughout the entire data-collection process. According to Yin (2018), the "ability to pose and ask good questions is therefore a prerequisite for case study researchers" (p. 83). For this case study, interviews were used for data collection. Interviews are a common means to collect data for case-study research (Merriam, 1998) and one of the most important data collection sources for case-study research specifically (Yin, 2018). Interviews were a primary data collection source in this research study. Specifically, a semi-structured interview method was utilized to allow the researcher to have input in the structure of the process (Hays & Singh, 2012), while also ensuring that it was not rigid in its approach (Yin, 2018). Hays and Singh (2012) describe semi-structured interviews as in-depth interviews that give more voice to the participant that can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Using a semi-structured, prolonged case-study interview allowed for the researcher to "ask interviewees about their

interpretations and opinions about people and events or their insights, explanations, and meanings related to certain occurrences" (Yin, 2018, p. 119). This approach led to personal exploration and processing (Yin, 2018) and as Collins (1986) suggests, a critical piece of self-definition for Black women often happens through storytelling and processing personal experiences. Each interview was 60-90 minutes in length and recorded using the recording Zoom feature. I uploaded and kept the recordings safe in a private external hard drive. The interviews themselves were recorded in a private space in order to ensure confidentiality and comfort for the participants.

As a form of triangulation (Merriam, 1998), interviews were paired with document analysis as documents can provide the researcher with "records of activity that the researcher could not observe directly" (Stake, 1995, p. 68). Document analysis helped the researcher glean the ways that phenomena present in the teaching practice. Teachers in public-school settings are often required to submit lesson plans throughout the school year. Hays and Singh (2012) suggest that "personal documents are typically solicited to help understand the culture and context of participants' experiences of a phenomenon" (p. 287). Reviewing lesson plans that the participants have developed helped shed light on the ways that they think about their pedagogy and their approach to teaching their students; it can lead the researcher to a deeper understanding of the classroom practices and experiences of the Black women educators being observed. Reviewing teacher preparation program artifacts, such as marketing materials, curriculum requirements, and class syllabi was also helpful in better understanding the impact of the programs.

The 8.5 x 11 informational graphic created using Canva shared the purpose of the study, criteria for participation, and the information for how to get in touch. Since this data collection

took place during the COVID-19 pandemic[4], the graphic also emphasized that these interviews were take place using a virtual platform. To protect participants in this study, the researcher gained informed consent from each participant, avoided deception, protected confidentiality, protected especially vulnerable groups, and selected participants equitably (Yin, 2018). The interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

Once the data collection process was complete, I began the data analysis process. After transcribing the interviews, I read and re-read the texts using first and second cycle coding methods. Basit (2003) describes coding as the process that allows the researcher to "communicate and connect with the data to facilitate the comprehension of the emerging phenomena and to generate theory grounded in the data" (p. 152). The coding process happened in two cycles. First-cycle coding allowed for the researcher to discover patterns and concepts across the different datasets and second-cycle coding allowed for the researcher to reorganize and reanalyze the data with the patterns and concepts in mind to develop themes across the datasets (Basit, 2003; Saldana, 2009). During the first cycle of coding, I used In Vivo coding in order to keep the data rooted in the language of the participants. I also applied the descriptive technique and through descriptive coding, I summarized participant responses using short words and phrases (Saldana, 2009). Saldana (2015) suggests that, "In Vivo Codes derive from the actual language of the participant" (p. 16). This particular method of coding aligned closely with my intent to amplify the voices of the participants because of its emphasis on their actual language (Saldana, 2015). The goal of the second cycle of coding was to develop themes,

[4] Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Old Dominion University put research restrictions in place beginning in March 2020. Of particular note is the restriction that states, "Principal Investigators should consider pausing in-person human subject research."

concepts, and organization from the first cycle codes. For this second cycle of coding, I applied the pattern coding technique. Pattern coding helped to group codes and help identify emergent and major themes from the data (Saldana, 2015).

Positionality

While objectivity is often seen as the highest standard in research, subjectivity in qualitative research is "not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding" (Stake, 1995, p. 45). Self-awareness is important to the qualitative research method in order for the researcher to thoughtfully approach the analysis process. Therefore, I believe that acknowledging my position in relation to the research allows for thoughtful engagement and analysis that will lead to critical consideration of how to create a more equitable experience for Black women educators. As the researcher, I identify as a Black woman educator in K-12 education. I attended public schools in Virginia my entire K-12 education and did not explore the world of private education until college and post-college work. I attended a private, four-year higher education institution in Virginia and did not pursue the traditional pathway to the classroom. Instead, I intentionally decided against the teacher preparation pathway and majored in Education Policy and Administration, an interdisciplinary program at the university. I first entered the classroom through an independent school in Richmond, Virginia as a career counselor and career-preparation teacher. As the youngest person, and only Black woman, on the leadership team, this role represented my first experience as a professional being asked to support student and staff development in the field of equity and justice, even though I had no formal training at the time.

In addition to my professional journey, I come from a line of Black women educators. My mother is in her 38th year as a K-12 educator in Virginia and my grandmother is a retired

Virginia educator. While I did not yet have an understanding of the phenomena they were experiencing, in retrospect I recognize much of what I learned growing up about their experiences were rooted in the *work beyond the work* phenomenon. It is through this lens, and the lens of four years of teaching experience, that I approached this study. In my journey as an educator, I realize that at the root of my pursuit is a desire to create the experience I wanted in my K-12 experience. Every day, my work advocates for students and families on the margins by existing in places, and conversations, where they may not exist. More intentionally, I think of Patricia Hill Collins, and Black Feminist Thought, when I consider the personal "why" of my journey to be an educator. Collins (1999) says, "a recognition of this connection between experience and consciousness that shapes the everyday lives of individual African American women often pervades the works of Black women activists and scholars" (Collins, 1999, p. 24).

Originally, I planned to employ Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998) to engage this study, but upon rereading *Black Feminist Thought* (Collins, 2000; 2009), I was reminded of my value as a Black woman educator and knew that I wanted this work to honor the experiences of other Black women educators. With so much of the Black woman experience being rooted in navigating both the erasure of Black women from the Feminist Movement and the patriarchal erasure of Black women from the Black Liberation Movement, I wanted to amplify the voices of Black women educators through my research. According to Walker (1983), at the heart of BFT lies writing the things we should have been able to read. In a sense, this research served a similar purpose. In pursuit of my undergraduate education, having knowledge about navigating the role as a Black woman in the education field, and in predominately white workspaces, mattered. While I took courses designed to give me an overview of different cultures through multicultural education, my undergraduate professors did

not include any work that focused on this *work beyond the work.* No one discussed the fact that this career path would force me to relive my racial trauma in predominately white spaces, feeling as if I was not trusted by white administrators, while also feeling as if I had to fight for every Black, Indigenous, brown, and queer child that walked my campus. With all of this experience, I see similarities between myself and the participants who I recruited to participate in this study. Given my positionality and current work as an educator, it was important that I incorporated measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the data analysis process.

Trustworthiness

To contribute to the trustworthiness of this study, a researcher journal was used as a tool for the researcher to consistently process how the research process is impacting them (Bhattacharya, 2017). Field notes and analytical memos were also used to contribute to the trustworthiness of the data. Field notes and analytical memos were a way for the researcher to "describe and analyze findings as they develop throughout the study" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 205). Keeping a running reflection on the emerging themes in the data, through consistent note-taking, processing, and reflection, led to greater understanding. Member checking was also utilized throughout the data collection process. Member checking established trustworthiness by involving the participant in ongoing consultations to ensure an accurate portrayal of their experience (Hays & Singh, 2012) and even more so, an accurate portrayal of their "voice" (Collins, 1990). Each participant was asked if they wanted a copy of the interview transcript before the data analysis. The participants that responded to the inquiry only asked to see a copy of the final dissertation.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. One limitation to this study was having to conduct this research remotely given the COVID-19 pandemic. Being able to witness the nonverbal communications in an in-person interview is ideal for this research. Although there are limitations, the findings of this study can help to shape the discussion regarding how to create more equitable experiences for Black women educators than the current experience of the *work beyond the work.* Making adjustments in the overall structure of the teacher preparation experience can contribute to sustaining Black women educators in the field.

CHAPTER FOUR

A HISTORICAL LOOK AT FIVE VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

In the years following emancipation, Black Americans organized and were able to make significant strides to provide other Black Americans in the South access to educational opportunities through the establishment of many all-Black elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004; Walker, 2019). During this period of Reconstruction, Black people in the South worked to quickly master the basic writing, reading, and arithmetic necessary to begin secondary education and ultimately pursue higher education (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004; Vaughn, 1974). While this period saw an increase in numbers of Black Americans prepared for higher education, they encountered significant barriers to access to higher education institutions, resulting in very few Black Americans doing so.

While there were some Northern higher education institutions that slowly began granting admission to Black Americans during Reconstruction, most predominantly white higher education institutions in the South would not attempt to grant admission to Black Americans; both integration for K-12 public schools and higher education institutions would be strongly opposed through the mid twentieth century (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004; Vaughn, 1974**)**. In Virginia, PWIs would begin allowing Black students entrance into their professional programs in the early 1950s, however their acceptance to the schools was only considered if the professional program they were hoping to pursue was not offered at Virginia State College, now known as Virginia State University (Picott, 1958). This meant that while the higher education institutions technically allowed Black students to attend their schools, it was a very limited number given the plentiful offerings, both undergraduate and graduate degrees, at Virginia State College (Piccott, 1958).

Most education of Black folks occurred through the ingenuity and persistence of Black Americans to create institutions to serve the unique needs of Black folks**.** Much like the integration of the K-12 public schooling system, Virginia and all Southern states aggressively opposed this integration (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004; Clayton & Peters, 2019; Fultz, 1995). While the number of Black students that attended higher education institutions increased from 2,132 in 1917 to 13,580 in 1927, the number of Black students present at predominantly white institutions barely increased (Foster et al., 2008). Even at northern schools established by abolitionists, Black American enrollment was low, in part because of significant student prejudice. For the 1,500 Black students who attended integrated colleges in the 1920s and 1930s, campus life was lonely and campus communities unwelcoming (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004; Fultz, 1995).

To best understand the lived experiences of the Black women participants in this study, it is important to have historical contexts for the institutions that they attended. Only one of the eight participants attended an HBCU, meaning that the majority of the participants attended predominately white institutions that never intended to serve them. In the same way, their teacher preparation programs were not developed with the intention of serving them, or any other Black students. This reality directly impacted their experiences within their teacher preparation programs and, ultimately, their approaches to the classroom.

This research study intentionally examines the lived experiences of eight participants educated in Virginia higher education institutions, one of the southern states that resisted integration across elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions. The institutions represented are James Madison University, Old Dominion University, Virginia State University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Bridgewater College. Three of the eight participants are graduates of the College of Education at James Madison University, two are graduates of the

School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University, while the other three participants each graduated from the other three institutions. In this section, I explore a brief history of each higher education institution that the participants of this research study attended for their teacher preparation programs. Researching the establishment of these institutions helps to better understand the context and environment that each Black woman educator participant experienced. For purposes of this study, information regarding the institution approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion was not included in this analysis. In 2020, with the murder of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and more, institutions responded with their current and future commitments to supporting a more equitable community. None of the participants were at these intuitions at the time that this recommitment, or first-time commitment occurred for their respective institutions therefore this information did not seem relevant to the historical context.

James Madison University

James Madison University, or JMU, was established in 1908 as the State Normal and Industrial School for Women in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Following a public cry for "better trained teachers," the Virginia General Assembly passed a bill in 1904 to create a new teacher training school specifically for white women. Before it developed its now expansive liberal arts program, the primary goal of the institution was to train "competent teachers" and "competent homemakers" and to offer a "practical, good education" to a small group of other students that were not interested in teacher preparation (Crowley, 2006, p.12). The University is a co-educational learning community still rooted in its original intent to "impress upon the teacher the importance of the work she is about to undertake, the honor and nobility of the profession, the

responsibility of the teacher as a member of society, and her duty to her pupils, patrons, and fellow teachers." [Dingledine, R. Madison College: The First Fifty Years, 1959.]

