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## Male Teachers' Exit Decisions: A Qualitative Interview Study Examining the Experiences of Male Teachers Who Left Miami- Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS)

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

TEACHERS' EXIT DECISIONS:  
A QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW STUDY EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCES OF  
MEN WHO LEFT MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
(M-DCPS)

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION  
in  
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

by  
Tierney E. Hunter

2022

To: Dean Michael Heithaus  
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This dissertation, written by Tierney E. Hunter, and entitled Teachers' Exit Decisions: A Qualitative Interview Study Examining the Experiences of Men Who Left Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

Ethan Kolek  
Member

James Burns  
Member

Benjamin Baez  
Member

Kristen Wilcox  
Major Professor

Date of Defense: April 1, 2022

The dissertation of Tierney E. Hunter is approved.

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Dean Michael Heithaus  
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

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Andrés G. Gil  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

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## DEDICATION

I give all honor and glory to the “Most High” for my life, health, and strength. It was Your Grace and Mercy that kept me during the times when I thought I would not make it on my own. You provided the strength and will for me to carry on through some of my darkest days. You opened doors and put people in place to assist, guide and encourage me to begin this journey, for a second time, and have the “stick-to-it-tiveness” to complete the process. Everything I am – everything I have is because of Your omnipotent Favor over my life. I ask that you continue to hold my hand, walk with me, cover and protect me during the next chapters of my life.

I humbly dedicate this body of work to my village. I thank you for your unconditional love and support, and for the immeasurable sacrifices made so that I may achieve this life-long quest. I could not have done this without you. Since my mother’s health began declining, leading up to her passing, it became painfully clear to me that family is everything... and without it, I’m lost. To Alonzo and Kayden, everything I do is for you. Kayden, remember this always... you can be anything you want to be, do anything you want to do in this world... see it, believe it, and achieve it. Finally, Pop can go outside and play with you. To Latrina and Itallia, it’s always been us, the “Three Musketeers;” I’m sorry it took momma’s death for me to remember that.

If my mother, Gracie Mae Hunter, were alive today, I would have to order an extra diploma – one for myself, and the other for her. For a single mother who struggled to put food on the table, struggled to keep a roof over our heads and who kept me out of the streets– this is as much her accomplishment as it is mine. I will love you for a thousand eternities!

I extend a very special thanks to my heavenly grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. James Spencer Hunter, Sr. The love they showered upon me was unconditional, organic and timeless. There was nothing that I wanted to do more than please them. So much of who I am today is because of them. I hope they are smiling down, proudly on their “Shorty’s” latest achievement. To my Aunt Ernestine and Uncle Larry, you taught me the meaning of working hard for the things you want; I am who I am because of what you poured into my life as a child. Yolanda and Dylan... “Ain’t no mountain high enough, no river wide enough...”

I started this journey with 10 other professionals who are all at the top of their game. We have gone through the fire several times and we are still standing. The support we have provided each other is unforgettable... thank you for being the strength when we individually needed to be picked up... thank you for providing the laughter when we secretly wanted to cry.

In conclusion, I must extend my heartfelt appreciation to the three gentlemen who graciously and generously participated in this study. For men, it is not easy to talk about our experiences and feelings, and these men allowed themselves to recall moments that, at times, made them uncomfortable in the company of a stranger. I am honored and grateful that you participated in this research. I am certain your contributions to this study will impact how administrators and district personnel view how men experience teaching. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION  
TEACHERS' EXIT DECISIONS: A QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW STUDY  
EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCES OF MEN WHO LEFT MIAMI-DADE  
COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (M-DCPS)

by

Tierney E. Hunter

Florida International University, 2022

Miami, Florida

Professor Kristen Wilcox, Major Professor

This qualitative interview study investigates the experiences of three men who exited Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS). The goal was to identify their rationales for resigning from M-DCPS. The participants were chosen from M-DCPS because it is the fourth largest school district in the country, and it is grappling with teacher attrition just as many other large, diverse, urban districts in the nation. Three participants who shared the characteristics of self-identifying as men and who had left M-DCPS were included in the study.

This study relied on the participants' recollection of their experiences, taking into account their perceptions of particular experiences in their teaching careers and how they made sense of those experiences. This study examined two sources of data: (a) questionnaires which provided information on participant demographics, educational backgrounds, teaching certifications, years of teaching experience, and employment histories; and (b) two in-depth interviews per participant.



This study sought to address the call for more men to teach in school districts across the United States. Through rich storytelling, the findings provide insight into three men's experiences. While not generalizable, the findings from these participants, in this study, in a large diverse urban district, hold implications for school districts' policies and practices with regard to retaining men in teaching.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
AP	Advance Placement
APC	Assistant Principal of Curriculum
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
ECT	Early Childhood Teacher
ECTs	Early Career Teachers
EOCs	End-of-Course Examinations
IRB	Institutional Review Board
M-DCPS	Miami-Dade County Public Schools
NPM	New Public Management
PIF	Personal Interpretive Framework
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

“Teachers matter” (Scheopner, 2009, p. 261). The role of the teacher significantly impacts student achievement and the quality of the school (Scheopener, 2009). Yet, school districts in countries around the world are sounding the alarm – recruiting and retaining highly effective teachers has become a top priority in the education of children. If the teacher retention problem is not addressed, major implications for the quality of children’s education will ensue.

One European study, commissioned by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), highlighted a concern raised by the International Labour Office of Liverpool. It warned that “Relentless population growth and declining working conditions are creating severe shortages of teachers in the world’s classrooms that may lead to a slide in educational standards” (Smithers & Robinson, 2003, p. 1). This concern was directed at developing nations whose rapid population growth cannot keep up with educational demands. This is not only a problem in developing nations, but in countries tackling increasing diversity and equity issues like the U.S. as well.

### **Teacher Preparation and Recruitment**

Like other countries, the United States is also sounding the alarm about teacher recruitment on the supply side of the equation. Filling teacher vacancies is becoming more difficult as the top teacher-producing states in the United States: California, New York, Texas, and North Carolina are reporting declines in enrollment in teacher preparation programs (Carter & Keiler, 2009; Okezie, 2018; Wronowski, 2018). Many colleges and universities are finding creative means of generating interest in the teaching

profession by recruiting undergraduates into their home-grown teacher preparation programs which collaborate with neighboring school districts with offers of discounted tuition, scholarships, or tuition reimbursement. Meanwhile, some school districts rely on offering monetary incentives to entice new applicants in the way of signing bonuses, student loan forgiveness, and housing assistance as a means of attracting applicants (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

### **Teacher Attrition**

As colleges, universities, and school districts continue their efforts to recruit highly qualified teachers into the profession, the rate of attrition for new teachers is staggering. In the United States, 50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years (Curtis, 2012; Ingersoll, 2003; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). It is important to note that attrition rates for young and new teachers are higher than those of older, more experienced teachers (Curtis, 2012). Further, attrition rates for teachers at high poverty schools are twice that of lower poverty schools (Curtis, 2012; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Wronowski (2018) reported on a study conducted by The Urban Teacher Collaborative which surveyed 40 urban school districts serving 6.5 million students in the year 2000 – reporting that nearly 100% of the districts reported an immediate need to fill teaching positions.

Researchers have provided a wealth of studies on the topic of teacher attrition, all reporting common themes and describing contributing factors for teachers' decisions to leave the teaching profession. Early career attrition teachers cite low salary, lack of administrative support, and lack of student motivation for reasons (Curtis, 2012). Other



studies took a different stance citing subject matter knowledge (knowing what to teach) and teachers' pedagogical skills (knowing how teach) – all stemming from the amount and quality of preparation that a new teacher has received as motivations for new teachers to leave the profession (Ingersoll et al., 2012).

While teacher preparation and recruitment and attrition studies have provided insights into some of the reasons teachers at different stages of their careers and in different school contexts leave the profession, little is known about how men and women experience being a teacher differently.

### **Statement of the Problem**

“The teaching pool keeps losing water because no one is paying attention to the leak” (Buchanan, 2010, p. 200). Researchers and policy-makers posit there is a dramatic increase in the demand for teachers and that these shortages confronting schools are a result of a substantial increase in student enrollment and in contrast, the number of teachers reaching retirement age (Ingersoll and Smith, 2003).

Compounding this issue even further, are the reverberating calls for more men in the teaching workforce across our nation's educational systems and in other countries (Mills, Marino, and Lingard, 2004). Many scholars agree that stakeholders generally see men as desirable both in the classroom and in the wider school environment (Cushman, 2008).

Since the teaching profession is and has been under-resourced, and the trends are particularly bleak for the hiring and retention of men as classroom teachers (Rice & Goessling, 2005), this current study responds to the calls for additional research; such

calls can be found in policy documents (Teacher Training Agency, 1999; Canadian Teachers Federation, 2002); in government reports (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002); in popular texts on boys (Biddulph, 1997; Gurian, 1999; Kindler, 1999). This investigation into the experiences of men with regard to their teaching careers in M-DCPS and their decisions to leave shines light on an important subset of teachers often overlooked in the research literature.

While research on the experiences of men in their teaching careers is extremely limited in the United States, I rely on research from scholars in other countries as well. For instance, a team of Australian researchers conducted a study of the trajectory of teacher representation by gender utilizing 50 years of annual workplace data. They observed a negative linear trend of the representation of men teaching in primary schools over time with the prediction that following this trend may result in no men working in the primary school teaching workforce by the year 2067. In Government primary schools, where this decline is sharpest, this extinction point comes much sooner; the year 2054 (McGrath & Bergen, 2017).

Since there is limited research on the contributing factors for men leaving the teacher workforce, a need exists to know more about this particular subset of teachers' experiences. To this end, this study explores the experiences of three men and their rationales for resigning from M-DCPS and teaching – a workforce where men are severely underrepresented.

## **Purpose of the Study and Statement on Positionality**

In this qualitative interview study, I sought to illuminate the experiences of three men, once employed by M-DCPS, to discover their reasons and rationales for leaving the district, and to characterize their experiences in rich detail.

I embarked upon this study, as a former teacher, now administrator, recognizing that my own background will shape my interpretation and acknowledge how my interpretations flow from my own personal, cultural, and historical experiences.

My intent, in addition to filling a gap in the research literature, is to provide practical implications for school districts to alter policies and practices when it comes to retaining men as classroom teachers. In addition, policymakers have often responded to the problem by trying to increase the supply of teachers. However, data on new teacher attrition suggests that efforts to recruit more teachers will not, by themselves, solve the staffing problems plaguing schools (Ingersoll, 2003). The solution must also include using approaches to retain teachers considering their own unique and individual needs and this includes men.

## **Significance of the Research**

The percentage of men in public school teaching positions has been diminishing steadily since 1971 (National Education Association, 2003; as cited by McCall, 2017). In fact, Stinebrickner (2002) categorized the underrepresentation of men in the teaching workforce throughout the United States as an epidemic. There are five factors that researchers have identified that may individually or collectively influence men's decisions to not enter the educational arena: a) low salary – other professions may be

more lucrative; b) low social status – teaching is regarded as less prestigious; c) “woman’s work” – the perception is that teaching is for women; d) false accusations – this relates to the potential of men being unfairly scrutinized for wanting to work with children (Cushman, 2007; McCall, 2017; Mills et. al, 2004; Rice & Goessling, 2005).