The College of Education is the oldest academic department at JMU and one of its largest, with over 100 faculty members and 3,000 students in teacher preparation programs currently. JMU began as a college of education and continues to hold true to that mission today. As their website states, "the history of the College of Education is the history of James Madison University itself." The College of Education in its earliest years combined the fields of education and psychology together as curricula for the teacher preparation experience (James Madison University, 2022). In the 1950s, President G. Tyler Miller restructured the education programs at the University by grouping programs together into divisions; one of those divisions would be the Division of Teacher Education, what is now known as the College of Education. Within the Division of Teacher Education, there was a Department of Education and Psychology, the Directed Teaching Program, which served as a beginning to student teaching, and a training school where students could observe methods and approaches to classroom teaching in action. After multiple restructurings and changes in school leadership, the Division of Teacher Education would evolve into what is now the College of Education with five departments: 1) Early, Elementary & Reading Education, 2) Educational Foundations & Exceptionalities, 3) Learning, Technology & Leadership Education, 4) Middle, Secondary, & Math Education, and 5) Military Science. Within those departments, JMU offers 11 degree programs for undergraduate students (James Madison University, 2022)

It would not be until 1951, however, that the motto and mission of the school would shift to accommodate the growing number of men that were enrolling and matriculating. The University would experience several name changes throughout its first few decades. In 1924, the

name was changed to the State Teachers College at Harrisonburg, but in 1938, the University decided to rename the school to honor United States President James Madison, who the University website describes as “One of our young republic’s finest statesmen, and one of the earliest proponents of public schools, higher education, and teacher training” (Crowley, 2006; “JMU Centennial Celebration”, 2022). In 1971, the school attained university status after acquiring more than 300 acres of land in the Harrisonburg area, beginning to award master’s degrees, receiving full coeducational status by the Virginia General Assembly, and enrolling over 5,000 students into their degree awarding programs (Crowley, 2006; “JMU Centennial Celebration”, 2022).

James Madison University existed for fifty-eight years before admitting their first Black student in 1966. In detailing their history for their Centennial celebration in 2008, JMU shares that their first Black student was enrolled in 1966, received her bachelor's degree in 1970 and a Masters in Science from the school in 1974 (“JMU Centennial Celebration”, 2022). She would then receive her doctorate from the University of Virginia, another higher education institution in Virginia. Under the leadership of President Ronald E. Carrier, who began his tenure in 1971, JMU would grow from a single-sex, all-white institution into a more comprehensive, diverse institution. Although the first Black person to attend JMU graduated in 1970, under Carrier’s leadership, there were 72 Black students enrolled by 1972 (James Madison University, 2022). The establishment of a chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated in 1971, the Black Student Alliance in 1972, and the hiring of Black faculty and new coursework in 1975 articulated the institutional commitment to desegregation (James Madison University, 2022).

According to the JMU website, the College of Education is the second largest producer of entrants into the Virginia teaching workforce among public schools in the nation (James

Madison University, 2022). The College of Education boasts a mission to prepare students to thrive as the world becomes more globally diverse. Students in the College of Education "engage in collaborative, transformative, and meaningful" education practices that support all learners and advocates for social justice (James Madison University, 2022).

Presently, James Madison University is a public research university located in Harrisonburg, Virginia and costs $30,792 for tuition, room, and board. There are currently 19,500 undergraduate students enrolled with 42 percent of the student population identifying as male and 58 percent identifying as female (NCES, 2022). Twenty-two percent of the student population is made up of minority students and one percent of the student population is listed as international. Of the undergraduate and graduate populations combined, Black Americans make up 4.94 percent (NCES, 2022). However, the website does not provide more granular data concerning minority student makeup.

Virginia Commonwealth University

What we have come to know as Virginia Commonwealth University began as two separate institutions serving two different populations in the Richmond, Virginia area. Richmond Professional Institute (RPI), established in 1917, and the Medical College of Virginia (MCV), established in 1838, would not merge to form Virginia Commonwealth University until 1968. RPI was established as one of the first schools in the South for social workers and public health nurses (Hibbs, 1973). The school was located on the top two floors of what was then the Richmond Juvenile and Domestic Courts building in downtown Richmond. RPI touted its humble beginnings as their desire to create something completely different from other public higher education institutions in the South (Hibbs, 1973). While many other higher

education institutions believed that there was a "common" body, or general education, for students to learn in their first year or two of college, RPI believed in the importance of considering the relevance of curriculum to their diverse demographic of students (Hibbs, 1973). Students at RPI chose the school to specialize in their professional fields early and to target specific areas of study that were of need in the local community; they believed that organizing their curricula around the occupation would lead to more retention of students by connecting their day-to-day experiences to their future professional lives as much as possible (Hibbs, 1973). They did all of this while still giving their students access to "college life" which included student engagement opportunities and life on campus.

Dr. Fred Kelly, a consultant to the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council in the early 1950s, shared that the work of the RPI to broaden its program offerings outside of the specific professional requirements was the "most characteristic modern development in higher education" (Hibbs, 1973, p. 85). RPI saw a place for the humanities within the professional and technology-based institutions. Between 1938 and 1960, the school would see increased growth in their student population and would go from about 30 freshman program offerings to over 50 (Hibbs, 1973). Prior to the passage of desegregation legislation, MCV founded the St. Phillip School of Nursing in 1920 to train Black women nurses apart from the students at MCV (Frisa, 2016). RPI, along with MCV, would begin to admit Black Americans in 1951, which ultimately resulted in the closing of the St. Phillip School of Nursing. It would not be until 1969, however, when the two institutions merged to form VCU, that the institution would begin incorporating Black literature and scholarship into program offerings (Frisa, 2016). In the 1960s, RPI and Old Dominion University, which this literature refers to as the "other urban college in Norfolk" (Hibbs, 1973, p. 108) would see a rapid increase in students as local city populations exploded.

As RPI worked to gain university status, many other Virginia schools fought to keep it from delving into liberal arts studies that included education and teacher preparation (Hibbs, 1973). However, the sudden increase in local student population and a change of school leadership accelerated the efforts of the institution to expand its offerings and attain university status (Hibbs, 1973). As a result of student and community interest, in 1963 the State Council of Higher Education recommended that RPI broaden its teacher-education program offerings to create a School of Education. Backed by Dr. Oliver, president of RPI from 1959-1967, RPI acted upon this recommendation and opened the School of Education in September of 1964, which drove a sharp increase in student enrollment (Hibbs, 1973)

Despite this growth, RPI would face hardship in attaining university status because of its location and because it did not "have a campus like other colleges" (Hibbs, 1973, p. 123). Around 1964, the State Council of Higher Education, and a committee of the Southern Association of Colleges, would recommend that RPI add to their program a School of Arts and Sciences although RPI had been hesitant to do so for the years leading up to this (Hibbs, 1973). Instead, RPI gained university status through merging with the Medical College of Virginia, formerly known as the Medical College of Hampden-Sydney. On July 1, 1968, both institutions would merge to form what we now know as Virginia Commonwealth University. VCU boasts a history of "firsts" in their story. They were the first school of social work in the South, first to do organ transplants in Virginia, the first American college or university to open a campus in Qatar, and more.

Currently, Virginia Commonwealth University has approximately 29,000 students enrolled and offers over 200 degree programs with over 2,400 full-time faculty (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2022). Tuition, room, and board costs $27,307. Although we know

that the university was slow to adopt the Arts & Sciences as a degree field, the school is now ranked highly for its Fine Arts program. The School of Education at VCU has four departments, one of which is Teaching and Learning. Within the Teaching and Learning Department, there are four degree offerings: (1) Early Childhood Education and Teaching, (2) Elementary Education and Teaching, (3) Health and Physical Education, and (4) Secondary Education and Teaching, concentration in engineering education. Within the Counselor and Special Education Department, VCU also offers a degree in Special Education in Teaching in both secondary education and early childhood.

Old Dominion University

In the early twentieth century, Norfolk, Virginia had been distinguished as one of the largest cities in the English-speaking world that did not have a higher education institution. So in 1919, the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia began to offer extension courses in Norfolk primarily geared toward teacher preparation at what was known as the Norfolk Division of the College of William & Mary (Sweeney, 1980). Faculty members from the College of William & Mary commuted to Norfolk to teach students in this extension school and within the first decade, it would grow to 350 students (Sweeney, 1980). A successful local businessman named William Homes Davis tirelessly advocated for a college in the Norfolk area. Robert Hughes, a prominent lawyer and member of the Board of Visitors for the institution, and Davies would go on to continue advocacy for the establishment of a local college by enlisting the help of William & Mary's president, J.A.C. Chandler. Hughes would go on to help develop the Norfolk-Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce in 1926, which was tasked with assessing the need of a higher education institution in the city. The committee determined that a junior college was both necessary and feasible. Although this committee recommended the establishment of a

junior college in 1926, the city did little to make the junior college a reality; instead, it would be the establishment of Atlantic College in Virginia Beach in 1930 that lit a fire for Hughes who never gave up his pursuit. Hughes wrote to President Chandler, “it seems to me that you should act promptly on your junior college if you intend to act at all” (Sweeney, 1980, p. 5). Joseph E. Healy, then the director of the extension campus in Norfolk, worked in collaboration with Hughes to identify a building that had potential to serve as the base for the college because of its access to local transportation and to parking (Sweeney, 1980). After identifying a potential site, Healy and Hughes invited President Chandler down to see the location and he, along with the chairman of the Norfolk School Board, approved of the location and decided to petition the City Council for access to the building. Their request was soon granted; the city even donated the building to their cause. In June of 1930, the college would open and by September, 206 students would enroll for classes.

As a branch of the well-known College of William & Mary, the Norfolk Division of the College of William & Mary did not have an issue recruiting faculty. President Chandler desired for at least half of the professors to be from William & Mary and would commit to teaching in Norfolk three days a week. This practice would soon change, as it was expensive, and the faculty members who taught at the Norfolk branch were often absent from faculty and staff meetings and not able to fully engage as members of either community (Sweeney, 1980). Another important step in the development of what would become ODU took place in 1931. The Norfolk branch established a cooperative agreement with Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI) to host the first two years of their standard engineering program as a means of creating larger opportunities to build the school in Norfolk. The Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) granted loans and grants to the school that allowed for

the development of administrative buildings, a gymnasium, and a pool that would ultimately lead to the growth and development of the institution. The school would continue to experience growth in the early 1930s despite the country's descent into The Great Depression. Families that were no longer able to send their children away to college because of the financial crisis opted into the local, junior college (Sweeney, 1980).

By 1951, leadership at the Norfolk junior college had begun discussing separating from William & Mary to establish their own public four-year college, in part to assume control over their own finances and to access more state funding. In August of 1953, the "Four Year College Committee" met with the William & Mary Board of Visitors, which approved four-year programs in nursing, elementary teacher education, and business administration; secondary education programs would be approved two years later in 1955. Student activities and Greek life began in the 1930s, but became more robust as more students enrolled and school expansion occurred (Sweeney, 1980). By 1959, the College of William & Mary in Norfolk offered a dozen baccalaureate programs and had approximately 4,000 students enrolled between the day college and the evening college programs. This led to the school pursuing accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACSS) (Sweeney, 1980). The William & Mary Norfolk Division would go on to sever ties with William & Mary to form Old Dominion College in 1962 with its own Board of Visitors. With this new development, the new school quickly built several new buildings to accommodate the growing student body.

The admittance of Black Americans also contributed to the rapid student growth at ODU during this period. In 1966, the first Black student graduated from ODU with a master's degree in English (Rosenthal, 1979). By the end of the decade, ODU would graduate the first Black student from its undergraduate degree program and hire its first Black faculty member in the Arts

Department (Rosenthal, 1979). Old Dominion College would grow to more than 10,000 students and attain university status by 1970.

Old Dominion University now serves over 24,000 students, both graduate and undergraduate combined, from all around the world, with 52 home countries represented in the student population (Old Dominion University, 2022). The school has expanded to 335 acres of land, with 148 campus buildings. Approximately 25 percent of the student body is military-affiliated, undoubtedly connected to its close proximity to Naval Station Norfolk. ODU now offers more than 300 student organizations, including 28 fraternities and sororities, has 14 different housing options, 17 on-campus dining facilities, and campus transportation shuttling students both on campus and throughout the city (Old Dominion University, 2022). Old Dominion University touts being ranked "among the best in ethnic diversity; Top 10 in the country and top 100 in the world for reducing inequality; and a top 15 University for African-American student success" (Old Dominion University, 2022).

The school has seven academic colleges and two schools; one of the Academic Colleges is formally known as the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies. Within the Darden College of Education, there are six departments, one of which is the Teaching and Learning Department. Within the Teaching and Learning Department, there are four degree offerings for initial licensure: 1) Early Childhood Education, 2) Elementary Education (PK-6), 3) Middle School, and 4) Secondary (Old Dominion University, 2022). On the website, you also learn that 37 percent of the student body comes from "underrepresented ethnic groups" and that "minority faculty" compose 28 percent of the overall faculty community and tuition is $11,680.

Virginia State University

In 1882, the General Assembly of Virginia passed a bill to charter the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute to be “a suitable site on the south side of the James River for the reestablishment of an institution of learning, to be used exclusively for the education of colored persons" (Virginia State University, 2022). It officially opened its doors in 1883 in Dinwiddie, Virginia, and during its first academic year, the school consisted of one building, 33 acres of land, and a 200-book library (Virginia State University, 2022). In its first year, the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute enrolled 126 Black students (Virginia State University, 2022). In 1886, the school would appoint its first president, John Mercer Langston, the great uncle of Langston Hughes. Langston would go on to become a member of the U.S. Congress in 1890. Langston was the only Black person elected to the U.S. Congress from Virginia until 1992. In 1902, there was a setback, and the legislature dissolved the collegiate program of the school, and it became the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institution. However, in 1920 the land grant program for Black folks was moved from a private school, Hampton Institute, now known as Hampton University, to the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institution. Shortly after this designation, the collegiate program would return in 1923 and the name was eventually changed in 1930 to Virginia State College for Negroes before its final name change, to Virginia State University (VSU), in 1979 (Virginia State University, 2022).

The VSU College of Education has been educating students since its origin in 1882. It has evolved to five departments: 1) Educational Leadership, 2) Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 3) Counselor Education, 4) Teaching and Learning, and 5) Doctoral Studies. Within the Teaching and Learning Department, there are four degree offerings: 1) Elementary Education

PK-6, 2) Special Education - General Curriculum, 3) Middle School, and a 4) Secondary Education Minor with a host of content area majors (Virginia State University, 2022).

Overall, Virginia State University now serves over 4,000 students and costs $21,198 to attend. Approximately 95 percent of the undergraduate student population identifies as Black. However, in their graduate programs, nearly 53 percent of the student population is white-identifying, with only 13 percent of the student population identifying as Black ("NCES College Navigator", 2022). Sixty-three percent of the student population is from Virginia. On their website, VSU highlights support programming from career and health services to residence life and student activities; they believe that involvement and engagement on campus will equal success, and that robust co-curricular offerings are a means to keep students on campus engaged and thriving.

Bridgewater College

Bridgewater College began as the Spring Creek Normal and Collegiate Institute in 1880 with only six students: five men and one woman. The school was among the first private liberal arts colleges in Virginia to admit women (Bridgewater College, 2022). As the school increased in size, it also developed its physical plant, appointed a Board of Trustees, and moved from Springcreek, Virginia, to Bridgewater, where it currently stands. A charter, and a new building in its early history, would change the school's name to Virginia Normal School. By its fourth session in 1883, students were able to use the new building located in Bridgewater. As the school continued to grow, a dormitory was built in 1888 to accommodate the students, referred to as the "White House." A new charter was secured in 1889 and the school would change its name once again, to Bridgewater College, to match the growing demand for advanced offerings. The

growing programs would include a Music program, a Bible School, and a Business School (Bridgewater College, 2022). Bridgewater describes this growth as necessary because it responded to the educational needs and wants of the student body. Bridgewater began admitting Black students in 1953 while also increasing student access to scholarships and loans, which resulted in significant enrollment increases under the tenure of President Warren D. Bowman (Bridgewater College, 2022). Bridgewater College is a Christian institution and is the property of the religious denomination "The Church of the Brethren." Bridgewater College is the only school in this list of five that has not attained University designation.

Currently, Bridgewater College has approximately 1,600 students, offers 55 majors and minors, and costs $53,630 a year for tuition, room and board. Ninety-nine percent of the undergraduate student population are full-time students. Nearly 64 percent of the student population are white students, while Black students currently make up 15 percent of the student body. Ninety-nine percent of the student population are 24 years of age and younger. Seventy-three percent of the student population is in-state and 26 percent of the population is out of state; there are also 25 countries represented in the student body population. Bridgewater has four learning pillars: identity, community, critical thinking, and cultural appreciation (Bridgewater College, 2022). The college intends for those four pillars to become learning outcomes as students engage with the campus community and eventually matriculate.

The teacher preparation program at Bridgewater College lives within their School of Professional Studies and offers three programs of study: 1) Elementary Teacher Education Program K-6, 2) Secondary Teacher Education Program 6-12, and 3) All Grades Teacher Education Program PK-12 (Bridgewater College, 2022).

As shared throughout this research study, it is vital that we examine and consider how history plays a role in the present-day experiences of Black women in higher-education institutions. Seven of the eight Black women educators who participated in this research study attended higher education institutions that originally intended to serve only white students. This context is important for leaders in these institutions to understand to better assess the needs of Black women in their programs. While public primary and secondary schools were mandated to desegregate in the *Brown* decision of 1954, legislation outlawing racial discrimination in higher education would not advance until the passing of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* and the *Higher Education Act of 1965*. The findings of this study reveal themes connected to the intersections of race, class, and gender that suggest that critical examination of institutional history is an important part of bettering the experiences of Black women educators in teacher preparation programs.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

For this research study, I engaged in semi-structured interviews with eight Black women educators that are both trained through teacher preparation programs at four-year higher education institutions in Virginia and currently teach in Virginia public school classrooms. After each interview, I engaged in a self-reflection and journaling process that helped me to process the insights shared during the interviews and allowed me the opportunity to capture as much of what I was feeling and thinking post-interview as possible. An important goal of this study was to amplify the voices of Black women educators, and through self-reflection and journaling, I realized I was processing some of my own experiences as a Black woman educator and that was powerful.

Participants

The eight selected participants attended various higher education programs within Virginia and had a range of years and experience within the field of education. The chart below details key information about each participant. Below that, there is additional information about each Black woman participant that is important to their overall lived experiences as teachers.

Table 5.1 - Participant Demographics

Participant Name	# Years Teaching	School / College of Education Attended	Current District
Kiara	7 years	JMU	Hampton Roads
LaToya	6 years	VCU	Central VA

Vanessa	5 years	JMU	Central VA
Jasmine	6 years	VSU	Eastern VA
Stacy	29 years	Bridgewater College	Central VA
Andrea	5 years	JMU	Northern VA
Chelsea	5 years	VCU	Central VA
Danielle	12 years	ODU	Hampton Roads

The interview process was especially important, as it allowed Black women educators to share for themselves what their experiences were like in their teacher preparation programs and to examine what impacts those experiences have had on their pedagogical approach to the classroom. The semi-structured format of the interviews gave more voice to the participants, which is one of the goals for this study (Hays & Singh, 2012). This interview approach also leads to personal processing and exploration (Yin, 2018) and, as Collins (1986) suggests, a critical process of self-definition for Black women often happens through storytelling and processing personal experiences. A brief description of each of the participants is below. For the sake of confidentiality, each participant has been given a pseudonym.

Kiara

Kiara is in her seventh year as a classroom teacher in Hampton Roads. She is currently a first-grade teacher and while she has had the opportunity in her seven-year career to teach kindergarten through third grade, she shares, “first is my baby.” Kiara is a graduate of James Madison University and was an undergraduate student in their College of Education. She

received both her Bachelor of Arts in education and her Master of Education from JMU. Kiara currently teaches in her hometown and knew when entering college that she desired to teach in a more urban city, specifically in a Title 1[5] school. She expressed how challenging it was toward the end of her teacher preparation program experience to select districts to apply to, or career fairs to attend to find the right school, so she narrowed her search to her hometown. She came to the realization that "these babies need love too…I'm from here. I wanna love on them. I wanna teach them." That desire to support students in her hometown has motivated her throughout her teaching career.

LaToya

LaToya is in her sixth year as a classroom teacher and currently teaches in Central Virginia. She attended the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University where she received both her Bachelor of Arts in education and her graduate degree. LaToya currently teaches first grade and comes from generations of educators. Both of her parents are educators, and she grew up having first-hand knowledge of school settings through the lens of classroom teachers. Her experience growing up with educators as parents raised her awareness of the impacts a positive school culture has on students and school communities and informs her efforts to intentionally contribute to her own school's culture. In her six years as a classroom teacher, she has come to the realization that serving in an administrative role is not her long-term goal. She believes that she is best used in the classroom supporting students and that her desire to join administration would be primarily rooted in the long term pay implications of doing so. LaToya teaches in the same community where she student taught and appreciates having that consistency

[5] "Title I, Part A provides financial assistance through state educational agencies to school divisions and public schools with high numbers or percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and achievement standards" (Virginia Department of Education, 2022)

following graduation from her teacher preparation program. LaToya describes that she "felt called to education."

Vanessa

Vanessa is in her fifth year as a classroom teacher in Central Virginia. She attended the School of Education at James Madison University for both her undergraduate and graduate degrees in education. Vanessa currently teaches eighth grade mathematics and has known since she was a child that she wanted to be a classroom teacher. When she entered college, and learned that she would need to major in a subject area, she selected mathematics because she had always been good at math throughout her K-12 education experience. Vanessa currently teaches in the same city she grew up in and while teaching might not be her long-term plan, she is committed to working with students that grew up in her community. When asked why she keeps coming back year after year, she communicated a sense of obligation to support students through the struggling education system. She shared that so many students do not like school because they do not see the purpose in it and that middle school, the division she currently teaches in, is a pivotal time in the lives of kids to support their growth and development.

Jasmine

Jasmine is in her sixth year as a classroom teacher in Eastern Virginia. She attended the College of Education at Virginia State University where she received both her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Education degrees. She currently teaches third grade and is the only participant in this study that attended a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). She returned to her hometown to work as a result of her mother falling ill, but has always anticipated teaching in the area she grew up in. Jasmine currently teaches in the same district that her mother taught in while Jasmine was growing up. Jasmine shared that her biggest draw to education is wanting to be

someone that kids from her hometown can look up to. She shared that seeing someone that looks like them, that is from where they are from, can encourage students to see that their futures are bright.

Stacy

Stacy is the most veteran educator interviewed in this study. At the time of her interview, she was in her twenty-ninth year as a classroom teacher and currently teaches in Central Virginia. She attended Bridgewater College for her Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary education and currently teaches first grade. Her graduating class of 1989 was the last class at Bridgewater College that allowed students to major in elementary education; many Virginia schools at this time made the same change, instead offering a minor in education and a major in Liberal Studies or a similar discipline. In 2020, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia restored to colleges and universities in Virginia the ability to offer elementary education as an undergraduate major. Stacy knew that she wanted to be a teacher when she was a child. She decided to focus specifically on early childhood education after taking a college elective course that had her working with preschool-aged children twice a week for a semester. In her twenty-nine years in education, Stacy has served at only three schools. Stacy shared that navigating the COVID-19 pandemic in school has been stressful and that this season feels "painful" for her as an educator.

Andrea

Andrea has been a classroom teacher for five years and currently teaches third grade students in Northern Virginia. She attended the School of Education at James Madison University for both her Bachelor of Arts and her Master of Education degrees. Andrea became a teacher because she loved and admired the teachers she had growing up. Because of their love

and care, Andrea has known since an early age that she wanted to provide similar opportunities to students as a teacher. Andrea feels that she was born to teach. She said that one of her favorite things about working with elementary school students is the joy that students have at that age. She went on to lament that the older students get, the more they lose that joy of learning and discovery. She values being able to lay the foundational skills that students need to become whoever they want to be someday. She currently teaches in the same area that she grew up in and described a comfort in going home to be a teacher in her community. One day, she hopes to be an administrator and to support the building of a positive work culture among professionals at the school.

Chelsea

Chelsea is in her fifth year as a teacher, currently teaching third grade in Central Virginia. She was educated through the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. Chelsea described her journey to education as non-traditional; she attended junior college first, had two children while working toward her degrees and was one of the older students in her cohort of classmates at VCU. Chelsea considers her grandmother and her third-grade teacher to be her inspirations to become a classroom teacher. During the interview, Chelsea shared a desire to encourage students and make them feel about learning the way that her grandmother and third-grade teacher, “Miss E”, made her feel. Her journey did not begin in the public school system; she began her teaching career in a small private school that she chose to leave when she discovered she did not have access to the resources to support the learning needs of her students.