### **Delimitations**

Creswell (2012) defines delimitations as choices made by the researcher to specify the boundaries that the researcher establishes for the study. In this regard, this study is delimited to participants who were not terminated from M-DCPS, rather, they resigned of their own free will (Krathwohl, 2009). In addition, the following delimitations were established for this study:

- a) Must be a self-identified man.
- b) Must hold a State of Florida Department of Education Teaching Certificate.

### **Assumptions**

Creswell (2012) defined assumptions as factors that potentially influence the researcher’s study that the investigator is not aware of therefore having no intent control.

As the researcher, I considered the following assumptions:

- a) The participants were honest in their responses and trusting of the process to be transparent and forthcoming.
- b) The participants felt that there was an explainable and worthy reason why they made the decision to leave M-DCPS.
- c) The participants were from all walks of life, but they chose to teach at the K-12 education level at M-DCPS.

d). The research questions were appropriately worded and phrased to encourage detailed responses to adequately capture the experiences of the participants.

### **Research Questions**

I investigated the following overarching research question:

What are the reasons men decide to leave their teaching positions in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS)?

This question is accompanied by the following sub questions:

1. What organizational characteristics contributed to these men's decision to leave M-DCPS?
2. What individual circumstances contributed to these men's decision to leave M-DCPS?
3. What social & cultural factors contributed to these men's decision to leave M-DCPS?

### **Summary and Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 introduced the study. A detailed literature review is provided in Chapter 2, which is divided into several lines of inquiry, i.e., status of the teacher workforce, teacher attrition for men, and teacher recruitment for men. Chapter 3 explains the methodology used through this qualitative interview study. Chapter 4 includes 2 parts: Part 1 titled "Their Experiences as Teachers", and Part 2 titled "Findings". Chapter 5 provides Limitations, Implications of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Much has been written concerning the problems of preparation, recruitment, and attrition of highly qualified teachers. The topic of teacher attrition has become of global concern. This review of the literature begins with an overview of the major findings regarding teacher attrition in the U.S. and in other countries. I then focus on research highlighting men in the teaching workforce and their reasons for leaving the profession in alignment with my specific area of inquiry.

The reviewed literature was collected via electronic search of Florida International University Libraries utilizing databases: ERIC (EBSCOhost), ERIC (ProQuest), Education Database; Education Source, and JSTOR. I used various subject terms and descriptors including: *men teachers, lack of men teachers; male teacher attrition, men who left the teaching profession, men's exit decisions, teacher education, men in teaching, teacher retention; beginning teachers' concerns, early childhood male teachers, primary male teachers, masculinity, feminization; boys' education, and male role models in education.*

This search produced over 100 peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, and articles synthesizing literature, all applicable to categorical themes that I created: the recruitment of teachers, teacher attrition, and teacher retention. Within those categorical themes, subthemes began to emerge. For example, the recruitment of teachers generated studies concerning teacher preparation programs and quality/caliber of teachers entering the teaching profession. The theme of teacher attrition generated studies on the contributing factors that men and women teachers leave schools, school districts, and ultimately the

teaching profession. The theme of early childhood and primary teachers produced a heavy concentration of articles and studies on elementary teacher attrition among men.

It is important to note that inquiries on teacher attrition for men in the United States produced an extremely limited amount of research. Further, within this shallow pool of research on men in the teaching profession, I discovered a niche of journals and dissertations focusing on the plight of African American men teaching at early childhood and primary levels. Although accessible, they were not very useful as the scope of this study did not focus on race or the intersection of race and gender in relation to teacher attrition.

### **Status of the Teacher Workforce**

As stated earlier, “the teaching pool keeps losing water because no one is paying attention to the leak. That is, we are misdiagnosing the problem as ‘recruitment’ [when ‘retention’ should be our focus]” John Merrow (1999) as cited by Denton (2009). According to Denton (2009), who addressed the challenges principals face in retaining highly qualified and effective teachers, explained that many people enter the teaching profession for idealistic reasons like making the world a better place and providing children with opportunities to be productive citizens. This idealistic teacher loves children and loves learning themselves. Struyven and Vanthounout (2014) explored the primary motivational factors that influenced student teachers’ decision to become a teacher: (a) intrinsic value, (b) being able to work with children and adolescents, (c) perceived teaching ability, (d) the possibility of making social contributions, and (e) to shape the future of children or adolescents.

Tomisk (2016) conducted a study on the motives, interests, and competences which lead participants to choose teaching as a profession: (a) students already had some pedagogical experience and planned to pursue teaching as a career, (b) many students had already worked with children in some capacity, (c) students chose the teaching profession under the pressure of other persons, and (d) parents whose scope of work is in education heavily influenced some participants' decision to become a teacher.

According to Denton (2009), these reasons, attitudes and motivations have not proven to be enough to sustain teachers in the teaching profession,

To stay in teaching, today's – and tomorrow's – teachers need school conditions where they are successful and supported, opportunities to work with other educators in professional learning communities rather than in isolation, differentiated leadership and advancement prospects during the course of the career, and good pay for what they do. (p. 17)

These findings are not unique to the U.S. context. As explained above, from a global perspective, relentless population growth in developing nations and declining working conditions in industrialized nations are creating severe shortages of teachers in the world's classrooms that may lead to a slide in educational standards (Smithers & Robinson, 2003). In one study, 31 countries provided their status on their current state of teacher recruitment and retention; 21 countries reported teacher shortages, all referencing the poor competitive position of teaching with respect to other occupations to which those with the necessary abilities might aspire (Smithers & Robinson, 2003).



## **Teacher Attrition for Men**

Previous research suggested that 20%-40% of teachers leave teaching in their first five years (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). A stable finding among studies on teacher retention is that attrition is high for young and newly qualified teachers and lower for older, more experienced teachers until they reach ages at which retirement is feasible (Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). While the gap between teacher supply and demand continues to widen, the shortage of men in the teaching pool is even more shallow than women, raising international concern and generating research interest in numerous countries: Germany, England, New Zealand, Ireland, the Netherlands, Finland, Canada, South Africa, Cyprus, Scotland, Australia, Malaysia, Turkey, and the United States (McGrath & Bergen, 2017).

In the United States, exploration into teacher attrition among men is heavily concentrated on the plight of men who are Early Childhood Teachers (ECT) as society continues to construct what is appropriate and normal career choices for men. A considerable amount of research concerning teacher attrition among men focuses on preservice teachers in teacher preparation programs with the focus of recruiting more men into their programs to address the concern for decreasing numbers in classrooms.

Meanwhile, Australian researchers have generated a substantial amount of research on teacher attrition among men. In one study, Gallant and Riley (2017) found that Australia does not maintain accurate records of teacher attrition. This makes it very difficult to track the annual number of Early Career Teachers (ECTs) exiting the profession. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) can

only speculate that the real figure lies somewhere between 8 and 50%; but, did not provide an explanation of how they derived at these figures (Gallant & Riley, 2017). The types of leavers leaving the profession, whether due to terminations and/or resignations, is unknown. Contract teachers who are not renewed are not being counted; early career teachers on short-term contracts are not being counted, and the reasons why teachers leave is not being monitored (Gallant & Riley, 2017). The researchers were able to pinpoint that the highest rates of attrition appear to come from men who are less than 30 years of age, followed by men in the 31-35 age group and secondary teachers (Gallant & Riley, 2017).

Previous studies of teacher attrition among men cited that early career leavers report excessive workloads, less-than-ideal collegial relationships, poor management practices, surveillance of their work, increasing accountability without commensurate support, and teaching out of field (Gallant & Riley, 2017). Without clear research questions, it appears the authors' focus was to determine whether the key factors mentioned above are influencing teacher attrition among men, and if so, to what degree (Gallant & Riley, 2017)?

The study was a collective case study utilizing both a convenience sample and the Personal Interpretive Framework (PIF). The researchers focused their analysis on the following: self-image, self-esteem, job, task perception, and future perspective (Gallant & Riley, 2017). The ECTs conceived two distinct contexts – the classroom was interpreted as a positive and the school was interpreted as a negative citing an unsupportive environment connected to excessive workload (Gallant & Riley, 2017).

The key findings of this study revealed that New Public Management (NPM; the reduction of professional relationships between teachers, their colleagues, and administration) is the biggest contributing factor to the teachers' decision to exit. Teachers described the practices in some detail which caused them to feel that the education system was one in which they did not belong (Gallant & Riley, 2017). NPM is characterized as promoting *agentification*, which reduces the professional relationships between teacher colleagues and leaders to contracts between agents on the bases of competition, economic efficiencies, accountability, evaluation and monitoring, hierarchical decision-making, league tables, outputs, and performance indicators (Gallant & Riley, 2017).

While other researchers are scratching the surface by only focusing on teacher attrition, Australian researchers have begun to dig deeper into the root causes of the country's attrition problems among men. In doing so, they discovered issues related to the extent to which education is commodified rather than sought as a public good (Gallant & Riley, 2017).

A second Australian study conducted by McGrath and Bergen (2017) examined the 50-year decline of men in the teaching profession in Australia. The researchers asserted that while the shortage of men in the teaching profession is typically researched by drawing on the perspectives of teachers, principals, and students, to date no researcher has examined the trajectory of the teaching workforce's gender composition (McGrath & Bergen, 2017). What is not known is if the decline of men in the teaching profession is likely to plateau, continue to decrease or, increase without intervention (McGrath &

Bergen, 2017). This longitudinal study accessed 50 years of national census data in Australia and the UNESCO to describe the representation of men in the teaching profession (McGrath & Bergen, 2017). The study highlighted the proportion of primary teachers who are men in the total teacher population in Australia and other countries and suggests there is a global decline in the proportion of men in comparison to women in the teaching workforce (McGrath & Bergen, 2017).

### **Teacher Recruitment for Men**

Attempts in several countries have been made to increase the number of men in the teaching profession, McGrath and Bergen (2017) suggested those calls for recruitment are misplaced. “There remain important social and psychological reasons [organizational reasons later identified] for schools to include both men and women teachers that are not being addressed during these marketing campaigns to recruit more men to teach” (p. 160). To address the social and psychological reasons for teachers’ decisions to enter and stay in the profession, McGrath and Bergen relied on the theory of gender schema. While the organizational reasons are addressed utilizing bureaucracy theory. Gender schema theory suggests that young students will most likely distinguish between men and women teachers and peers based on physical appearance and will in turn use that gender knowledge to generalize about others (McGrath & Bergen, 2017). Bureaucracy theory states that a diverse workplace that is reflective of the broader population ensures that all groups are considered in decision-making processes relating to, for example, policy, and administration (McGrath & Bergen, 2017).

According to McGrath and Bergen (2017), this study provides the first empirical look at the trajectory of teacher representation of men at a national level. Not only does it confirm the decline of the representation of men in the teaching workforce, it also found an equivalent decline in Australian secondary schools. The implications of the study are that it becomes increasingly unlikely that Australian students will be taught by both men and women in the next 50-years (McGrath & Bergen, 2017).

Andin, Harun, Hamzah & Joliari (2017) conducted a study in Malaysia designed to answer the motivating question, what are the factors that restrict young men from pursuing a teaching career? This in response to the steady decline in the number of men teaching in Malaysia. In 2005, men represented 31% of primary teachers and 36.6% of the secondary teachers. These numbers represent a decrease from 2001 where men represented 33.4% of primary teachers and 38.2% of secondary teachers (Andin et al., 2017). Contributing factors to the small and shrinking proportion of men in the Malaysian teacher workforce are a decreasing number of men enrolling in college, and men enrolled in college are discouraged by family and social influences from entering the teaching profession (Andin et al., 2017).