Danielle

Danielle is in her twelfth year as an educator. Danielle currently teaches second grade students in Hampton Roads after having taught pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students. She

attended Old Dominion University for both her undergraduate and graduate degrees in education. Danielle worked three jobs while working toward her Bachelor of Arts degree and lived off-campus during her undergraduate experience. Although she attended a teacher preparation program for her undergraduate degree, Danielle decided to apply to Teach for America because she felt that in her first year of teaching after her teacher preparation program, she needed help with everything, especially serving in a Title 1 school with mostly English Language Learners as her student population. She would eventually return home to Virginia to care for her mother.

The lived experiences of Black women educators in teacher preparation programs and their classroom settings vary widely from one another. However, these interviews reveal some consistent themes across the case studies about the experiences of Black women educators in their teacher preparation programs and in their current school communities. Through interviewing the eight Black women educators, I was able to gain insight into their lived experiences and gain a deeper understanding of teacher preparation processes and pedagogical approaches. Below, the major themes of this study will be discussed. The three major themes that emerged from the data were the challenges of building community within teacher preparation programs, the incorrect assumption that teacher preparation programs prepare teachers to serve any student, and the burden on Black women educators to do the *work beyond the work* in their teacher preparation programs and in their professional environments.

Building Community in Teacher Preparation Programs

Black women develop culture in social institutions where Black women exist (Collins, 1986; Guy-Sheftall, 1993). This culture is derived through a shared meaning and experience; however, the experience is not monolithic and depends on the other identities at play that can impact the experience of and with Black culture. Across the participants, the theme of culture

and community seemed to play an integral role in their lived experiences in their teacher preparation programs. Whether in discussing their time in actual classes for their undergraduate degree programs or making decisions about where they would apply to teach as they neared the end of their programs, the participants referred to culture and community consistently across interviews. When talking about their experiences with other students during their teacher preparation experiences, participants shared that there were additional complexities to building community because of their Black womanhood, especially for those that attend PWIs.

Peer Community: Being "The Only"

Throughout the interviews, each participant spoke about their communities both on campus and within their teacher preparation programs. A common thread among participants was that community building within their teacher preparation programs proved to be difficult, so many of them built the majority of their community primarily outside of their teacher preparation program. The experience of being the only seemed lonely for many of the Black women participants. One participant, Andrea, shared, "Um, in my elementary program, for a long time, I was the only black student and then another girl changed her major, so then there were two of us." In sharing her experience about being the only Black student in class until another Black woman joined the class, Andrea also shared that an additional complexity to this experience was not feeling included within the smaller class community as a result of being the only Black student. Some participants recounted specific moments, such as when it was time for group work or projects, in which they were overlooked by classmates and felt the need to prove themselves and their work ethic. One participant shared that she had to work hard to build a reputation where "people start to know who you are and they know your work ethic, and then it's like, 'oh, yeah, like, let's work with Andrea.'" Other participants did not communicate an ability

to prove themselves to the classmates; therefore, they felt as though they were a "last resort" during group work. When asked to share more about this experience, one participant shared that she was always the last person to be picked for group work and that when professors would require students to turn to their neighbors for conversation, "everyone turned away from me." She went on to share that,

> Oftentimes I felt like what I had to say or what I had to give wasn't really, um, receptive or I would pay attention to eye contact, and no one really made eye contact with me when we were doing ideas. That was something I was really big on. [That] I used to pay a lot of attention to. A lot of people probably think like, oh, I never pay attention to stuff like that, but I do.

This perspective in particular calls attention to the "outsider within" experience of Black women in academic settings (Collins, 1986). Vanessa understood her position in the classroom, and in the larger community, based on her recognition that no one looked her in the eye. Vanessa and the researcher proceeded to discuss practices that should have been in place to promote positive connection and interaction with peers in the classroom setting. Collins (1986) suggests that Black women are often able to analyze and understand dynamics of race, class, and gender within institutions and have a unique ability to critically examine how to dismantle those oppressing systems.

As other non-Black students within their teacher preparation programs built relationships with one another, the Black women educators shared that they mostly built their communities outside of the programs, through other organizations on campus. Jasmine, who attended an HBCU, shared that she did not rely on making connections with folks in her program because she was in the school band, which was a strong community to rely on and engage with during her

undergraduate career. She shared, “most of the time, I would just kinda go to class and just… go to rehearsals. I didn’t really interact with [my education classmates] too much, unless they were in the band with me.” Most of the students in the teacher preparation program with Jasmine were Black, therefore she did not experience feelings of being the “only” as her larger campus community afforded her more opportunities to build community with other Black students which lessened her need for community within the program itself.

Within their teacher preparation programs, some of the Black women educators also experienced a dynamic of “us and them” in relation to other students that was challenging to overcome. Kiara shared that outside of working on group work where she was required by her professor, and for the sake of her grade, to engage with students in her class, she did not have a relationship with her peers. She said, “... if it wasn’t something like that, I did not talk to them, or have a relationship at all. I definitely felt like it was them and me.” When I inquired further and asked Kiara if there were any moments in particular that stood out to her that made her feel othered in this way, she shared that the moments were all very similar, that she was not talked to unless she spoke first, and that she resigned herself to that being the relationship dynamic she had with her peers. Another participant, Vanessa, expressed a similar peer-facing experience. She shared, “...people just didn't really know how to take me and my opinions about stuff. So, um, I wouldn't say that I gained, like, true, like, friends and stuff like that. We just kind of did assignments together and these were the people that I was with, but it wasn't really no, like, true friendship.” The feeling of being the only and feeling a sense of “us vs. them”, led to feelings of isolation and disconnection at points in many of the Black women educator narratives.

It was clear to many of the participants that a large part of their feelings of disconnection from their peers in the teacher preparation programs stemmed from being from different racial

and cultural communities than a majority of their peers. Besides the one participant who attended an HBCU, each of the other participants communicated that their peers in their teacher preparation programs were mostly white women. Stacy, the longest tenured educator of this group of participants, described only overlapping with one other Black student during her entire teacher preparation program experience. Stacy said that the teacher preparation program felt very scary and emotional for the Black students in it given its high demands and the lack of their representation throughout the program. In addition to this lack of Black community while in the teacher preparation program, Stacy also reflected on the experience of not seeing Black folks reflected in other external areas of the program, such as in the schools she observed and did her student teaching, which only exacerbated her feelings of disconnection from the program. At one point, Stacy remarked that the experience of being "the only" is probably much different presently. The experiences of the other study participants, who completed their teacher preparation programs at PWIs over fifteen years after Stacy completed hers, suggests otherwise.

Emotional Support

Many of the participants articulated a similar sentiment that when they struggled with aspects of their undergraduate experiences, they found people outside of their academic programs to support them. Jasmine shared that while she could have engaged her peers for emotional support, she never felt that she had permission to "break down" with those peers because, "you didn't wanna do that because it would make you seem like you're weak." Jasmine shared that access to mental health services would have been helpful in her teacher preparation experience. She shared that, at her university, she did not feel as if she had the space or time to have emotional interruptions and that the university lacked adequate mental health resources and understanding that students might have other things happening in their personal lives impacting

what was being required of them at the program level. She communicated that "if you had things going on, you still kind of had to suck it up and keep going because they had a lot of classes that are only offered once a year. So, if you missed it, then you have to wait a whole 'nother [sic] year to come back around and get it." Jasmine learned that the best way for her to get through her teacher preparation program was to "basically suck it up."

LaToya communicated the importance of finding that "one special person" in your teacher preparation experience to lean on personally and professionally. She stated that the most important relationship she developed in her teacher preparation program was with her classmate who would eventually work in the same district with her and currently is her "work wife". During the interview, she lovingly described meeting her "work wife" and building relationships with the "close knit" community in her teacher preparation program. She shared that this professional connection helped her to secure her first teaching position after college. LaToya's college classmate did a teaching placement at a school that LaToya was interested in applying to. LaToya reached out to her classmate and was able to ask "Hey, how's this place? They have a job opening. What do you know about it?"

Interestingly enough, LaToya shared that her emotional support was mostly derived from her family network. She spoke about the complexity of navigating college and training to maintain "your social life, your school life, and all these things." While LaToya considered herself good at compartmentalizing and dealing with her experiences, she shared that she came from a family of educators and therefore relied on her parents for much of her support. If she needed help thinking about which classes to take to best support her teacher preparation, she would call her parents. LaToya also credited her friends and one adjunct professor for their roles in providing community and support.

Chelsea discussed the experience of trying to build community as a "non-traditional student" in comparison to the students in her teacher preparation program. She described her community while in her undergraduate program as very loving and supportive, especially considering that she was a "non-traditional" student. Chelsea was a student in her undergraduate program for six years and had the experience of engaging more than one student cohort in the teacher preparation program. While a student in her undergraduate teacher preparation program, Chelsea had two children and communicated, "I was in my 30s and so, I was a bit older… I seemed removed from the space." While she expressed feeling somewhat removed from the community in her teacher preparation program, she also referred to classmates as "sweethearts" and mentioned that they even went so far as to offer babysitting services to her. She argued that no matter the life stage of the cohort, the community aspect of the teacher preparation program is an essential aspect to consider because this cohort not only supports one another toward completing the program, but also can be future colleagues.

Other participants did not speak to this being their lived experience; rather, they saw the need to try to make the best of the community they were in, understanding that there would eventually come a time where their professional paths might cross. In regards to obtaining professional support from her teacher preparation program, Jasmine said it was "non-existent" and that after a student finished the coursework "you just applied and that was it." She laughed as she shared that she learned about her first professional classroom teacher position through a friend of hers at the call center where she worked. One day while at work, her friend shared, "well, hey, Petersburg is having a job fair." This was the kind of professional and career support Jasmine wanted from her educational program.

Other participants shared that their largest obstacle to community-building was being a non-traditional student. For Chelsea, the hardest part of building community was finding people to rely on for emotional support. She shared, "Um, I definitely had to lean in, which was hard, um, at first." She relied mostly on community and emotional support from home, but had to rely on the community within the teacher preparation program as she got pregnant and prepared to welcome children into the world. As an example, she shared needing to communicate to peers and professors when she needed additional support or time on a project. She found that most of the community was understanding of her different life stage and worked to accommodate her as a classmate and peer.

For Danielle, it was the experience of living off campus or working multiple jobs to pay her way through school, which distinguished her from her peers in the teacher preparation program. One participant gave a brief glimpse into life as a working student and shared, "... I worked two or three jobs and I came to campus, I went to class and I got back in my car and I drove back home or back to work." She spoke of not having any community during her time in her undergraduate teacher preparation program and described having to prioritize work in order to afford school. She shared, "not living on campus was a hindrance to making friends, really. And then working full time to pay for school. I just didn't have the capacity to really make a bunch of friends."

Teacher Preparation is not Preparation for all Student Experiences

"You have to have characteristics of a magician to be successful in this field."- Danielle

While the teacher preparation experience varies from institution to institution, and from person to person, another of the themes that emerged from the data was that the Black women educators did not feel adequately prepared by their teacher preparation programs to teach the

demographic of students that they now teach. Throughout the interviews, each of the Black women educators communicated knowing upon entering college that they wanted to be classroom teachers. Many of them agreed that because they entered college knowing that they wanted to teach, they would have valued more opportunities to dive deeper into coursework and subject areas that served to better equip them to serve their students upon graduation. One participant, Kiara, expressed that when "you go in knowing what you want to major in and you stick with it…. that time could have been used for something more." That time she referred to is the first two years of taking general education courses as a part of her Liberal Arts degree requirement. As participants transitioned from their undergraduate experiences to their professional lives in the classroom, many of them voiced a similar frustration and a desire to have been better prepared for their work with students from low-socioeconomic communities, and from primarily Black and Brown communities. Many participants shared that their programs just scratched the surface in preparing them to step into the classroom; one participant shared that nothing she learned could "help you with anything right now." Danielle described her teacher preparation experience as having a lot of theory, but "the application component was missing for me." Early on in her undergraduate experiences, she began registering for graduate level courses trying to learn as much as she could to support her future students. She went on to share that "...they gave me a foundation, a foundation to stand on. But again, just kind of like in many public schools… you may not graduate prepared for college." Here, Danielle is making the comparison between lacking preparedness for college when leaving high school leaving her undergraduate teacher preparation program to experience the classroom as a teacher.