Andin et al., (2017) surveyed eighty-five men who were first-year, mechanical engineering students from a public university in Malaysia. The questionnaire consisted of 27 statements dealing with the factors that might restrict men from choosing the teaching profession which included: (a) social influences, (b) perception of the teaching profession, (c) job condition/workload, and (d) personal values (Andin et al., 2017). The evidence revealed that the most prevalent factors that restricted men from choosing the

teaching profession as their career option included social influences, school experiences that failed to inspire interest in teaching, the conditions of the job, the perception that teachers lack talent for other intellectually demanding jobs, and low salary (Andin et al., 2017).

Based on these findings, Andin et al., (2017) suggested the following: (a) develop a teacher recruitment campaign in schools that specifically target men; and (b) convince young men at the university and high school levels, that the teaching profession can offer a pleasant working environment; and (c) lobby the government and states to provide a more competitive remuneration package for teachers. Andin et al., asserted that policymakers and employers must address the current gender imbalance by first understanding the factors restricting young men from pursuing a career in teaching (2017). A concrete understanding of the issues could significantly contribute to a larger effort to attract more men into teaching as a career (Andin et al., 2017). This research is important as it provides evidence that the decline of men in the teaching profession is a global problem and that a multi-faceted, and gender-attentive approach to recruitment is needed to find a resolution

In a study conducted in Turkey, researchers found that the rate of men teaching preschool varies from 1% to 4% (Erden, Ozgun, and Ciftci, 2011). Erden et al., (2011) observed that preschool education traditionally has meant taking care of and feeding children, and this scope of work has been regarded as work of women, while men gravitated towards more technical jobs. Erden et al., (2011) found that there is a common negative idea about men teaching in pre-school settings; men have rarely been accepted

and are usually perceived as outsiders. As a result, men typically avoid the teaching profession because of this prejudice, in conjunction with the isolation, low status, and low salary it brings (Erden et al., 2011).

In their conclusions, Erden et al., (2011) called attention to the need for more men in the preschool setting with the following rationales: (a) the negative impacts of the absence of fathers in children's lives, (b) men can be positive role models for children, and (c) gender equality in the workforce is ideal. They concluded, "If we balance the number of men and women in the teaching force, this may help children to develop more positive behaviors inside and outside the classroom settings" (p. 3200).

In another study conducted in Shanghai, China, Yang and McNair (2019) examined the universal occupational image of an early childhood teacher and noted that it often excludes and marginalizes men since the duties and demands of the profession are associated with feminine characteristics like nurturing and caring. Men teaching kindergarten in China are faced with the following diverse challenges:

- parents' suspicions of the teachers' motives
- their sexual orientation
- their suitability for the work
- low social status in contrast to other occupations
- low salary
- the expectations that men will assume a stereotypical disciplinarian role
- problematic forms of interaction with women
- the assignment of tasks outside of their teaching responsibilities

- men teachers are exposed to high risk of gender stigma often accompanied by heightened surveillance and suspicion on the part of the parents or guardians.

In China, it is not uncommon for gender norms to confine men and women into specific roles and expectations (Yang & McNair, 2019). According to Yang and McNair (2019) Confucianism has exerted a far-reaching influence, making explicit distinctions between the public positions dominated by men and the domestic space occupied by women, highlighting superiority and hegemony. Confucian beliefs are that women are required to obey their fathers before marriage, their husband during married life, and their sons in widowhood (Yang & McNair, 2019). Confucianism also contends that men should make achievements in their careers while women should stay at home assisting their husbands by doing all housework and looking after the children (Yang & McNair, 2019).

This is the root of the problem for men who teach kindergarten. A teaching position in early childhood education is regarded as a gender-atypical profession for men (Yang & McNair, 2019). “Men are raised to become a real, virtuous man, one that is ambitious, decisive, and responsible for supporting the family” (Yang & McNair, 2019, p. 275). Yang and McNair also found that girls are outperforming boys at different levels of education; boys have more behavioral problems than girls, and boys are moving away from traditional gendered roles, all of which suggests a social shift in China labeled the “Boys Crisis” (Yang & McNair, 2019). Some educators have attributed the crisis to an



overexposure to women who teach the primary ages, while others have argued that the lack of role models is due to the rising divorce rate (Yang & McNair, 2019).

This 5-month long study employed a combination of convenience sampling, criterion sampling and snowball sampling (Yang & McNair, 2019). The men participating in this study had to either be currently teaching or have taught in a public kindergarten in Shanghai (Yang & McNair, 2019). Participants identified the following challenges: (a) gendered divisions of labor, (b) interactions with colleagues on and off campus, and (c) the impact of their chosen profession on their marriage prospects (Yang & McNair, 2019). Highlighted are the rewards participants received from their work: (a) opportunities given to them by the principal, (b) promising future in relation to potential promotions, and (c) winning the children's' love— all considered worthwhile despite the challenges (Yang & McNair, 2019).

### ***Summary and Organization of the Study***

Chapter 2 provided an in-depth literature review including several related lines of inquiry on the status of the teacher workforce (Denton, 2009; Tomisk, 2016); teacher attrition for men (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014; Gallant & Riley, 2017); teacher recruitment for men (McGrath & Bergen, 2017; Andin et. al., 2017; Erden et. al., 2011). Chapter 3 explains the methodology utilized in this qualitative interview study. Chapter 4: Parts 1 & 2 describe the findings. Chapter 5 provides limitations, implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

### **Chapter 3: Methods**

In this study, I sought to understand the rationales for and the lived experiences of three men leading up to their decision to leave their teaching positions in M-DCPS. In this chapter, I describe the context and setting for this study and provide an explanation of how the participants were selected for this study. I then provide detailed information about my data collection process and data analysis methods.

#### **Context, Researcher Positioning, and Participant Sample**

M-DCPS is an “A” rated, large school district located in Miami, Florida. It is the fourth largest school district in the United States with approximately 20,480 teachers, and serving over 357,000 students (M-DCPS, 2019). Of these students, 69% receive Free/Reduced Lunch (a poverty indicator) and over 91.5% are identified as falling into one or several ethnic minority groups (M-DCPS, 2019).

As an assistant principal for M-DCPS and a self-identified man, I designed this study with the intent that the findings of this study will be utilized to mitigate, on some small level, the teacher attrition problem for men that M-DCPS and other school districts across the nation are experiencing. I discuss how I addressed my own subjectivities about the topic of my study more below.

I conducted this inquiry by utilizing a purposive sampling approach as I describe in more detail below rather than a random sampling of men who are former teachers of M-DCPS and who resigned (Krathwohl, 2009). I made this choice because out of the total population of men who left M-DCPS, many might have left under varying circumstances and motivations which would not have been conducive to the scope of this

study. This is in line with Buchanan's (2010) assertion that many respondents' departures from teaching may have been traumatic deriving from termination.

### **Participant Recruitment**

District supervisors granted me access to a data set listing all teachers who resigned from the district within the last three years (2017-2020). This data set included the following demographic information: location type; employee identification number; full name; personal email; home address including city, state, and zip code; gender; race; ethnicity; and date resigned.

To recruit the three participants, I sent out recruitment emails to potential study participants. Many responded that they were interested but did not follow up or continue with the process. For those who responded and were dedicated to moving forward, I sent the "Human Subjects Consent to Participate in Research" Form utilizing the software "JotForm." Essentially, it was a means of solidifying the participants' agreement to participate in the study. At the end of the consent form, the participants signed in the designated space. The consent form was then returned to me in email form with a Portable Document Format (PDF) attachment. Upon receipt of the consent form, I immediately responded with a follow-up email containing a "JotForm" link to the Demographic Questionnaire.

It was necessary that I asked the participants to answer the demographic questions prior to the interview so I would not focus on minor details during the actual interview process and also ensured that the participant met my sampling criteria: a) must be a self-identified man; and b) must hold a State of Florida Department of Education Teaching

Certificate). At the end of the questionnaire, the participants signed in the signature box.

The questionnaire was then sent back to me in email form with a PDF attachment. Thus, I had collected my first round of data from my participants and obtained their permission to schedule the first interview.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Questionnaire Results*

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Teaching experience	Highest degree	Content area	Location type
Kevin	51	Man	1.5 years	BA	Social Studies	High school
Larry	44	Man	17 years	BS Science	Science	High school
James	34	Man	7 years	BA History	Social Studies	Middle school

**Data Collection**

It is important to note that my initial plan of how I would collect my data was to conduct two-part, face-to-face interviews. However, the COVID-19 pandemic changed how the world operated and the normal ways of conducting business came to a halt. National and world-wide COVID-19 guidelines and protocols were enacted as a means of slowing virus transmissions and keeping people safe. As a result, I had to adjust my means of collecting data for this study.

In efforts to adhere to COVID-19 social distancing protocols, all study participants agreed to meet virtually. I conducted all interviews using Zoom. Through email, I asked study participants for convenient dates and times they would be available to meet. Once dates and times were set, I scheduled meetings by sending Zoom invitations which included the following: title of the meeting, that is, Interview 1 or

Interview 2; time and date of the meeting; usernames and passwords were provided to assure participants that they were entering a safe and secure meeting and their anonymity was maintained. With participants' permission, each Zoom meeting was recorded to ensure accurate data was being collected. These recordings proved valuable during the transcribing and analyzing process.

I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) for asking questions and recording answers. The interview protocol consisted of 10 open-ended questions accompanied by follow-up questions aimed at probing and digging deeper into the participants' feelings and experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

At the conclusion of the interviews, I noted ideas, thoughts, and key concepts that were still fresh in my mind from the interview. I noted body language during the interviews, if participants seemed reluctant to answer questions or dig deeper into their feelings about an issue, and emotions that were made visible during the recalling of an experience. I accumulated interpretive memos, i.e., notes chronicling emerging themes and my own subjective responses to the data (Mills et. al., 2013). These were invaluable data that helped to shape and guide my analysis of the participants' life and experiences as a teacher. Finally, I manually transcribed the six interviews, word-by-word to ensure accuracy of the data (see Table 3 for a summary of this process).

**Table 2***Data Collection and Analysis Process*

Step/Phase	Process
Recruitment	Data set provided by M-DCPS District personnel listing all teachers who resigned from the district within the last three years. Women were filtered out. Recruitment script sent to personal emails.
JotForm Questionnaire & Consent	I sent through email, a link to a JotForm. Their demographic information was captured, as well as the participants' signatures agreeing to participate in the study.
Data Gathering via Zoom	COVID-19 protocols would not allow face-to-face interviews. Therefore, I conducted interviews virtually, utilizing Zoom.
2 Semi-structured Interviews	I used the interview instrument to conduct the one-hour semi-structured interviews with each participant..
Researcher Notes	I noted, body language during the interviews; if participants seemed reluctant to answer questions or dig deeper into their feelings about an issue; emotions that were made visible during the recalling of an experience.
Interpretive Memos	Interpretive memos chronicled emerging themes and subjective responses to the data. I noted thoughts and ideas, and key concepts that were still fresh in my mind from the interview.
Transcription of Data Coding and Categorizing Data	I transcribed the audio recordings. I uploaded interview data to a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) NVIVO.
Identification of Emergent Themes and Subthemes/Thematic Analysis	Once uploaded, I began coding. I engaged in content analysis, identifying relevant emergent themes.
Representing Visual Data Matrices	I created Word Frequency Charts.