LaToya, early on in our conversation, shared an anecdote of a dear friend that attended an undergraduate teacher preparation program in California and was required by the university to

teach for the full school year. She shared, “she saw the beginning to the end. And looking back on it, I wish VCU would do that…” and then went on to share how using those four years wisely by having classes the first few semesters and then having the chance to do a full year of student teaching in order to see “the beginning, the middle, the end, the good, the bad, the ugly…” would have been beneficial to her. Other participants would share a similar sentiment of needing more hands-on experience with students prior to being placed as a teacher into the classroom. Research suggests that having access to the classroom alongside a mentor teacher can result in increased teacher retention and more racially diverse candidate pools (Papay et al., 2012).

Several of the participants described coming to the realization that the students that they were being prepared to teach through their teacher preparation programs were not representative of the students that they were planning to teach upon matriculation to the classroom. Participants articulated that they had to intentionally seek a student-teaching experience they thought would more closely mirror their future teaching environment because the schools most readily available for pre-teachers to do their practicums and internships were primarily in white, suburban communities. Andrea shared that when selecting her student-teaching placement, “I knew that I didn’t want to teach in the Harrisonburg community because that wasn’t reflective of the community that I would be serving.” Andrea knew that the student demographic of local schools in Harrisonburg, Virginia did not match the student demographic that she would engage once she transitioned into the classroom. As she reflected on student teaching, she detailed an experience in Northern Virginia where many of her student population were English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners. Andrea shared that in her first year as a classroom teacher, over sixty percent of her students were ESOL learners and that she wished that she had access to

courses to teach her specifically about working with, and supporting the education journey of, ESOL students.

As Jasmine, the only participant that attended a HBCU, reflected on her experience within the teacher preparation program at Virginia State University, she recalled what she considered the most helpful in preparing her for the classroom. She described one of her professors as "the most helpful professor in the program" in part because of her ability to provide some context for the environment in which she would be teaching. Jasmine shared that this professor "understood segregation and all of those issues at that time over in that county." This would be the county that Jasmine would go on to observe and do her student teaching in; she described having this background knowledge as helpful as she prepared to engage both faculty and students.

In another conversation, Kiara mentioned that she knew very early on in her teacher preparation program that the pedagogy she was learning connected to student behavior was not based on what she imagined her reality to be going to a school district and community that was underperforming according to the state. Like other participants in this study, Kiara expressed that a course in her teacher preparation program geared towards evidence-based practices and interventions that considered the intersection of race and class, along with geographical location, would have been so helpful in helping her practically think through navigating her experience as a classroom teacher. Similarly, Kiara shared, in reference to the professors within her program, "none of them come from where my kids come from or had that same background or same type of experience…" and went on to share that the teaching methods she learned did not feel effective because they did not take student background, culture, and environment into consideration.

Danielle shared that her program missed many opportunities to have white students in the program explore their privilege and to explore inequities that exist within the educational experiences of different folks in the United States. She shared that there is so much more to being in a classroom with a group of twenty-something students. Danielle said, "to be a public teacher, is to be a magician." and that teacher preparation programs should highlight that reality to future educators. Danielle shared,

> The community… You've got to know how to manage your time, adults, children, policy analysis, the public, the community, grading, socioemotional components that your children come with. I don't remember not a single class that taught me about the socioemotional learning of my students... I did not learn how to come in and ask my babies did they eat last night.

This lack of preparation to meet students where they need to be met is vitally important. The observation Danielle made, that she did not learn about socioemotional learning or how to ask children whether their basic needs were met, demonstrates that teacher preparation programs should teach about student developmental needs while teaching about student learning and outcomes. One cannot happen without the other; students in classrooms must have their basic needs met, including a sense of safety, to do their best work and to learn.

Andrea shared that "the realness" of what the classroom dynamic would be like given the realities of the students she wanted to serve was missing from discussions in her teacher preparation program. Participants really seemed to value gaining real-world experiences that were as reflective of the communities that they would serve as possible. The Black women expressed finding value in hearing "real life and real talk" from their professors about life in the classroom and with students. One participant reflected that one of the most helpful pieces of her

teacher preparation program was the honesty and transparency of her professors who were previous classroom teachers. In addition, participants noted that it would have been helpful to discuss how student demographics impact the classroom. Andrea shared that a missing component to her teacher preparation was Exceptional Education [6]and what her role would be in supporting those students. She shared, "that was something that I felt like was literally not covered in my undergrad program." While Andrea is grateful for the foundation of theory she received from her program and for the "very intentional" lesson planning courses she took, she also realized that "that's not what the real world is like when you're actually teaching" and named learning on the job as what prepared her most for her tenure as a classroom teacher.

Chelsea talked about feeling "lost" in her first few years as an educator and how one of the most beneficial professional development opportunities she took advantage of was The Clark Hill Institute and its focus on social-emotional learning. She shared how essential trauma-informed care is to her daily lived experience as a classroom teacher and how more opportunities to learn additional content knowledge that would support her role in the classroom would have been a great use of time in her program. Ultimately, it would have helped Chelsea better know that "the kids are okay."

The educators shared that one of the more crucial aspects of the teacher preparation process for them was the practicum and internship experiences. When discussing their first-year experiences in the classroom, the participants communicated relying mostly on their student teaching experience and less on actual theory and practice from courses. One participant describes it as "...sometimes you had to just pull it out of your head, not necessarily from a class

[6] Exceptional Education is interchangeable with Special Education. Special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2017)

that you took." These required experiences within the teacher preparation process gave the participants a chance to connect and put theory to practice. Each participant reflected on the internship and practicum experiences as the best, most hands-on experiences of their programs. The only criticism of internship and practicum participants noted was limited access to experiences and classrooms that were representative of the populations they hoped to teach. For one participant, there were no Black children in the classroom, or adults in the building, during her observation and internship experiences and this felt like a missed opportunity for her. She shared there weren't "even Black custodians or teachers. It was just me."

Stacy shared that while she was in her program nearly 30 years ago, teachers were only provided a manual to teach from: "you just opened the manual and that's what you taught. Whereas now, when you get, uh, the books, it's based on the state." She shared that one particular stressor between graduating from her teacher preparation program and becoming a classroom teacher was the intense required observations at the time. At one point, Stacy expressed that "you had to be observed by the state, four or five people, and you had to um, come up with… your lesson had to show 12 of these 14, um, items." She shared that this was a real block for many educators in the program and that is ultimately why she originally stepped away from the program to work at a daycare.

In addition to wanting more time to engage with K-12 students in the teacher preparation process, many of the participants also desired coursework that examined building rapport with students from different backgrounds. Vanessa credited being born and raised in the community that she currently teaches in as giving her an easier entry point in building relationships with her students. She also pointed out how difficult the transition felt to many of her peers that graduated and began teaching in communities unlike those that they grew up in. There was this

one story that stood out to her about a peer at JMU that is now teaching in her same district, and how she has struggled navigating relationship-building with students and families. Vanessa shared, "speaking for one of my friends who went to JMU with me, she's not from Richmond at all. She's from a suburban area… she was not adequately prepared at all." Some participants discussed how the course requirement for classroom management focused on positive behavior reinforcement and interventions and one participant shared that this approach might "work for a particular group of kids" but did not work for the kids that she taught. Some participants discussed transitioning from their teacher preparation experience into classrooms that had students from communities where trauma was prevalent and that courses connected to the intersection of education and trauma would have been helpful training and discourse to have through the teacher preparation process to support the workload of the educators and, ultimately, better the student experience. The participants seemed to share the similar sentiment that the most crucial skills for their work as classroom teachers are relationship building and maintenance, training that they did not feel as if they received, or had access to, during their programs.

LaToya did experience the alignment between what she was learning about in classes and the community that she would eventually teach in and shared that this alignment was integral to her success as a classroom teacher, especially in the earlier years of her career. She described the VCU School of Education as "very well adapted and equipped" to prepare future educators for the school communities that existed in and around the city of Richmond, Virginia, which is ultimately in line with how the college came to be within the city and for the city.

LaToya described classroom management as teachers being prepared to support students behaviorally, but also prepared to unpack the "unconscious bias" that comes into play for

teachers when they enter a classroom. She shared that it is important for teachers to be prepared to say, "...like 'I think this way, but my students might not,' or just realizing, like, you're working with other people." In addition to learning to engage students and colleagues, LaToya shared that knowledge on how to engage community members in general would have been a helpful learning opportunity for her and her peers in the teacher preparation process. While she comes from generations of educators and understands the importance of being able to communicate with both students and adults, LaToya noted that not everyone has that perspective. LaToya shared that learning how to engage colleagues, parents, and administrative and support services staff at the school is an important part of developing and building the community necessary to be successful in a school setting. LaToya described it as, "it's not just you coming in to work and just teaching your class and leaving. Like really, you're, you're building the school culture." In addition to learning to build community with students and adults at the school level, LaToya shared that a helpful pipeline for engagement would be between undergraduate students in teacher preparation programs and classroom teachers or administrators for them to engage regularly.

Time and time again, the participants expressed a desire to have more time in the classroom prior to being responsible on their own to teach students. In addition to this, one participant shared the desire to have more responsibilities during the student-teaching process, in order to develop the skill of community engagement. Participants shared the sentiment that you do not, as a student teacher, get the full experience of engaging parents and learning the "little things" that make up the day-to-day experience of leading the classroom. Danielle believes that student teachers need to "feel the weight so that [they] can know…" what it is really like to be a classroom teacher. She argued that giving student teachers the full scope of responsibility, from

handling discipline to grading and engaging parents, is all worthwhile experience to have before becoming fully responsible for a classroom of students. Research from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) suggested over a decade ago that practice should be at the center of teacher preparation education. By placing practice at the center of the teacher preparation experience, it allows for pre-service educators to consider their own practice and study the practice of expert educators in the school environments in which they are placed. According to the National Research Council Report, clinical preparation is identified as one of the practices to have the biggest impact on student outcomes along with content knowledge and quality candidates (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2011). Turning the approach of teacher preparation on its head is ultimately what the Black women educators were speaking to; more tangible, clinical practice is at the center.

Work Beyond the Work

The experiences of Black women educators during their teacher preparation experiences are important to examine, and so are the experiences for these Black women once they begin their work as teachers in the field. The theme of *work beyond the work* was present throughout the conversations with the participants. For the sake of this research, *work beyond the work* is defined as the expectation placed on Black educators to support the cultural education of their white peers and the emotional and social development of students of color, while simultaneously excelling in the profession as a teacher. The unacknowledged and uncompensated roles forced upon Black women in the workplace to care for and take on the responsibility of both children and adults in an environment is a part of the *work beyond the work.* This phenomenon suggests that Black women educators are often put in positions to do far more work than their job descriptions entail, and that their peers are expected to do, to support their larger school

communities. The historical portrayals of Black women affect their lived experiences within their educational environments, as colleagues and as classroom teachers. More specifically, Black women as laborers, or as "mammies," assumes that Black women will carry the emotional and physical labor in their work settings (Collins, 2000). This concept emerged consistently throughout the data and ultimately impacted the Black women educators' approaches to their practice and pedagogy within their school environments and classroom settings.

Additional Roles & Responsibilities

When discussing their involvement at their schools, many of the participants pointed to work that was above and beyond what is expected of them as classroom teachers. LaToya described her experience of "picking up the slack" in her school community and how that landed her additional responsibilities in the workplace that have been hard to shake after agreeing to take them on, even though she has tried. She described having to support her principal in coming up with a plan for managing student behavior because the principal "truly lacked" this skillset. Another interesting dynamic here is that LaToya did not feel as if she could say no because she was a young, Black professional in the workplace working to make a good impression on her supervisor, so when she was asked to do something outside of her role, she jumped at the opportunity. Other participants shared a similar sentiment: a sense of deep responsibility to learn ways to best support the student population. LaToya saw the opportunity to support the discipline structure as an opportunity to create a more consistent, equitable structure for her students at the school.

Some participants described how not feeling equipped to care for the students that they taught upon entering the teaching profession did not feel fair to students. Therefore, a few of the participants now serve as mentors in many capacities: through the teacher preparation programs and to the student teachers that serve at their schools and in their classrooms. Many of the

participants communicated the desire to support new professionals to their school community, especially white women within predominantly Black or Brown spaces, because ultimately the students would suffer because of their lack of preparedness. One participant shared that she mentors teachers "all year, I'm like their go-to person. Everything they have questions about, they can come to me. It doesn't matter if it's parents, behavior, resources, or how to log into this thing...".

Research suggests that much of the learning for early educators does not happen in the clinical preparation of the teaching program but instead in those first few years on the job (Sykes et al., 2010). Therefore, teacher preparation programs really rely on teachers in the workplace to oversee much of the development of new teachers. In addition to daily responsibilities, the Black women educators also do additional work like tutoring, assisting with after school programs, and even serving on committees to represent the interests of their students and families. Being one of the few Black educators in a space made many of the participants feel as if they had to be present in order for their students to get the best support possible. Kiara shared later in her interview, "Um, this is my second year as one of the lead teachers." Interestingly, Kiara did not see the role as Lead Teacher for her grade level as an additional responsibility; however, the work of the lead teacher is to support, and often provide coaching, to the other grade-level teachers. One participant describes some of the additional responsibilities as building school culture - and the importance of developing those relationships across campus. She details the practice of getting to know everyone from the students to the secretaries and custodians because the entire culture of the building can shape student learning. Each participant found the idea of building community within schools to be something that they personally work to do.

Approach to Pedagogy & The Classroom

"I lead my classroom with love first and understanding." – Andrea

Study participants reported their programs teaching similar approaches to pedagogy. Each participant remarked that their programs discussed the significance of relationship and rapport building with students and their families. The participants also reported learning how to lesson plan and scaffold curricula throughout the year to make sure students were prepared for the Standards of Learning (SOLs) tests. In addition to developing these skills, participants took classes throughout their teacher preparation programs related to classroom structure, management, and routine building at the beginning of the school year. However, as noted above, many of the participants noted that the *one size fits all* approach their programs took in regards to pedagogy did not work for their specific classrooms because they failed to account for any external influences to student learning. As a result, the participants had to adapt their pedagogical approaches to include strategies to mitigate external student issues that negatively impacted learning outcomes, which the participants described as taking a "student-first" approach.

However, the student-first approach described seemed to be a product of teacher intuition, rather than a skill the participants developed through their programs. While the teacher preparation programs offered the foundational knowledge for teaching students, participants noted that it was their student-first approach, and their willingness to be flexible, that set them up for success in the classroom. When discussing lesson planning, Vanessa shared that she was taught to lesson plan and review weekly; however, she shared, "I am a person who planned each and every day before I walked into my classroom" because often what she expects to teach in a given week can shift dramatically based on student life and world happenings. Vanessa shared,

> I'm a day-to-day planner and I'm always like, ‘does this make sense to a kid?’ And I try to do my assignments and my activities to see, okay, ‘how are they gonna think? Does this make sense?’ So, um, I, often times spend a lot of time trying to figure out what I wanna do because there's different ways that you can approach it. And I'm always trying to find the best way that'll make sense to them.

In talking about her practice as an educator, Vanessa grappled with knowing the importance of getting through the required curriculum, while also acknowledging that the teaching pace needed to do so did not work for her students. This understanding resulted in Vanessa spending extra time, before and after school, to consider each of her students and their unique learning styles in order to support their learning in the classroom. Vanessa went on to share a sentiment that was common among the other participants. She talked about the importance of meeting students where they are in terms of curricular content. She shared, “I also often try to tap into kinda what they know first, um, kind of, kind of just start there and building up,” which she acknowledges is not what she was taught, because it “can sometimes lead to like us falling behind, behind in the pacing guide.” While understanding that it can lead to overall falling behind, the core of the approach is the understanding that students feeling a sense of understanding and success has the power to encourage them to dig deeper into the curriculum and continue learning. Vanessa taking this approach to her practice in the classroom allows students to have an entry point into the learning by first tapping into what they already understand.

Another component of meeting students where they are is making curriculum real by making real world connections. Participants discussed the importance of having their students understand the usefulness of specific curricula and building ways for them to engage their

learning even at home. Danielle shared, “So for me, when they transfer whatever we're doing in the classroom and they have to do it at home to show their parents, like, ‘Let me show you what we did today’-- that fills me up!” She goes on to share that she taught her students to use a hand signal throughout class to acknowledge when something that they are hearing or learning is connected to their lived experiences.

When discussing how they approached creating their classroom community and culture, from classroom structure to pedagogy, the participants shared a common approach of leading with instinct. Danielle shared a time when she decided, after graduating from a teacher preparation program, that she wanted to join Teach for America (TFA) for additional teacher training. More specifically, she valued the focus TFA placed on teaching students from Title 1 school communities. Their approach to pedagogy, classroom management, student behavior, etc., considered the background and communities of the students that their graduates would go on to serve. It was this student-first model of teaching that attracted her to TFA.

Each of the Black women educators described applying a student-first approach to their teaching practice; it was clear that, for the participants, relationship building, and maintenance were at the core of making meaningful connections with students and building trust that ultimately leads to engagement in the classroom. Danielle shared that her students and their families invite her to places such as their homes for dinner, soccer games, etc. She expressed, “they want me to come literally just watch TV with them and I'm just like, ‘Oh Miss. Lewis is so busy.’ But you want me at your house, gosh, why not come? And just make sure your parents are okay with me hanging out with your family.” She then remarked, “you don't get that in school” in reference to her teacher preparation experience not equipping her to enter into the community with her students and their families.

Each educator commented that relationships were key for engagement with students and would ultimately lead to their learning, and feeling safe, in their classroom environments. Vanessa shared, “kids thrive off relationships” and that she jokes around a lot with her students, even though other teachers in her school community might frown upon such activities. Like other participants, she went on to share that classroom management begins with building student rapport and that her students respect her because she takes the time to get to know them. Like other participants, Vanessa counted addressing student needs before learning as leading to more success in the classroom. She shared that her approach to teaching, which she explicitly communicates to her students, is, “I don't teach math to you… I teach students math, so my students always come first.”

Some participants described their practice of preparing for lessons by thinking from the perspective of her students. Although her team plans lessons together, Vanessa intentionally tries to think like her students to make tweaks and adjustments that support their learning and growth. As she prepares lessons for class, she asks herself, “how are they gonna be thinking about this? How are they looking at this?”; she has learned that knowing her students well enough to ask herself that question has been among her most helpful strategies in teaching her students the curriculum. Andrea communicated a similar sentiment and said, “I see myself in the kids… I don’t like to give them, like worksheets every day. Like, I try to make things hands on… giving them options of what to do.” Giving students “voice and choice” is at the core of many of the Black women educators’ practices in the classroom to remind students that they are their own best advocates and have a say in how class goes.

Chelsea describes it simply as, “if I’ve made it where, you know, I made a student laugh and they weren’t expecting to, I’ve done my job. You know? Because sometimes it’s not about

you hitting every mark and getting every A." Chelsea, a parent to two Black boys, said that she demonstrates the kind of care for her students that she hopes her boys will receive as they navigate the school system. She expressed concern that at her school, Black boys are not always allowed to share how they feel or given an opportunity to explain why they reacted to something the way that they did. So her classroom also serves as a safe space for other students in the community as well. Taking cues from students on being the experts on themselves is also a skill that seemed to resonate across the participants. Trusting that students know themselves and allowing them to express themselves was a practice all participants described as important.

To support students practicing self-affirmation and self-advocacy, one participant described implementing a daily practice of affirmation each day as students enter the classroom. Danielle shared,

> I have an affirmation mirror where my kids come in and they say something positive about themselves. And throughout the day when we're feeling down or something happens or there's a traumatic experience and we're willing to share… As a collective, we have the words and the resources to build one another up.

She described the importance of having students "build that muscle" of self-affirmation so that when a difficult moment arises, they have tools to encourage themselves. She shared, "when they get a test with 20 questions, and they missed 12" they get to celebrate the eight that they did get right and then get back to work. Participants stressed the importance of building resiliency in their students and modeling that practice to them. They each sought to create a safe enough space for students to feel comfortable talking about what is happening in their life that might be taking up space for them to learn.

Danielle also went into detail about engaging student behavior with a student-first approach. She asked me, “what do you do when a kid comes to school and they’re hungry every day and they keep stealing the breakfast and hoarding it until lunch, or they steal food on Fridays? It’s not a disciplinarian thing… that’s something else.” She expressed the significance of building rapport with students enough so that they trust you as an adult in their lives and can say, “Miss Danielle, I really wanna talk about this thing that’s happening, but I just don’t know how to do it.” One of the ways that many of the educators shared that they do this is through greeting students by their names daily and being in tune with how they show up to class each day. As Jasmine described, “If I’m asking a question and their eyes are glazed over” because they are not engaged, being flexible and willing to pivot for the benefit of the student is important to achieving positive outcomes.

The participants overwhelmingly discussed how taking a student-first approach to their teaching practices was not something that was learned in their programs, but instead developed as a result of their own lived experiences and intuition and practice based on their observations of student needs.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

Black women educators have historically played an integral role in developing the racial identities of Black students within classrooms since Reconstruction (Clayton & Peters, 2019; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2013). More specifically, Black women educators have been "hidden actors" advocating for equitable treatment and access for Black students and families both locally and nationally while simultaneously educating students and supporting communities (Butchart & Rolleri, 2004; Fultz, 1995; Walker, 2013). The field of education was one of the few vocations that Black women professionals could access outside of domestic labor after Reconstruction (Tillman, 2004). However, the *Brown vs. The Board of Education* decision resulted in the intentional firing of Black teachers and administrators once schools were forced to integrate (Collier, 2002; Tillman, 2004).

The representation of Black teachers in public schools has significantly declined since the *Brown* decision (Ingersoll, 2011; Milner & Howard, 2004). Black educators only represent approximately 7.7 percent of the teaching population, with Black women educators representing a majority of that 7.7 percent. Currently, white women compose 83 percent of the teaching workforce in American public schools, and although the student population has become increasingly diverse, teacher preparation programs are still preparing white pre-service teachers to engage homogenous groups of students (Howard & Milner, 2014; Pham, 2018). It is important to examine the training that teachers receive in order to better understand the sociopolitical contexts in which students exist and to consider how ideologies affect classroom and school cultures. As we think about sustaining Black women educators both through recruitment and retention practices, it is critical that we intentionally examine their experiences

at every stage of their education journeys to ensure they are adequately prepared and supported. Examining their lived experiences in their teacher preparation programs can lead to valuable insight on possible shifts teacher preparation programs can make to their practices and pedagogy to center Black women.

The primary goal of this study was to amplify the voices of Black women educators by giving them an opportunity to speak about their narratives by discussing their teacher preparation experiences and their current approaches to the classroom. The second goal of this study was to explore how teacher preparation experiences influenced the pedagogical approaches of these Black women educators. Finally, the third goal was to provide qualitative data that could support teacher preparation programs' practices and curricula to recruit, retain, and sustain Black women educators in K-12 education, while training white and non-Black educators to be allies in support of this goal. Through case study methodology, I sought a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Black women in their teacher preparation process and of how these experiences might have influenced their pedagogical approaches to the classroom. The data collected provided answers to the following research questions:

1) How do Black women educators who completed teacher preparation programs in the state of Virginia describe their experiences while enrolled in those teacher preparation programs?
2) In what ways have the teacher preparation program experiences of Black women educators who completed their teacher preparation programs in the state of Virginia influenced or not influenced their pedagogical approaches?

The findings from the previous chapter revealed that the Black women educators who participated in the study shared similar experiences. I originally selected Jasmine to participate

in this study because I was interested in learning more about her experience in her teacher preparation program at an HBCU. Jasmine was the only respondent that attended an HBCU and I wondered how her experiences might be similar to, or differ from, the experiences of participants that attended PWIs. While I thought that her experiences in her teacher preparation program might serve as a counter narrative thematically, I found that most of her experiences mirrored those of the other participants except for the feeling of being "the only" in her classroom settings.

Much of the data gathered from the participants can be divided into three key themes. Those themes are culture and community, a desire for more targeted teacher preparation, and experiencing the phenomenon of *work beyond the work* in their educational environments. Because of the qualitative method employed, these findings are not generalizable; however, this research does begin a conversation about what teacher preparation programs can do to consider the recruitment, retention, and support of Black women educators.

In the section below, I will share a discussion of the findings, study limitations, implications for teacher preparation programs, and recommendations for future research. I will also discuss how the Black Feminist Thought framework can provide deeper insight into the lived experiences of Black women educators during and after their teacher preparation programs and inform the ways that teacher preparation programs recruit and support future Black women educators.