## **Data Analysis**

I analyzed these data utilizing the literature on qualitative interview studies. For instance, I analyzed the data using both inductive and deductive approaches to establish a comprehensive codebook and to identify any patterns or themes that were evident (Creswell & Poth, 2013). For instance, I created codes Organizational and Individual Characteristics, along with Reasons for Becoming a Teacher, Reasons for Leaving the Profession, and Reasons for Staying based upon relevant literature. As I coded the data, I created new inductive codes such as Accountability, Evaluation, Support, Not Appreciated, Challenges of Teaching, and Benefits of Teaching (see Appendix D for code book examples). When describing and analyzing a pattern of interrelationships, both approaches are recommended to derive at a comprehensive set of conclusions (Miles et al., 2013).

Data analysis in this qualitative study consisted of a five-step process: (1) preparing and organizing data transcripts for analysis; (2) engaging in inductive and deductive coding through multiple cycles of coding (see Appendices for codebook); (3) condensing the codes into themes; (4) displaying the data in the forms of tables or figures; and (5) engaging in interpretive memoing (Creswell & Poth, 2013).

The data consisted of the following: three sets of demographic data, two in-depth (at least one hour) interviews for each of the three study participants, and 18 researcher interpretive memos. The entire interview data set included 111 transcribed pages of data. Of the 18 researcher interpretive memos in total, I wrote seven during my analysis of Kevin's experiences, six during my analysis of Larry's experiences, five during my

analysis of James’s experiences. See Table 3 for a summary of the data sources collected during this study.

**Table 3**

*Data Source Summary*

Number of Interviews	Minutes per Interview	Number of Transcribed Pages	Number of Codes Generated
<b>Participant 1</b>			
2 Interviews:			
1 <sup>st</sup> Dec. 21, 2020	1 <sup>st</sup> – 64:12 minutes	33 pages	1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle Codes – 12
2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec. 23, 2020	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 43:33 minutes		2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle Codes – 52 3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle Codes – 10
<b>Participant 2</b>			
2 Interviews:			
1 <sup>st</sup> Dec. 28, 2020	1 <sup>st</sup> – 48:19 minutes	34 pages	1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle Codes – 09
2 <sup>nd</sup> Jan. 08, 2021	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 30:02 minutes		2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle Codes – 55 3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle Codes – 11
<b>Participant 3</b>			
2 Interviews:			
1 <sup>st</sup> Dec. 23, 2020	1 <sup>st</sup> – 48:02 minutes	44 pages	1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle Codes – 11
2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec. 28, 2020	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 49:58 minutes		2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle Codes – 51 3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle Codes – 12

**Interpretive Memos**

Interpretive memoing is recommended in qualitative research as the practice provides opportunity for the researcher to engage in reflexivity and ultimately contributes to what Maxwell (2012) described as interpretive validity—ensuring that, to the best of the researchers’ ability, the participants’ meanings are represented in the final account. Examples of interpretive memos follow.

**Kevin – Interpretive Memo 6**

Kevin revealed he was discouraged by his assistant principal from writing referrals on students. Codes: Challenge; Relationships (Administrators); Support



(Administrators); Work Ethic. This gave him pause to consider what else could he do if the students were deserving of a referral in his opinion. This speaks directly to his classroom management skills and his feelings about the lack of support from his department chairperson and administration.

The fact that Kevin was told that his contract would not be renewed after he initiated a conversation is huge. The lack of support, lack of communication, and the fact that administration did not share with him their expectations of classroom management. They provided no means of professional development to assist.

#### **Larry– Interpretive Memo 6**

Larry was a superstar. He made it clear that the only reason he left M-DCPS was for the salary increase. Although he was reluctant to reveal to me the name of the school he is working at now, he did reveal that he received a \$20,000 increase in his base salary of \$46,000-\$47, 000. That is a significant increase. It is understandable why he left. Money is a motivating factor for many professionals.

#### **James– Interpretive Memo 5**

James was a superstar teacher, and yet, he had to deal with a few stigmas.

- Considered a pot-head based on looks.
- Men are not curriculum oriented.
- The cool teacher.
- Not a disciplinarian – “Kumbi Ya’d his kids into submission.”
- Was the topic of various discussions: teacher made the comment about him selling his car the day it rained, and he entered the building soaked.

- Teachers working hard equates to excessive time spent in school versus those who leave school at dismissal are not considered hard workers.

As the researcher, I focused on making meanings and interpretations as I reflected on the data. During this process, I was forced to exercise textual reflexivity, the monitoring of the edited text, the voices of the participants' stories and lived experiences, coupled with my own reflexive voice articulating my positionality and interests (Vagle et al., 2009).

I used Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), namely NVIVO to help me analyze, manage, shape and interpret my data (Creswell & Poth, 2013). This software provides security by storing the database and files together in a single file and enables the researcher to easily manipulate the data and conduct searches (Creswell & Poth, 2013). NVIVO assisted in the management of my data by allowing me to execute the following functions:

- Stored and organized transcripts and the audio data.
- Located and sorted text and images associated with a code or theme.
- Retrieved and reviewed common passages or segments that relate to two or more code labels.
- Compared and related among code labels.
- Allowed me to conceptualize different levels of abstractions.
- Allowed me to represent and visualize codes and emergent themes, through maps, charts, and cluster analysis.

## **Ethical Conduct**

FIU's Office of Research Integrity Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this qualitative interview study on Monday, April 13, 2020. No approval was needed from M-DCPS's Research Review Committee. In alignment with the guidelines for human subjects' research, the participants were not required to engage in any unethical or dangerous actions during this study (Williams, 2012).

Miles et al., (2014) point out that it is important to think of our participants' vulnerability to harm. Those vulnerable to harm might include those who are publicly visible, those who lack resources or autonomy, those who are stigmatized, weakened, institutionalized, those who cannot speak for themselves, those involved in illegal acts, or those too involved with this study that might cause a conflict of interest (Miles, et al., 2014). For this reason each participant was issued a pseudonym and other identifying information was omitted from the portrayals herein in order to conceal their identities.

In addition, the men who participated in this study did so of their own free will. They were the first to show interest by responding to my recruitment emails. They were the first to complete the in-take process. They freely signed the consent forms after confirmation of their understanding of the research procedures and protocols and willingly completed the questionnaire. They agreed to a date and time for two virtual meetings and answered the interview questions of their own free will as well. All documentation was kept in a secure file protecting their anonymity throughout the study.

Following the guidance of Rossman and Rallis (2003), my task as the researcher was to render an account of the participants' lived experiences as holistically and

honestly as possible. I discuss measures I took to address threats to credibility and trustworthiness inherent to qualitative research next.

### **Credibility & Trustworthiness**

Creswell (2008) suggests that researchers engage in at least two strategies to address credibility and trustworthiness threats in any given study. For example, credibility is enhanced in an interview study when the researcher generates rich and thick descriptions of the participants' experiences through the collection and analysis of multiple sources of data (i.e., triangulation). The procedures I used to do this are outlined above (i.e., the use of multiple interviews across multiple participants). Trustworthiness is enhanced through member checking/seeking participant feedback as well as engaging in reflexivity (i.e., self-reflection on bias, preferences, and preconceptions) (Creswell, 2008).

### **Member Checking**

In accordance with Florida International University (FIU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols and guidance with respect to "Do No Harm," I shared the interview transcripts and my analysis of the interview material with my participants and requested feedback. Creswell (2008) cites that member checking (i.e., soliciting participant feedback) is considered "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 342). The approach *writ large*, in most qualitative studies, involves taking the data and analysis back to the participants so they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account (Creswell, 2008), p.342).

I invited study participants to review the transcripts prior to moving forward with my analysis to ensure participants were comfortable with sharing their statements. Out of an abundance of caution with respect to “Do No Harm,” I also invited study participants to review my analysis of the interview material and notify me of any concerns (Creswell, 2012; Josselson, 2013). The results of member checking are as follows regarding the interview transcripts: two of the three study participants responded they had no substantive comments or concerns and one study participant did not respond. Regarding the analysis of interview material, one of three study participants responded with no concerns and appreciated my insight. Two of the three study participants did not respond.

To further enhance the trustworthiness of my study, I consistently self-checked for my own biases and recorded these in my interpretive memos (McCall, 2017). I provide an account of my positioning and subjectivities next.

### **Positioning and Subjectivity**

I was raised in Liberty City, a sub-city of Miami, Florida by a single mother, two grandparents, and two aunts. With an absentee father, and negativity abounding in my life, these women were my village; sheltering and shuffling me from house-to-house, nurturing and providing for me while my mother worked long hours to make ends meet. My mother and two aunts graduated from high school. My four uncles did not graduate from high school. Neither did my grandparents - they quit school in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades to work in the farming fields of Sylvania, Georgia. I come from a long line of proud, minimally educated family members who, regardless of their low educational achievements, conveyed their high expectations for my success.

My professional career has been guided by the proverb, “Each One, Teach One.” It is steeply rooted in the African American experience. It was my driving force as a teacher, and it remains so as an administrator. If knowledge is power, then how can I hold onto this power without teaching and uplifting fellow men? By sharing knowledge and my experience, I am sharing power. Thus, eliminating dependency and building trust and fostering a healthy work environment and relationships. Building the capacity of faculty, staff, students and their parents is my passion.

I have found my purpose because I naturally gravitate towards students. I am meant to be in an academic environment, sculpting and guiding young minds, preparing them for the vast unknowns of life. Perhaps, if I am honest, the gravitational pull is stronger for the struggling students, particularly the younger men, because I was once an “at risk” student. For students living in harsh environments, being raised by a single parent, those with an absentee or a deceased parent, even an incarcerated parent... I am often the advocate, the compass, the voice for those who don’t realize they need a voice. I am the champion for their future success.

I am a teacher. I am an administrator. I am this study. I too have grappled with many of the same issues and similar experiences as our study participants. There lies my struggle to stay on the ethical side of right when I was collecting, analyzing, and interpreting their data. Keeping myself, my experiences, my thoughts and feelings about their thoughts and feelings, out of their stories proved taxing – however, telling their stories, their experience was extremely important.

During these interviews, I connected with all participants on different levels. I remember my days as a neophyte teacher and just how difficult teaching was for me. Education was my second career. I entered the workforce with no pedagogical knowledge or preparation. I knew nothing about how curriculum was developed and less about how to deliver it. The only classroom management skills I possessed came from common sense methods I adapted from my mother because she used them on me as a child. I too wanted deeply to contribute to my society by giving back the knowledge and life experiences that I had attained through teaching. Teaching brought me joy. I empathized with the experiences of these men and I was able to connect with them on a professional plane, understanding exactly what they had gone through as teachers for M-DCPS.

As men, we connected during our discussions. I liked them; and despite the difficulties they endured as teachers... I could tell they were advocates for the education of children. That was our common ground. I must admit, it was extremely difficult for me to not insert myself when they were sharing their stories, their experiences. These men shared their pain, dismay, and discontent for the politics of the educational arena and their disdain for organizational politics. I am honored they entrusted me with their experiences and I hope that through my analysis of their data, I will effectively and efficiently interpret and present their experiences in a light that helps other men.

## **Summary and Organization of the Study**

Chapter 3 described the methodology used in this qualitative interview study. Chapter 4: Parts 1 & 2 provides rich supposition regarding how the participants' experienced being teachers at M-DCPS. Chapter 5 ends the study with Limitations, Implications of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research.



## Chapter 4: Part 1 - Their Experiences as Teachers

In this chapter, I introduce three men who once worked for M-DCPS as teachers. Two of them left the teaching profession altogether, while one remains a teacher in a different capacity and setting. Their stories are raw, organic, and intriguing. This study was intended to reveal their stories, interpret their experiences, and explore their rationales for leaving M-DCPS through the lens of prior research on teacher attrition. This study was implemented with dual goals of (1) filling a gap in the literature on attrition of men in the teacher workforce and (2) identifying practical implications for policymakers and leaders who seek to increase the representation of men in the teaching profession.

### Introducing Kevin

Table 4 identifies the former teacher who participated in this study. The participant is identified by a pseudonym for his name, his age range at the time of the interview, if he has publicly identified his sexual orientation, sex, and highest degree earned.

**Table 4**

#### *Participant 1 Demographics*

Pseudonym	Age	Orientation self-identified	Gender	Experience	Highest Degree
Kevin	Early 50s	No	Man	1.5 years	Bachelor of Arts

I feel that honoring these participants' stories begins first with a portrayal of their unique histories leading up to and during their teaching careers (Burnes, 2011, p. 110). This is

followed by a description of major themes each of the participants shared with regard to their reasons for leaving their teaching positions in M-DCPS. Throughout, I have integrated my own reflections on their stories drawing upon the interpretive memos I crafted throughout the data collection and analysis process.

### ***Introducing Kevin***

Kevin is in his early 50s. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree and is currently enrolled in graduate school. In his late 40s, Kevin taught for six months at a private Catholic school (grade unknown). He then moved to South Florida, where he applied to become a teacher with M-DCPS. He met the state of Florida's requirements and obtained a Temporary Educator Certificate in Social Studies for grade 6-12. He worked as a substitute teacher for a couple of months before he was hired as a permanent high school social studies teacher. Kevin was employed, as a teacher for M-DCPS for one full year.

### ***Trying to Keep His Head Above Water***

From our conversations, it became evident that Kevin was not the "Top Dog" of teachers. He did not generate any major positive attention. He was not nominated by colleagues for the Rookie Teacher of the Year Award. He did not teach classes that contributed to the school's grade at the end of the year. He was not asked to take on additional responsibilities, such as a sixth period class, which would have landed a sixth period supplement (providing extra money in his pocket). A perk usually reserved for high-performing teachers who could handle the workload without a dedicated planning period. He was not asked to become a coach of a sport; he was not asked to

sponsor a club; and he didn't "sit with the cool kids" in the cafeteria or the teachers' lounge. He fostered no close relationships with colleagues and/or administration.

I didn't win any awards. Didn't get recognized for showing up every day. Not that I wanted to be recognized. But that's just my nature. I mean, I feel like I worked my butt off. Never got any recognition, but that's probably true of every teacher. Every teacher probably deserves a teacher of the year award or whatever. You know? (Interview 1, 12-21-2020).

In essence, Kevin was a new teacher trying to learn how to become a teacher while barely keeping his head above water (Ingersoll, 2003). Kevin recognized he ventured into teaching late in his life and thought that he would infuse life-lessons into the state-mandated curriculum.

I'm like, a late bloomer as far as exploring this idea, going into teaching and I have you know, I didn't go to school for teaching. I didn't go right? I didn't. You know, I started teaching when I was in my forties and I thought, well, at this point, I actually have something I could teach that goes beyond just a textbook – the practical things of life. You know how to get a job, how to do an interview, how to present yourself, how to be a professional, how to be all those things that aren't subject specific (Interview 1, 12-21-2020).

Admittedly, Kevin knew he was not seen as a disciplinarian. He recognized that classroom management was not one of his strengths as a teacher. He elaborated on his experience, providing a particularly bleak and general synopsis on his students' behavior and motives.

These kids did not want to read and they're already notorious for classroom behavior. And I'm like... What? I'm trying and not knowing anything about anything how to deal with this at all. I'm up there, to at least get their attention, or something. [Telling them] to sit down and behave [doesn't work]. I'm trying and trying and trying and trying. They were small classes, but you know, these are the most disruptive kids, not the academic superstars (Interview 1, 12-25-2020).

The impact of Kevin's lack of effective classroom management skills was illuminated with the interview question, "Please explain how life, as a teacher, was for you. Walk me through a bad day, what would that look like?" Kevin took a deep breath, hesitated for a few seconds, and recalled one of his worst days while teaching— a day when total chaos ensued after a student told a joke in his classroom.

Bad days were like that one where a student told a joke, and it just became chaotic and extremely loud. They were laughing as loud as possible. One kid literally fell out of his chair laughing and nothing I did or said would quiet them and it went on for like – it felt like forever, probably five minutes.

But, you know, you run out of tools, you know, lifting your hand up [over your head] and just standing there. I mean, it's nothing you can do. You can't scream. You can't try to be louder than them. You know, you really can't.

I just was like throwing up my hands, like giving up. This is not a controllable situation. You know, there's nothing I can do. I've done everything I can. There is no calming them. They obviously don't respect me enough or whatever. And I felt like, you know, I failed. I failed to maintain control of the class and I've totally

run out of ideas. It's like, there's nothing I could do at that point. It's like I can't yell at them. I can't swear. I can't like, become a tyrant. It's not even my nature to be like a tyrant. I can't throw things. I can't scare them into silence.

If I call for backup, it'll look like I don't know what I'm doing, which I didn't. I was at a total loss, and I'm sure it echoed down the halls, like everybody heard this. I mean, it was a deafening sound. Approximately 25 kids making as much noise and laughter as possible. And I'm like, you know what? I don't know what else to do. This is not for me. I'm out of here!

A couple of the kids saw that I was frustrated. [They] helped to calm their friends down. You know, telling them to cool it or whatever because I'm like, I'm getting my things. I'm clearing my desk while they were doing this. I didn't say anything. I didn't tell them what I was doing. I wasn't verbalizing anything. I just got my stuff opened my desk and started clearing it out. A couple of kids were like, okay, we've gone too far, I think they said. Mr. Walker, what are you doing? They asked. [I replied,] "What does it look like I'm doing? I mean, seriously!"

You know, that was like the day I just wanted to walk. And that was early, like fourth period, middle of the period. They were doing that. I'm like, I am packing. I don't know what stopped me from calling the assistant principals, [and telling them] you'll have to find coverage for this class because I am done! Seriously, I almost walked in the middle of the school day (Interview 1, 12-21-2020).

Simply having a degree and teaching certification does not make one a qualified teacher. One must possess, in addition to classroom management skills,

“teacher value” i.e., possession of subject matter knowledge (knowing what to teach) and possession of pedagogical skills (knowing how to teach) (Ingersoll et al., 2012). As prior research has indicated, the amount of preparation that a new teacher has received in each of these areas depends, to a certain extent, on the path that he or she has followed in becoming a teacher – and, in some cases, determines if the teacher will remain in the profession (Ingersoll et al., 2012).

Acknowledging that gender stereotypes oftentimes contribute to behaviors (Andin et al., 2017), by virtue of Kevin being a man, he may have been perceived by his students, colleagues, and administrators as being strong enough, tough enough, or savvy enough to gain control over the situation. In contrast, he had to rely on the assistance of a student in this case, and her influence over her classmates, and her ability to recognize the “I’m done” look on a teacher’s face.

Kevin did not walk out in the middle of the day during that incident. That class period ended at the ringing of the bell. He took the five-minute transition time to collect himself. The next class of students arrived, and he continued his day beaten and weathered. He did not resign, at least on that day. He returned to work the next day, and the next day after that and continued showing up for duty as a public high school teacher.

### *Left Alone to Fend for Himself*

It is possible that Kevin might have become a better, more skilled teacher with the right amount of guidance and support. There were various avenues administrators could have taken to help a struggling first year teacher. Support for new teachers, in some schools, may come in various forms: reduction of workload or class size, effective

mentoring by experienced teachers who themselves are provided with the requisite time and support to undertake these demanding roles, solidarity in student discipline matters, and a climate of collegiality (Buchanan, 2010). However, Kevin claimed to have not received any guidance or direction from the administration. There was no conversation about the discipline issue inside his classroom. No administrator prescribed for Kevin targeted professional development courses geared towards building his capacity as a teacher and learning new classroom management skills. It was not suggested that Kevin observe a more seasoned teacher to see how that teacher conducted their class or to observe the processes and procedures utilized in a well-established, successful classroom led by a veteran teacher. No administrator had a formal conversation with Kevin about their concerns of not being able to control his classroom. According to Kevin, this matter was not a concern during his formal observation review.

But nobody said, like nobody, no assistant principal or principal, said Mr. Walker, we have some concerns about your classroom management. Here they are. And here's some ways that you can improve or whatever – that never happened. A formal sit down never happened (Interview 1, 12-21-2020).

When Kevin realized the struggle was becoming too difficult ... he approached one of the assistant principals and received some confusing advice.

I was having some issues with some kid or some kids in the class, and I asked the assistant principal for advice or guidance or whatever and she asked, 'Do you know about these green referral slips?' At that time, I didn't. I said, no. She said, 'Well, this is like going nuclear or whatever. It's like when you write these slips,

that means like somebody is in serious trouble and it gets documented. But then she's like said, but don't write these! Don't like, have them flying out the door. Don't like, write them up every time there is a problem. She continued; you know you can hold your own personal detention. You can do a teacher detention. You could write those all you want, but don't write those green referrals slips... don't hand them out like candy, you know (Interview 1, 12-21-2020)?

Kevin left the administrator's office feeling defeated. Where else could Kevin be able to find the assistance, he needed? When he asked teachers for assistance, they would minimally do what he asked of them; that is, help him plan a lesson, house a disruptive kid for a quick timeout, or watch a class while he went to the restroom. Although they complied, he could feel their apprehension.

I would say that if a teacher recognized that I was struggling in the classroom, they didn't, they weren't proactive, and they didn't approach me and offer suggestions. It was more an issue of me approaching them, and then they would offer suggestions. They had their own problems (Interview #1, 12-21-2020).

Kevin quickly discovered that his chairperson wasn't prepared to help him in the way that he needed.

I didn't know him well enough to, uh, speculate as to why, but he at times was condescending, and that was a little off putting. The way he offered his assistance was not to my taste, but I did recognize that he was good at what he did. And he achieved things that I was unable to, so I didn't dismiss what he said. But I kind of avoided him (Interview #1, 12-21-2020).



His remedy for Kevin' classroom dilemma was to write teacher-led detentions for disruptive students. That was his method, and for his classes, that method worked. Kevin immediately noticed the contrast between his department chair's classes and his classes. His classes were quiet, and all students were working when Kevin entered the room. But Kevin also observed his chairperson was teaching higher-level, intrinsically motivated students. Whereas Kevin was assigned classes with lower-level, struggling students who generally hated school.

### ***Just Another Warm Body***

One of the main reasons Kevin explored becoming a teacher stemmed from stories on social media and nightly news reports that school districts were experiencing high levels of teacher shortages, labeling the issue a crisis. School districts instituted a campaign aimed at recruiting more teachers into the workforce. M-DCPS was one of those school districts leading its own campaign. Admittedly, Kevin considered himself a late bloomer of sorts. He became a teacher in his late 40's because he thought he had experienced life and acquired enough wisdom which he could impart to students– life lessons he could teach, beyond the state-mandated curriculum. He felt this would be invaluable to his students.

Once hired, Kevin assessed the types of classes he was assigned to teach the students who were struggling academically. The students' bad behavior and disruptions seemed to continuously get worse. He was unable to gain control; he started to become disenchanted with his job.