Key Findings

Building Community in Teacher Preparation Programs

This study shows that there is more to learn about the experiences of Black women educators in Virginia and beyond, especially concerning community and culture within teacher

preparation programs. The participants in this study overwhelmingly noted how important culture and community, or the lack thereof, was to their lived experiences within their teacher preparation programs. As higher education institutions across the country work to recruit underrepresented students to their programs, it is key for educational leaders to remember the words of Gloria Ladson-Billings: “there is something very wrong with recruiting someone to a campus for the cause of diversity and not continuing to push hard to create that diversity” (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 233). Teacher preparation programs have a responsibility to not only recruit Black women educators, but also to create environments in their programs and on their campuses in which Black women can thrive.

Each of the higher education institutions represented in this study have made some form of public commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion on their websites, either through formal diversity statements or through informal value statements. It is important that higher education institutions that claim such commitments to inclusivity ensure that they are prepared to support the Black women educators that choose their schools. The Black women educators in this study overwhelmingly described their experiences in the teacher preparation programs as isolating, incomplete, and not considerate of the additional roles and responsibilities that they would have to take on as Black women educators in their school environments. Each participant expressed feeling a lack of community within their teacher preparation programs, often expressing feelings of disconnection and isolation from their peers. It is the responsibility of teacher preparation program leadership to implement initiatives within their programs to reflect the institutional commitment to inclusivity by ensuring that their diverse populations are fully incorporated into the program community.

While I anticipated the participants sharing initial feelings of isolation within their programs, I was dismayed to hear reports from the participants that those feelings persisted for the duration of their programs, particularly in cases where the participants reported remaining isolated from their specific cohorts. One participant remarked that she did not gain a friend in her teacher preparation experience until she met an engaging classmate in her graduate program. Each participant reported desiring a feeling of community in their teacher preparation program.

These teacher preparation programs, particularly the ones at PWIs, failed to develop communities and culture that these Black women pre-service educators felt able to engage. Jasmine, the only participant to attend an HBCU, noted that while she did not experience feelings of connectedness to her classmates in the teacher preparation program, she was easily able to establish connections with other groups on campus that made not having program connections easier to withstand. Culture and community, for Black women, is an essential piece of meaning making and can contribute to feelings of connectedness within their communities. There is a great opportunity for teacher preparation programs to create opportunities for Black women educators to be in relationship with other Black women educators.

Teacher Preparation is not Preparation for all Student Experiences

The analysis of the data also unearthed that a *one size fits all* approach to pedagogy and practice is not effective and results in additional roles and responsibilities for Black women educators. The participants in this study communicated that the curricula in their teacher preparation programs were not individualized enough to support the needs of the types of students they desired to teach upon graduation. In addition to this, many of the participants expressed frustration that they could not use the general education requirement time to select courses to take that would enhance their effectiveness in the classroom environments they

planned to enter. Having access to more tailored coursework would allow pre-service educators to think critically about their trajectory post-graduation and determine what courses would be most beneficial to their future work. This flexible class time could also be an opportunity to have pre-service educators spend more time in classrooms. Many of the participants expressed wishing that there was time for a full year, or at least more than one semester, in the classroom to get a more accurate understanding of a school year.

Butchart and Rolleri (2004) reported that in the early period of public education in the United States, Black women teachers were sent to teach poor Black students because they could "go where white ladies cannot" (p. 161). This notion absolved white women teachers of responsibility for any non-white students they encountered and heaped all responsibility for educating Black students onto Black women. While no one would make such an argument today, the spirit of this message lives on in the *one size fits all* approaches some teacher preparation programs take in preparing pre-service educators to teach students. It is critical for teacher preparation programs not to assume that Black women educators, or any pre-service educator, know and understand how to support Black students in their classrooms. Research shows that teachers of color are uniquely positioned to effect institutional change within their places of work; however, research also shows how important it is for teachers of color to have ongoing training to support this effort and ensure that they are not unintentionally perpetuating dominant culture as their white colleagues can (Easton-Brook, 2014; Gomez et al., 2008; Klopfenstein, 2005; Pham, 2008; Villegas & Davis, 2008). It is equally imperative for teacher preparation programs to prepare all of their pre-service educators to interrogate their own prejudices, mitigate them, and assume the responsibility to meet the educational needs of any student they encounter, addressing their other needs as necessary to do so.

Within the K-12 education system, the student population is becoming increasingly diverse, but the teacher preparation programs are geared toward white pre-service teachers and homogenous groups of students (Howard & Milner, 2014; Pham, 2018). Across the data, participants communicated that much of the preparation that they received in their teacher preparation programs was not applicable to the populations of students that they currently teach. Three of the participants in this study attended a PWI (JMU and Bridgewater College), three attended Minority Serving Institutions (ODU and VCU), and one attended an HBCU (VSU). However, a majority of the participants in this study teach in predominantly Black school communities. The majority of the participants also teach in lower-socioeconomic areas where the school systems have Title 1 designations. There are not enough teacher preparation programs in Virginia to provide the kind of training that would meet the needs of every specific school community. However, there are pedagogy and practices that can support the development of Black and brown students and lay the foundations necessary for learning.

These Black women educators found that the types of students they were most prepared to teach in their programs were not the actual student populations they intended to teach. They overwhelmingly articulated they would have benefited from coursework that considered different approaches to pedagogy and practice that had Black and brown students in mind. The one participant who attended an HBCU communicated that she did not learn to teach or engage Black students but instead was offered a more generic approach to concepts like classroom management, student behavior, and pedagogy that did not take culture or community into consideration. Teacher preparation programs at HBCUs have historically equipped Black educators to teach Black students. Therefore, the perspective of this participant that her institution taught more generic approaches to teaching, signals a subtle shift in the mission of the

program. Teacher preparation programs do not have to reinvent the wheel, or find the one approach that will work for each community. Rather, this is an opportunity to consider the scholarship of Gloria Ladson-Billings, and others, that is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP).

In many ways, the student-first approaches the participants described mimic the work of CRP because they acknowledge the real-life matters that impact student learning and use those real-life connections to empower and equip students to inspire, and create, change. From affirmation mirrors to visiting students at home with their families for a meal, the participants shared that establishing these cultural connections with their students and their families laid the groundwork for student learning and success. Without intentionally training white and non-Black pre-service educators to support students in the same ways, the phenomenon of *work beyond the work*, which is rooted in historical portrayals and expectations of Black women and their labor, perpetuates.

Work Beyond the Work

While engaging in conversations with the Black women educators, it was clear that the *work beyond the work* is not addressed in the teacher preparation experience. None of the participants articulated ever learning about or discussing within their programs the additional responsibilities and expectations that would be placed on them throughout their teacher preparation experiences, or afterwards, in their schools of choice. As "the only" within many of their teacher preparation programs, participants often served as informal leaders in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion; responsibilities their white peers were not given. In describing the one course she took focused on diverse student populations, one participant expressed several frustrations: that her program did not offer more coursework discussing the unique needs of different school communities, that her white classmates were seemingly completely ignorant to

inequities in education, and that she, as the only Black student in her class, often found her classmates seeking easily-obtainable information from her instead of pursuing it on their own.

Participants reported that they most often experienced *work beyond the work* in their professional communities upon graduation from their teacher preparation programs. In talking with them, sometimes I wondered if the women realized how much responsibility for their students and larger school communities they had assumed. The expectation that Black women educators perform roles and responsibilities outside of their job descriptions, imposed upon them by colleagues and supervisors and often disguised as affirmations of Black expertise, is rooted in white supremacy and designed to seem like normal, inevitable, roles for Black women educators in school systems (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1993). The unacknowledged, and undervalued, work that Black women educators do makes the work less sustainable as it is unfairly distributed.

This *work beyond the work* is not often acknowledged or considered a value-add to school communities, but rather an expectation that is rooted in the stereotypical portrayals and roles of Black women. Research suggests that this extra responsibility is one that Black educators are not prepared for in their teacher preparation programs and, understandably, this makes the field of education less sustainable for Black teachers than it is for their white peers who are not expected to carry this extra responsibility (Kohli, 2009, 2012). In order to lighten the burden of additional responsibilities for Black women educators, white educators, specifically white women educators, need to assume more of those responsibilities.

One of the ways that this can happen is by allowing white women educators opportunities to be agents of change by engaging what it is that they need through professional development. Professional development, like any other form of learning, is not a one size fits all approach;

rather, it allows educators to be honest about their learning opportunities, or gaps, and to pursue knowledge that serves their students best. Providing professional development opportunities also allows for Black women educators to be co-learners with their peers rather than their educators. Having voice and choice within professional development also allows Black women educators opportunities to take what they need when it comes to their learning and growth edges.

Recommendations

Engaging Black Women's Culture

One of the key themes in the findings was the importance of community to the participants, and the lack of community within their teacher preparation programs that led to them experiencing feelings of isolation and disconnectedness. The findings also suggested that the experience of being "the only," which participants reported experiencing during their teacher preparation programs, carried over into the school environments where the participants would go to work upon program completion. This finding seems to correlate with Black women educators making up only a small percentage of the public-school teaching population, of which white women made up 83 percent in 2016 (US Department of Education, 2016). However, research suggests that the culture, and community, of Black women is an essential piece of meaning making and can contribute to feelings of connectedness within their communities (Collins, 1986). Research also suggests that culture for Black women is socially and collectively constructed and develops within social institutions where Black women exist, like school settings (Collins, 1986; Guy; Sheftall, 1993).

Without access to many Black pre-service educators in their teacher preparation programs, making community with peers in classes proves challenging for Black women educators. This was made clear in the findings as many of the Black women participants

described having to work hard to prove their academic abilities to their peers before even collaborating with them in the classroom, let alone developing personal relationships with them. It is critical for teacher preparation program leaders to consider pathways to creating community for the Black pre-service teachers in their programs, especially if such opportunities are not readily available within the School of Education. One participant discussed how she currently serves as an informal mentor for pre-service teachers, particularly Black women, that are doing observations, internships, and student-teaching at her current school. She shared that she chooses to use her time in that way to ensure that those Black women feel seen and valued within the school community. This participant also said that because she is an experienced educator who has proven herself in the community, she can help the pre-service educators by bringing them into the community she is building at her school.

There is an opportunity within teacher preparation programs to develop opportunities for Black women pre-service educators to make connections with other Black women educators. If a program lacks Black women pre-service students, or Black faculty and staff, creating a program that allows for Black students, alumni, and local Black women educators to engage one another will help mitigate feelings of being “the only" in predominantly white institutions or programs. Baylor (2015) describes a mentoring opportunity rooted in the spirit of *Sankofa*, meaning giving Black women educators an opportunity to reach back and use the wisdom of Black women educators in the past to build for the future. In essence, a leadership model that kept Black women educators in relationship with one another could help sustain Black women educators in the field.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Research suggests that teachers of color are more likely to empower students of color to be engaged in their learning and have higher expectations for the success of their students (Gasman, et al., 2017).

> Because racially representative teachers are important to the academic and emotional well-being of youth of color, teacher education programs and schools must not only acknowledge and appreciate the wealth of their experiences but must also support their development to navigate the racial climate of schools and successfully teach in diverse classrooms. (Kohli, 2012, p. 194)

Black women educators have historically been aware of the unique educational and developmental needs of their Black students because they often shared cultural backgrounds with those students (Clayton & Peters, 2019; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2013). Black women educators have always leveraged their cultural knowledge in order to meet the specific needs of their Black students. This practice of utilizing cultural knowledge in service of teaching makes up what we have come to know as Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy was developed out of Black educators having a keen understanding of their Black students and the communities from which they come. Building resiliency was at the core of this academic teaching and pedagogy (Walker, 2019).

The study participants overwhelmingly discussed taking student-first approaches to pedagogy that they did not learn in their teacher preparation programs, but instead developed using their lived experiences, intuition, and practices based on their observations of student needs. Because the majority of the national public school teaching population does not share cultural practices with the majority of the public-school student population it serves, it is

paramount that teachers are trained to meet the needs of the students with whom they do not share cultural similarities. Whether pre-service educators plan to teach in Black and brown communities or not, it is crucial to add courses to teacher preparation programs that require pre-service educators to dive deeply into the historical experiences of non-white communities within the context of the United States in order to better position pre-service teachers to be culturally responsive educators who will share the responsibility of supporting diverse student needs. Understanding the history of education from multiple perspectives can serve to help pre-service educators think critically about their classroom practices and the communities they will serve.