I think I came in with a fairly high level of enthusiasm, which diminished over time because for all the, you know, news reports that there's a teacher shortage desperate for teachers, etcetera, etcetera... when I got there, I didn't get the sense that they were desperate to have me.

Maybe it's me, but as far as, like my colleagues and administration, I didn't get the sense that they were that desperate. And I kind of felt like, you know, maybe the news reports were overblown or overstated or whatever. You know, the desperation, I didn't sense. And I didn't feel... I felt ultimately my enthusiasm diminished over time.

I felt that I was a placeholder at this particular school. You know, I only had a half years' worth of experience as a permanent teacher in a Catholic school [when I was hired]. So, I have very limited experience. I can't, like, speak to 20 years of experience, but, you know, I felt like I was a placeholder and, you know, just there for the year.

Maybe they hadn't figured out whether I was, you know, the right person to work there. I don't know. I can't get into somebody else's head. So, my commitment diminished over time. [I felt like] someone who was there, too, uh, warm the seat, fill a [vacancy] for the time being. So yeah, I felt like an outsider (Interview 1, 12-21-2020).

Kevin' experience is not unlike those of other new teachers who enter the profession wearing "rose-colored glasses," believing they are going to make a significant contribution to the world one student at a time. When the reality in many schools is that

administrators are simply trying to fill a void, plug a whole in the master schedule and have all vacancies filled before the school year begins. Depending upon the type of school and its location, it is possible for administrators to be in the unique position of being able to choose from several candidates vying for a position – each one bringing something different to the table in terms of their background, life experience, education, and certification.

That is usually the case with high-performing and more advantaged schools nestled in middle to high-income, suburban neighborhoods (Gatan, 2008). In more challenged schools, such as high-poverty, inner city schools, administrators are desperate for a minimally qualified candidate, that is, someone certified. All the other matters of training, tools and resources will be addressed at a later time. The immediate issue must be resolved – fill a teacher position.

### ***You Are Fired***

The end of the school year was approaching with about one week left. Kevin had not had any conversations about being rehired for the next school year and thought he would approach the principal for an answer. The principal would not speak with him. The assistant principal took the opportunity to terminate Kevin. “I asked to see the principal to just ask, “Am I coming back next year?” Because I didn’t have an inkling. The assistant principal was like, ‘Well, umm’ [hesitating].” At that moment, Kevin knew that he would be out of a job at the beginning of the school year.

I asked, “Am I not coming back next year?” She was like, “Well, some budget things are going on, we're not going to renew your contract.” I said, “Okay, so is

that the only reason?” She said, “Well, we also have some concerns about your classroom management.”

I'm like, “Why are you telling me this, like the week before school ends if there was a problem? Why didn't you tell me [earlier] so I could try to fix it? If that was actually the case, then you should have said this like, months ago and give me some help. Give me some... give me some headway so I could make some [changes]. But this is the first time I heard of this. I'm like, okay, thanks for letting me know the week before the school year ends” (Interview 2, 12-23-2020).

Who could imagine, leaving the assistant principal's office after being told that employment was limited to the next few days, and after that, you would no longer be employed? Kevin was fired after he went to inquire about his employment status for the upcoming year. Fired for not possessing classroom management skills – yet, not given the opportunity to acquire or develop said skills – not given the professional courtesy of a proper observation with feedback addressing concerns by the administrative team. Even after receiving his verbal notice of termination, Kevin still reported for duty each day, to do what all the other teachers in the school were doing... giving students opportunities to submit late or extra credit work; inputting assignment grades, effort, and conduct into their electronic gradebooks; dismantling their classrooms and packing for summer recess.

***Wait... On Second Thought, You Can Have Your Job Back***

On the very last day of school, Kevin was in route to the end of the year party being held in the school's cafeteria. He recalled that it was not really a party, that the administration had finger foods and soft drinks available for the faculty to say good-bye

before summer recess. In the cafeteria, he recalled the principal initiating a very troubling conversation.

It wasn't a party. They had stuff for us in the cafeteria and [I] saw all the teachers, and the administrators were there. Everybody was there [for] the very last day of school. [The] principal comes up to me and says, well, one of the other teachers is resigning. So, now the budget has been freed up and if you want to come back next year, you can. [I responded,] give me a couple weeks to think about it. You know, it's like you're letting me know on the very last day that I can come back. When last week you told me you couldn't [rehire me]. [I was like] forget it, man (Interview 2, 12-23-2020).

Kevin thought both the principal and the assistant principal together created an unwelcoming and even confusing environment within which to work. It is clear that the principal's intentions were to remedy the teacher shortage in her building before it became an issue by utilizing a very casual conversation, in the school's cafeteria, during an end-of-year gathering, while other teachers were near.

Kevin made it clear during the interview that although he asked her for time to think about her offer, he had instantly decided on not accepting it. In fact, Kevin had grown angry at her proposition. Memories of the tumultuous year came rushing in like a flood.

[I felt] complete and total helplessness, and frustration. You know, no matter what efforts I put in and I put in [some work] when I was at M-DCPS, I never missed a day of work. I was there before the principal. I was there early every

day. I was there before the doors got unlocked every single day and never took a day off. Those kids never had a sub. Nothing [but] total commitment. I was more committed to the profession than the players within the profession we're committed to me.

You know, I thought [why] should I make this investment in this profession, if they're not willing to invest the same amount or a similar amount in me? [Then] why? Why am I coming to work early? Why am I coming to work every day? And why am I coming up with these creative lesson plans? Why do I seem to invest myself so much in this, and they don't seem to care that I do?

I wondered, was there going to be some sort of pay off in this profession? Why am I investing myself so much in this? And they don't seem to care that I am. And they're not invested in me either. Maybe they're burned out and tired, and they just want to get through their job quietly and retire comfortably, and not rock the boat (Interview #2, 12-23-2020).

Kevin felt her efforts were disingenuous; thus, he did not renew his contract for a second year.

## **Introducing Larry**

Table 5 identifies the second former teacher who participated in this study. The participant is identified by a pseudonym for his name, his age range at the time of the interview, if he has publicly identified his sexual orientation, sex, and highest degree earned.

**Table 5**

### *Participant 2 Demographics*

Pseudonym	Age	Orientation self-identified	Gender	Experience	Highest degree
Larry	Mid-40's	Yes	Man	17 years	Bachelor of Science

### *Introducing Larry*

Larry is in a unique position in this study as he is still employed as a teacher. He is currently teaching biology at a private school in Miami, Florida. However, Larry worked for M-DCPS for over 14 years. Although Larry had not left the teaching profession altogether, his experiences while working for M-DCPS, provide valuable and significant contributions to this body of work.

Larry is one of five kids and comes from a very large Puerto Rican family. His parents briefly attended college but did not obtain their degrees. Larry is the first of his five siblings to attend and graduate from a college or university. Larry comes from humble beginnings. During the interview, he recalled that his parents received government assistance to supplement their low-income wages and to help make ends meet. “We were lower income, you know, we had assistance from, uh, from the government at times. So, I remember... you know, my mom trying to provide for us

somehow, some way or another, you know, trying to get food at the table, stuff like that” (Larry, Interview 1, December 28, 2020).

### *Answering the Call to Teach*

With the help of an athletic scholarship for swimming, Larry obtained a Bachelor of Science degree. He is an artist, scientist, and is fluent in both English and Spanish. Larry is also an avid swimmer who coached young swimmers at the local, inner city swimming pools during the summers while working in the private sector. Those interactions with his swimmers fostered the relationships that motivated Larry to become a teacher.

At the age of 28, Larry met an educational consultant, who was at the ground level of starting a charter school. She hired Larry as her assistant in charge of hiring teachers, setting up the classrooms and buying supplies, and she assigned him the task of creating a welcoming, academic environment throughout the school. Together they opened the small charter school nestled in the heart of Miami, where Larry also began teaching. It was a great school that focused both on academics (science) and athleticism. According to Larry, everything was fine for about two or three years, until the pay checks stopped flowing. “That fell through due to some of the administrators that were there [mishandling funds] and we weren't getting paid on time. So, I said, you know what? I need to get paid, you know? This is [how I make] my living. I have to make a living” (Larry, Interview #1, December 28, 2020).



### *An “Exemplar Teacher”*

Larry made the decision to leave the small Charter School, for a more financially stable work environment. He was hired by M-DCPS as a high school, science teacher. He enrolled in Miami-Dade College’s Education Certification Program where he became certified by the State of Florida. Over the course of a 17-year career, Larry has worked for a charter school, three M-DCPS high schools and is currently teaching at an undisclosed private school in Miami. In the world of teachers, Larry is an exemplar. He looks great on paper and knows that with his credentials and experience, any school would find him a worthy candidate for employment. He is a bilingual, Hispanic, certified in Earth Science and Biology. He has experience teaching Advance Placement (AP) Biology and has received Highly Effective Summative Evaluations for all, but one year of his teaching career.

Larry felt that he was valued and appreciated by his colleagues and administration at the schools where he worked. His achievements included being nominated by his colleagues for Rookie Teacher of the Year and Teacher of the Year. He was offered extra period supplements, translation, monetary gifts from what he called “The Gods” (i.e., gifts offered by administration to strong teachers who could survive taking on an extra classes without having a dedicated planning period and still not skip a beat).

It's nice. It's humbling. You know, it's nice to be able to do something because you want to from your heart. And then, yeah, these accolades occur, but it's just who you are. You know, that's what you want to be. I want a program that's successful. I wanna be a teacher that is successful. You know, I just don't want to

go in there and just know that's my job. Just going through the motions. No, I'm there for a reason. Let's get it done, you know?

[Yes,] it's nice to be acknowledged. I think it builds a nice report [with colleagues.] We have the teachers, and we have the administrators all connecting [and agreeing]. The administrators know who we are... they're acknowledging us for our successes, which is nice. It does build a nice community... that's important, especially in the school setting. (Larry, Interview 1, December 28, 2020)

During the interview, I asked Larry, "What did a good day look like? Walk me through that." Larry, with a smile on his face, proudly recalled the day he literally saved a student's life during one of his classes.

I had to administer the EpiPen [to a student in distress], which was scary, but at the same time, that child, I mean, I spoke to the parents that day. I also got a nice email and [another] phone call later. I remember them saying, "Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much. You know, for keeping everything under control, and saving my child's life." But just that acknowledgement from the parents. Hey, you know, we see you. Thank you for not only teaching our child, but everything else that you have to do. It's incredible. It's a great feeling.

So, that was just one of many [good days]. That was an incident that I wouldn't want anybody to ever go through. But luckily, it happened to me. I knew how to deal with it [through my experience] as a lifeguard. I was placed in a situation

where I had to take the role and keep everybody else calm and focus on what's at hand. (Larry, Interview 1, December 28, 2020).

Other good days for Larry came in the form of validation for his efforts in teaching his students. All administrators and teachers are on pins and needles during the time of year when the scores for End-of-Course Examinations (EOCs) are released. EOC assessments are computer-based, criterion-referenced assessments that measure the Florida Standards (FS) or the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) for specific courses, as outlined in their course descriptions (Florida Department of Education, 2022). EOCs for middle and high schools play a pivotal role for both the students and the schools. For some students, at the high school level, EOCs are factored into the overall course grade and maybe a graduation requirement. For the schools, EOC's are factored into the school's rating by the State of Florida (Florida Department of Education, 2022). Larry was rarely one of those teachers nervous about impending scores being released. In fact, he looked forward to seeing the results, seeing just how well his students performed on the state-mandated tests.

When my students [would] get back their EOC Scores, they emailed me, you know, I just wanna' thank you, what a great year it has been and you were able to help me succeed on this exam. It's those little things that do make a difference. It's the reason why I teach. My reward. (Larry, Interview 1, December 28, 2020)

Larry admitted that his good days outweighed his bad days as a teacher. He recalled a time when he was tasked to teach his first AP class. From the way he told his

story, it seemed that it wasn't just a bad day, but rather a bad year riddled with complaints and unhappy students. He had been thrust into the AP world, teaching an AP Biology course and was faced with the daunting prospect of having to learn a totally new curriculum as well as having to learn the students who were enrolled in this high-level course, along with their high expectation parents. Larry had no problem expressing how difficult of a time it was for him.

I still remember teaching my first AP class and you know, just kind of being thrown in. I didn't have the materials I needed to begin with, you know, to fully prepare me to teach the course. So, you know, my other [non-AP] classes, I had everything set up where I had my lesson plans and everything. Everything flowed. And with this AP course...[hesitation] I remember looking back, I'm like, man, I was all over the place. I had no structure. I remember I had one student... she was micromanaging everything and that was frustrating for me because here I am trying to, you know, do the best that I can, and the student just wanted to like, how else can I get the teacher in trouble?

She just kept complaining to the principal, complaining to anyone who would listen about how terrible a job I was doing. I was just like... look, I'm doing the best that I can! Another student, I acknowledge that he had a reason to complain. I was a first year AP Biology teacher and I was bad. I look back now and man, it was chaotic. It was disastrous. How exhausting... teaching AP means I had to relearn everything... it was very difficult. I was literally gasping for air for at least half the year. (Larry, Interview 1, December 28, 2020)

Larry expressed throughout this ordeal, that he felt supported by the principal. He felt she understood what he was going through and that she assisted and supported him with learning the curriculum and supported him with the students and their parents. He revealed that the matter ended up turning around for his good and that he and his principal grew closer as a result.

### ***Show Me the Money***

Traditionally, the teaching profession, was not a well-paying job, even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Researchers were lamenting the plight of teachers and their struggle for higher wages as far back as 1905. Early literature on the monthly wages for teachers in the United States, specifically in New York cite \$47.55 for men teachers and \$39.10 for women teachers; pay that was compared to the work of a policeman, letter carrier, stenographer, and even a New York street cleaner (Skinner, 1905). Speaker Nixon in his seventh inaugural address to the Assembly at Albany said:

We must not lose sight of the main purpose of our public school system, namely, training for good citizenship, and providing that each generation may come into manhood and womanhood capable of self-support and be able to support their dependents. We boast of our institutions as much as we please, pointing with pride to our organized school systems, our modern courses of study, our great school buildings, progressive boards of education, enormous expenditures for public schools, but the influence which works for the greatest good is the devoted and unselfish service of our teachers- yet, with these salaries, school teaching must be regarded as an unimportant business. (Skinner, 1905, p. 203)

He lamented further that teachers should be paid more because at that time, he recognized that teachers were asked to do more, even in 1905.

We are constantly raising the requirements for a teacher- constantly making it more difficult to enter the profession and easier to leave it. The miserable salaries we are paying are destroying the effectiveness of our schools; keeping them from the very people who would be best to teach our schools. Teachers of the state deserve the best we have – in sympathy and in salary. (Skinner, 1905, p. 203)

As a top-rated, highly effective teacher, Larry yearned to be recognized for his credentials, achievements, and expertise and felt he should be compensated appropriately. But, like most M-DCPS teachers, and teachers across the country, Larry felt he was not being paid enough for the job he was doing. He was not being paid his worth. After 14 years of teaching in the fourth largest school district in this nation, Larry was fed up with his annual salary.

To make ends meet, he felt pressured to coach the swim team, take on extra periods to supplement his income. The downside is that Larry found himself spending an extreme amount of time at the school, not to mention having to plan for lessons and grade papers. He found himself working on weekends to keep his classes afloat.

To make extra money, I had to start picking up more work. I asked for a 7<sup>th</sup> period. I asked for a coaching supplement. It was exhausting. I'm not gonna' lie, I was working from 7 a.m. till 8 p.m. somedays, especially when coaching” (Larry, Interview 2, January 8, 2021).

The constant battle for a salary increase began to take a toll on Larry. He became angry and felt unappreciated for his hard work and dedication to his craft – and to his students.

We constantly have to fight for a raise. And I'm like, why do we have to fight for a raise when I'm doing... [pause] I mean, I'm a highly efficient teacher, and I still have to ask my supervisors and union reps when are we getting a raise? And you know... the doubt begins to set in and I'm not sure if or when a raise will ever happen. That shouldn't occur at all. I don't know how budgeting works. I don't understand that aspect. Maybe us teachers need a little course on how the state allocates certain amounts of money and how that money is spread out. I could be highly efficient, but then the other teacher could be satisfactory and we're still making the same amount of money, so that says to me that I don't have to work as hard in the end. But I'm not gonna' do that – that's not who I am. But it would be nice if you are highly efficient, you are rewarded for that, you know (Larry, Interview #, January 8, 2021).

Those feelings of anger and being undervalued engulfed Larry's psyche and slowly began to eat away at his commitment to M-DCPS. He began not only contemplating if he should continue teaching for M-DCPS; he began contemplating if he should remain in the teaching profession. But Larry loved teaching. It was gratifying working with students and seeing the light bulb turn on in the mist of grasping new concepts. But, he also needed to make a better living and teaching was not providing the means to do that.

With a combination of fear of the unknown and a little self-doubt, Larry began to contemplate other employment opportunities –

I went through a period for about maybe a year or two where I was like, I don't wanna keep doing this. Um, due to the fact that, you know, I wasn't getting paid as well as I should have been. I think it's just natural to go through this [thought process].

Why leave? Take a chance? I think I was afraid to make the jump. And what if it didn't work out? I think my confidence was not as strong when faced with the prospect of starting over. I came to a point, like, I was gonna make the jump. And if they say no, what do I have to lose? I can always come back to M-DCPS.

(Larry, Interview 2, January 8, 2021)

Led by the age-old philosophy, “You don't burn bridges you may need to cross again in the future,” Larry felt compelled to have a frank conversation with his principal, informing her that he would be interviewing for other positions outside of M-DCPS. She had always been supportive of Larry and her response eased his anxiety and made the conversation easier when he confessed his intentions.

She was like, at the end of the day, I want what's best for you. You know, you got to do what's right for you. And she supported me. And to me, that meant a lot. She understood. You know, she understood. It's nice to be able to be honest and open with your co-workers, you know, to agree instead of hiding everything

(Larry, Interview 2, January 8, 2021).

One of Larry's friends worked at a small private school in Miami. He knew there was a science position available and encouraged Larry to apply for the job. Larry's



decision to apply was based solely on the premise that just maybe, this little private school, and its administrators would value Larry’s contributions and pay him what he was worth. Larry interviewed for the position and was offered the job on the spot. “Honestly, the amount of money they offered was a big factor. I'm not gonna say the name of the school, but I’m telling you the pay, um, I'm making about \$20,000 more than I was at the district” (Larry, Interview 2, January 8, 2021).

With a base salary of around \$46,000 without supplements, and after working for M-DCPS for 17 years– Larry was all too happy to accept the new teaching position he was offered.

***Introducing James***

Table 6 identifies the third former teacher who participated in this study. The participant is identified by a pseudonym for his name, his age range at the time of the interview, if he has publicly identified his sexual orientation, sex, and highest degree earned.

**Table 6**

*Participant 3 Demographics*

Pseudonym	Age	Orientation Self-Identified	Gender	Experience	Highest Degree
James	Mid-30's	Yes	Man	7 years	BA History

James holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History and a minor in Education and is in his mid-30’s. He is currently enrolled in graduate school seeking a master’s degree in Marine Science. He is a former teacher of M-DCPS where he taught middle grades for 7

years. He is certified in Social Science 6-12; Earth Science; and he is certified to teach the gifted.

James is the product of a single-parent household where his Cuban-born mother worked several jobs to make ends meet. Unlike James's uncles and aunts, who did very well for themselves after migrating from Cuba, making loads of money wasn't in the cards for Ms. Alvarez (a pseudonym). She worked hard to care for her son. Taking care of her son was important.

My mom worked seven days a week. I saw the toll it took on her working so hard. I barely had a real relationship with her other than, I knew that was the woman working her ass off for me! My relatives did well for themselves. My mom did not. But, she would say, yes, I'm poor, but I'm happy.

### ***Where It All Began***

One of Ms. Alvarez's many jobs was as a preschool teacher. She served as James' inspiration for becoming a teacher. James also credits his middle and high school teachers, for the roles they played in his life.

I'm just really grateful for the teachers that were able to reach out to me and help me kind of get to where I am today. You know, the ones that made me crafty or creative or whatever it is... I owe that to my teachers (Interview #1, Wednesday, December 23, 2020).

James' teaching career began when he landed a job at a local non-profit organization aimed at teaching children with disabilities watersports, sailing and the importance of caring for and preserving Miami's waterways. From there he migrated to

the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) After School All Stars, a school-based after-school program that provides free, comprehensive after-school programs that keep children safe and help them succeed in school and life. The YMCA laid the foundation for his teaching career. The program was housed in a M-DCPS middle school. James recalled it was the interactions with the kids that kept him going back. “It was my shoe in the door. It became this teaching experience... little weird moments where I [realized] yeah, yeah, this is where I wanna be. Something I love and I wanted to relate. And that was a big part of why I taught” (Interview #1, Wednesday, December 23, 2020).

Soon, James generated the interest of the school’s principal, after helping to defuse a couple of sticky situations in the program.

I was extremely lucky. I didn't even have to substitute. I'd handled some pretty serious problems that happened in the aftercare program for the principal, concerning different students and their parents, some that involved the program, and some that didn't. Wonderful lady, she'd had her eye on me early on. I was her guy for a while (Interview #1, Wednesday, December 23, 2020).

The school’s principal encouraged James to get certified and after doing so... she hired him to teach middle grades Science.

### ***A “Star” is Born***

During the interview, it became evident that James was a “Rock Star” of a teacher. He was young and bilingual, certified in Social Science 6-12 and Earth Science, and was certified to the gifted. He loved teaching and it was obvious to his peers that he loved teaching. They nominated him for “Rookie Teacher of the Year.” His dedication

and dependability became obvious to his principal, and he was rewarded with perks of the profession. James received extra period supplements which meant extra money in his pockets. He was offered various coaching positions which also meant extra money in his pockets, and he didn't shy away from performing certain administrative tasks, perks that only the hardworking – the “do-ers” were offered.

I always had a supplement, for which I was very fortunate. So, I always taught six periods straight through. I taught civics all day long, all different levels. Any time a position was offered to me, I'd always ask, 'Are you sure? Me? Nobody else wants this?' Thinking, like I don't have enough already? You know how it is when ten percent of the school says yes to extra work and everybody else says no. I was one of the ones saying yes... all the time. I was producing in the classroom... I was coaching sports because the kids wanted to play that sport. I was happy to take the money and take on the extra responsibility.

The best part of teaching for James was the relationships he fostered with his students. His humbleness wouldn't allow him to admit that he was a role model for the many students' whose lives he touched each day. He was able to see himself in many of his students, especially the boys who grew up without a father figure in their lives. James loved the adventure of teaching, being in the schoolhouse. He spoke proudly of his everyday routine which began with his early morning arrival to the building.