Research suggests that every institution, including educational institutions, has its own sociopolitical context, as do the individuals that make up those institutions (Watson, 2017; Royal & Gibson, 2017). How teachers teach is determined by their ideologies, so it is critical for teacher preparation program faculty to understand that teaching is not a neutral profession (Watson, 2017). All of the experiences, traditions, and beliefs held by individuals impact how they engage both the curriculum and their students. Educators must "understand that the complex and fluid construct of culture plays a significant role in school learning" (Morrison et al., 2008, p. 234).

Royal and Gibson (2017) suggest that CRP, and specifically its focus on cultural competence and sociopolitical awareness, is needed now more than ever. According to Ladson-Billings (1992, 1995), CRP requires that: a) students must experience academic success, b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the social order. Ladson-Billings (1995) expresses the significance of a core tenet of CRP, critical consciousness, as an important practice for students that not only allows them the ability to critique cultural norms

and values, but that also challenges them to seek out more than individual achievement and success.

While research points to the impacts of CRP on Black students and other students of color within the K-12 context, it is worthwhile to consider what CRP might contribute to the success of students in teacher preparation programs. Not only could a culturally relevant pedagogy impact the lived experiences of Black women educators in their teacher preparation programs for the better, but it could also train them, and other educators in the program, for the experiences they will have, and the community they will foster, in their future classrooms and schools. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy has the potential to lighten the burden on Black women educators that is the *work beyond the work* in educational settings by equipping more pre-service educators with the tools to support marginalized students.

Black educators are often positioned as experts within their educational settings to create more equitable experiences for students even if they are not properly trained to do so (Farinde et al., 2015; Gasman et al., 2017; Kohli, 2009; Ladson-Billings; Pham, 2018). The historical expectation of Black women educators was to "go where white ladies cannot" and, as Ladson-Billings (1998) suggests, to propel students academically and culturally, while also giving them tools to challenge social inequity. Currently, development of culturally relevant pedagogy is an expectation placed primarily, if not completely, on Black women educators. Equipping all pre-service educators with tools to develop culturally relevant pedagogy for their students and communities would ease that burden on Black women educators. Only two participants in this study expressed having a class, or two, that was specifically geared towards supporting the needs of their marginalized students; while other participants referenced having limited coursework

dedicated to the concept within other courses, most participants reported feeling underprepared for the work required of them in their current school settings.

Many of the participants discussed how useful their first two years of school could have been to learning more about the communities they hoped to serve, and having an opportunity to pick courses that would support their transition to the classroom. Because of this desire, it is also important to think about how Critical Professional Development could benefit both teacher preparation programs and schools.

Critical Professional Development

The Black feminist perspective implores us to consider the connections between oppressive systems rather than focusing on one oppressive element at the expense of others (Collins, 1986). It reminds us that our identities, such as race, class, and gender, do not exist in a hierarchy; instead; they intersect to create unique perspectives and experiences, especially for Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). Because of the inability of the dominant culture to understand the intersecting nature of oppression, Black women have historically experienced erasure. The erasure of the Black woman experience has an impact on the educational experience for students and education professionals and illustrates the importance of examining how the historical portrayals of Black women influence the present-day *work beyond the work* in educational settings. While Black women are no longer limited to "mammy" or "domestic" work, there is still an unsaid expectation that Black women will "still do a remarkable share of the emotional nurturing and cleaning up after other people, often for lower pay" (Collins, 2000, p. 45). This understanding of Black women, rooted in white supremacy, is designed to make the *work beyond the work* seem like a normal, inevitable role of Black women educators in schools.

In order to combat this erasure, it is critical that the teacher preparation programs examine their curricula to ensure that students do not complete their teacher preparation programs without taking courses that engage the intersection of race, class, and gender and their impacts on the experiences of students and educators. For students pursuing advanced degrees in education in order to serve in leadership capacities, programs should offer curricula that examines the intersection of leadership and equity as it pertains to creating a culture and community for everyone to be their best selves. This understanding of culture and community should be a requirement for all pre-service educators, both at the micro-level of curriculum and the macro-level of teacher certification. Kohli et al. (2015) suggests that Critical Professional Development (CPD) opportunities frame teachers as experts on their individual needs and areas of growth. CPD assumes that educators are politically conscious and committed to supporting the transformation of society. The practice of CPD offers teachers agency in their growth and development as educators (Kohli, Picower, Martinez, & Ortiz, 2015). Teachers that are indeed interested in social justice are in need of problem-posing, social-justice-oriented professional development.

Throughout the interviews, the participants expressed a desire to have more time in the classroom prior to being responsible on their own to teach students. During their reflections on their college experiences, the participants reported wanting more time to either take classes geared towards the students they hoped to teach or to have more actual classroom time to gain hands-on experience. In addition to this, one participant shared the desire to have more responsibilities during the student-teaching process, in order to develop the skill of community engagement. One participant shared that student teachers do not get the full experience of

engaging parents and learning the "little things" that make up the day-to-day experience of leading the classroom.

One participant shared how, for her, professional development was just a means to an end; she went because she had to, but considered her professional development experience as a "one size fits all approach" that did not meet her specific needs as an educator. Other participants reported that their most successful professional development opportunities were the ones that they chose for themselves based on their own needs. CPD positions the educator as an expert on their needs.

Listen to Pre-Service Black Women Educators

"*The history of white women who are unable to hear Black women's words, or to maintain dialogue with us, is long and discouraging"* – (Lorde, 1984, p. 66*).*

Self-defining for Black women has been an intentional way for them to resist domination (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1993). Collins (2000) describes four stereotypical roles into which Black women have been subjugated: mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas. Teacher preparation programs have an opportunity to listen to Black women share what it is that they need to be recruited and retained within K-12 education instead of perpetuating this subjugation. Black Women Standpoint suggests that Black women are uniquely positioned within their settings to observe and understand their communities better than those of the dominant culture (Collins, 1986; Guy-Sheftall, 1993). Black women are best positioned as the authorities on their own lived experiences in K-12 education systems and within the teacher preparation process. During the data collection, it became clear to me that the participants had a wealth of knowledge and critical feedback to share, both about their teacher preparation experiences and about their current classroom experiences. Each of them had ideas and suggestions for program improvements; from curriculum and pedagogy to class culture and

professor support, they were clear in their observations about what more could be done in their teacher preparation programs to support them personally and professionally. Amplifying the voices of Black women educators and consistently offering opportunities for Black women pre-service educators to give constructive feedback to program leaders are simple steps teacher preparation programs can take to ensure that they respond to the needs of Black women pre-service educators in their programs. These needs will change over years and generations of educators, which is why constant feedback opportunities are also a pathway to giving Black women pre-service educators what they need to feel supported, instead of what the program assumes they need.

Limitations

This study is not without limitations. One limitation to this study is the COVID-19 pandemic and its lasting impact on the Black women participants and their work as classroom teachers. During this study, I was not able to interview or connect with participants in person; instead, I relied on virtual meeting spaces to interview participants. By not engaging the participants in person, it was much harder to gauge nonverbal communications and make in-person observations that in-person interviews might have afforded. Additionally, it is unclear how much of the *work beyond the work* the participants reported was specific to the unique pandemic context in which they were interviewed. Although there are limitations, the findings of this study can help to shape discussion regarding how to create a more equitable experience for Black women educators in their teacher preparation programs and in their educational environments. Making adjustments in the overall structure of the teacher preparation experience can contribute to sustaining Black women educators in the field.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this research point to just how much more there is to explore and discover about the efficacy of teacher preparation programs and the experiences of Black women educators. For example, this study could be replicated in other states with their own histories and stories connected to desegregation. Another possible area for future research could include examining the experiences of Black women educators who serve in independent schools. This research lays a foundation for further exploration of why, and how, Black women teach. In addition to the why and how of Black women educators, there is much more opportunity to learn more about the ways that Black women are already engaging their classrooms and school communities. While culturally relevant pedagogy is becoming more widely known in the last few years, this approach is not new to Black educators, so having Black educators share their approaches to pedagogy and their experiences in the classroom might lead to the development of curriculum better suited for the changing demographics in public-school student populations.

Conclusion

Black women educators have been "hidden actors" for generations, advocating at the local and national level for equitable education access for Black students. Black women educators have been hidden actors while simultaneously educating Black students, preparing them academically and socio-politically for the world they would live in (Rolleri, 2004; Fultz, 1995; Walker, 2013). When I began this research study, I knew that it was important for me to amplify the voices of Black women educators. My position as a Black woman educator, who learned so much about myself and the world around me through my K-12 experience, is one that I carry with me throughout my personal and professional journey. As I consider the roles of my mother and grandmother as educators, and the work that they did to ensure the success and uplifting of Black students in their urban and rural settings, I realize that the history of Black

women educators is one that directly impacts me and the experiences of the women I come from.

As educational institutions grapple with growing societal change, and the demands placed upon them as places that serve students, it is important to amplify the experiences of Black women who have been doing "the work" to teach, and perhaps more importantly uplift, Black and brown students. More intentionally, it is vital to the recruitment and retention of Black women educators to continue exploring what teacher preparation experiences are like for Black educators, as teacher preparation programs are the primary pathway into American classrooms.

In this case study, participants shared their experiences of their teacher preparation programs and how their programs influenced their approaches to pedagogy and practice. While I anticipated hearing stories of Black women educators and the *work beyond the work* phenomenon, what surprised me most was the loneliness the participants experienced throughout their teacher preparation processes and their perceived lack of preparedness to teach students from diverse backgrounds. These findings highlight how much work there is to do to ensure that Black women educators, or any educators invested in the success of disadvantaged students, are not only recruited, but retained and sustained. I also realized throughout this dissertation process how essential community is for me as a Black woman educator. My journey to the classroom and school administration has not been traditional. I, too, have felt lonely and disconnected from Black woman educator community during my decade in the field. Interviewing the participants for this study allowed me the rare opportunity of connecting with other Black women in the field while shedding light on a loneliness I never fully realized. During the interviews, I quickly found community with the Black women that I talked with; we shared full-body laughs, deep sighs, and real-life connections that reminded me that I, too, need community to be sustained in the field.

Black women educators have historically been, and continue to be, activists in the classroom working to advocate for the educational, social, and societal needs of their students, without meaningful training or support from their teacher preparation programs or their eventual employers. For decades, they have assumed this *work beyond the work* in part because their white peers could not, or would not, do so for marginalized students. With the very foundation of education not taking into account the needs or experiences of Black, and other non-white folks, it is incredibly important that teacher education programs commit to a reevaluation and reexamination of their curricula and cultures. In doing so, they can produce teachers better equipped to meet the varied needs of the modern student population and ease the additional burden on Black women educators to meet needs neglected by the rest of the education system.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. What four-year higher education institution did you attend in Virginia and when did you attend?
2. What was your experience like with professors?
3. What was your experience like with classmates?
4. What was your experience like with the curriculum?
5. Describe your professional support in your teacher preparation program.
6. Describe your emotional support in your teacher preparation program.
7. Do you believe that your teacher preparation program adequately prepared you for your role as a teacher? If so, how? If not, how so?
8. How long have you been a classroom teacher including this year?
9. How long have you been a classroom teacher at your current school?
10. Describe your experience in the classroom.
11. Describe your experience at work outside of the classroom (i.e., general school environment, administration, extracurriculars, etc.)
12. Describe your professional and/or emotional support at your school.
13. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experiences as a Black woman in education?

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SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Commodore, F., Lockett, A., Johnson, A., Googe, C., & Covington, M. (2020). Controlling images, comments, and online communities: A critical discourse analysis of conversations about Black Women HBCU presidents. *Women's Studies International Forum, 78*, 102330.

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SELECTED PRESENTATIONS & WORKSHOPS

- **National Association of Episcopal Schools Biennial Conference – November 2022: "**Developing & Enhancing Curriculum on Gender, Race, and Equity"
- **MAESA Early Childhood Conference – November 2022: "**Curating a Culturally Relevant Curriculum for Early Childhood"
- **Carney Sandoe Diversity Forum – January 2021:** "Antiracism as a Professional Practice"
- **NAIS People of Color Conference – December 2019:** "Redefining Time in Traditionally White Independent Schools: Debunking the Excuse that Change Must be Slow"
- **Association for the Study of Higher Education – November 2017:** "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Conversations about Black Women HBCU Presidents" w/ Dr. Felecia Commodore, Amanda Washington, A.C. Johnson, and Megan Covington
- **Association for the Study of Higher Education – November 2017:** "The Crafting of Black Women HBCU Presidential Narratives in the Media" w/ Dr. Felecia Commodore, Amanda Washington, A.C. Johnson, and Megan Covington