Each day, I got there early. School started at 9AM... I'd be there at 7AM walking in with the custodians. I liked to chit chat with them, see how they're doing. I'd usually have a kid waiting to hang out with me usually because his parent dropped

him off too early. Others would come early to catch up on work. I was very tech-oriented, so I used that as an opportunity for the kids to have extra access to technology first thing in the morning.

James loved the chaos of middle school. He empathized with middle schoolers and wanted to assist them with navigating through their social pressures in a healthy manner. He loved the “Ah Ha” moments when the light bulb turned on for his students. He felt that being a teacher was his way of serving his community. I could see the joy in James’s eyes when he revealed that he keeps in touch with three of his former students who are now teachers.

I have three former students that are now teachers this year. I never expected them to become teachers. They went to college and kept in touch with me. One was supposed to be an architect, one an economist and the other was obsessed with Women’s Studies. They all used my name as a point of reference and called me to tell me when they were hired. Yeah, it's humbling.

When pressed to express how it made him feel, to know that he had such an influence on those students who, in essence, wanted to be just like him, James shied away from expressing those feelings and responded with a simple, “It makes me gush.”

### ***What A Bad Day Looked Like***

During the interview, I asked James, “What would a bad day look like? Walk me through that.” James took a breath, then he recounted what he considered a bad day.

I guess a day where me and the kids were “off” and nothing was getting through. I remember this lesson on enlightenment thinkers. Every year, I’d try a new

approach and be prepared ahead of time. I think my energy- if I were nervous, would kind of dictate how badly it was going to go. That benchmark is notoriously awful, like everybody does terrible in it. But I think visibly seeing their frustration at the lesson and my delivery. That's what a bad day looked like for me.

Let us put James's "Bad Day" into perspective. For many teachers, there is a broad-spectrum of incidents that could happen in a classroom during a "Bad Day." Many with whom I have worked would not classify a failed lesson as a bad day. Many would reflect on what went wrong, try a different approach, and revisit the lesson, especially if it is a targeted benchmark. Recounting a "Bad Day" for many teachers might be a fight that took place inside their classroom; an administrator entered the classroom for an impromptu observation and the teacher was ill-prepared or was not teaching at all; or a student had a medical emergency where paramedics had to be called to the classroom traumatizing the students and the teacher.

### ***The Pressures of the Job***

For James, however, coming with "Rock Star" status did not come without its challenges and high expectations. As the school's resident "Yes" man, working as the co-director of the magnet program, the athletic director, coaching various athletic sports, performing various administrative tasks, all while teaching six periods per day proved to be too much to handle. He was spreading himself thin and quickly realized that with all the monetary perks he enjoyed and the autonomy he was afforded, managing his time and his stress became difficult.

The administrative duties became more important as a result to the school than my actual time in my classroom. And that became an issue because I felt like I was giving up on my kids – my focus was somewhere else and not on my most important job – teaching.

One of my kids mentioned that if anyone wanted to see me, it would be on a field trip with the global program. I was on field trips more than I was in my classroom. We took almost 26 field trips a year. That program was quite important to the school. But, with it came a cost for the people that were running it.

I felt like I was doing a horrible job as a teacher. I became complacent. And so, um, because the administrative part was also the political part, it was important to show face. I became frustrated and felt in my mind that I'd lost sight of what was most important – the kids.

James and I had a very candid conversation about the stigma he battled against during his tenure. When asked, "How was your relationship with your immediate and extended colleagues?" James took a breath and responded with the notion that he tried to get along with everyone, but not everyone was as nice to him. He recounted an incident where a colleague made a comment that sparked feelings of self-doubt and made him feel like an outsider. Proud about the new positions he held, James included his titles in the signature of his email. This did not sit well with a couple of his colleagues. Their comments made him realize they were having discussions about him; they even made

judgments about his lifestyle and relaxed demeanor. Those teachers felt that he was bragging, “look at me,” and made their disapproval known.

When I was getting the positions, I remember taking a lot of flak, people were upset that I was being offered so many jobs. They made fun of my signature on my email because I had all my stupid titles on there. But I wasn't bragging. If I didn't have to write another email, I would have been happy as a cat. There were other teachers who held like fifteen titles in the school, and they weren't talked about. I felt like I was being chastised for being an overachieving teacher... wanting to give the school his all. I was damned if I did and damned if I didn't” (Interview 2, December 28, 2020).

It became evident to James that some of his peers began to resent the neophyte teacher for being the “Yes” man. James began to ponder how his colleagues might be viewing him as a teacher and as a colleague. This notion began to weigh heavily on his heart because it mattered to James what people thought about him. Since high school, throughout college and even as a teacher, he's carried a persona of being a “hippy stoner,” one who liked to smoke weed and get high.

I've dealt with that my whole life, and ironically, I don't smoke. I was young, in a workforce dominated by women. I guess I've always kind of looked like a stoner. But I don't do pot. Not for any reason other than I just don't have an interest in it. Never really have. It's always frustrated me that because of my demeanor, that was the assumption. I've been given “random” drug tests many times in the past under this assumption.



Although his demeanor raised his colleagues' eyebrows, it just might have been what attracted the students to him. According to James, he was not the disciplinarian type of teacher that students were scared to encounter. He did not need to be. He was not in the hallways yelling at students to hurry into his classroom. He was not the teacher other teachers sent their most disruptive students to catch a break. He was the young, easy going, cool teacher, always relaxed, one who did not speak much, and one who contemplated what he would say before he said it.

He did not own a car and that was fine with James. He preferred to take the monthly expenses for a car, car insurance and gas to travel and gain worldly experiences. As James's luck would have it, someone would have something negative to say about such choices. James recounted one of those rainy South Florida mornings when he arrived to work drenched. While shaking the water from his umbrella at the main entrance, a colleague shouted from a distance, "I'll bet you wished you had a car now!" How did she know James didn't own a car? Was it the talk around school? What else were they saying about James behind his back? This incident further perpetuated the notion that James was under a microscope, under surveillance, he was being watched at every turn. He started to become disenchanted, not with the teaching profession, but with the adults within the organization.

### ***The Grass is Greener – Part I***

The phrase "the grass is greener on the other side" is not necessarily true... Instead, as one of my favorite vocalists, singer/song writer Eric Roberson, wrote in one of his songs, "The grass is greener wherever you water it." In relation to James'

experiences, he was already disenchanted with his colleagues' judgment and what he perceived as trash-talking, and this along with the heavy and demanding workload that came with being the "Yes" man at his school, made James want a way out. A way out presented itself and he took it. His girlfriend landed an attractive job in another city, and James made the decision to relocate with her.

Midway through my tenure, I fell in love with a woman, and I moved for a year. At the end of the school year, I told my principal I had to see where this relationship would take us... I told her, I'm resigning and moving. Thank you... you've always been so good to me. I can certainly help facilitate the next person coming in to replace me and turn over everything to them.

But, as usual... when you uproot your life, detach from family and your day-to-day life to relocate to another city to follow someone else's dreams, it never works out. So, at the end of that year, we parted ways and I moved back to Miami, and I was quickly in front of my old principal begging for my job back... any job. Luckily, my principal was like... don't be an idiot. Of course, you can come back. She just so happened to have an open Science position and it was a pretty effortless return. (Interview 2, December 28, 2020)

### ***Things Were Not the Same***

The new school year started, and James had a new schedule which came with a new group of students and a fresh perspective on the extra leadership roles he would and would not accept. No longer would he be the "Yes" man in the building. No longer did he need to prove himself as a teacher. He was over compulsion to be an overachiever. He

wanted a workload that would not take him away from his students. He wanted to be comfortable. He took on a sixth period course for the extra bump in pay and he became the director of the magnet program.

But, things felt different this time around; there was an air in the school that wasn't there when he left. It did not take long before the murmurings and gossip began to circulate in the teachers' lounge about James's sudden return after a year of being gone. There was a lot of infighting taking place within other departments. Even his principal took notice that James wasn't putting in the late hours and weekends like he once did. No longer was James spending all his time at the school, he was finally going home at the end of the workday.

From James' experience, it was usually not a good look to be leaving the building with the kids at dismissal. In fact, it was frowned upon by the administration; the notion was that if a teacher was leaving that early, then he/she was not putting in the time required to complete instructional tasks like planning, grading papers, updating the gradebook, engaging in professional development, making calls to parents, especially if the teacher has a sixth period supplement. James made note of a one such "slacker" teacher, who, each day, walked out of the building at dismissal with the students.

There was one guy in my department they called him "Beefcake." The guy was nice but, he had a tough schedule, all lower-level kids who usually came with behavior problems. He asked the Assistant Principal of Curriculum (APC) for a break, to give him a mix of lower level and regular level classes. He didn't ask for the higher-level students. But, they didn't give this guy the time of day.

The administration really didn't care for this guy very much because dismissal was 3:50pm... and each day, he was in the parking lot by 3:52pm. What's wrong with that? The guy had four kids, and his wife was still in Cuba. So, he left at dismissal to care for his kids. The guy had responsibilities. The guy had a life (Interview 2, December 28, 2020).

At this point in our conversation, I felt compelled to note that I understood this matter from both angles. From the teacher's perspective, he could not dedicate long hours to the school, that would mean neglecting his own children. Sponsoring extra-curricular activities afterschool was not feasible for him. Without being fully aware of teachers' circumstances, some administrators may categorize teachers in this position as lazy, unwilling to do more or give more, only doing enough to get by.

James's new perspective during his return landed him in the same category as the "slacker" teacher. In need of extra cash, he thought becoming the director of the magnet program would fit perfectly. But his principal had taken notice of the change in James's behavior and associated it with work ethic and commitment. She her observations known as James recounted.

It's interesting, when I came back from my year off, I needed to make some extra cash. I wanted to get more involved in the magnet program. Her response to me was... "Well, I didn't know if you still wanted to do that stuff anymore because you were leaving so early." I was like, I was leaving early because I had nothing to do. I would rather grade my papers at home, no reason to sit in my class alone for six hours just grading papers (Interview 2, December 28, 2020).

Now James's eyes were open to how judgmental the administration could be and the tactics they used. It was as though being absent for a year was enough to erase from their memory James's hard work and dedication. Gone from their memory was how much time he had dedicated to the school – all the leadership positions he held – all the long hours he had invested in the success of his students; all of that had been forgotten in his view. Although James was granted the director of magnet position, his perspective had changed.

***“I” Am in Charge of the Field Trip***

As discussed in the literature review (Andin et al., 2017; Erden et al., 2011), patriarchal gendered roles for men and women have impacted how teachers of different genders and gender identifications are expected to behave and what roles and responsibilities they are expected to take in their schools. In the teaching profession, teachers and administrators are still often offered or assigned tasks that align with beliefs about what is “fitting for men,” like being stern disciplinarians or providing coaching in sports like football and basketball, or teaching “masculine” subjects like physical education or science and math. Meanwhile, these entrenched beliefs also effect what opportunities women are offered with traditional “feminine” roles being to nurture and care for students; manage all things curriculum centered, plan meetings, parties and school events, and decorate the school according to the holiday or season (Andin et al., 2017; Erden et al., 2011).

From my experience as an administrator, I can attest that assistant principals who are men, especially newly hired assistant principals, are tasked to ensure that facilities are

operating effectively; to ensure that custodians properly clean and sanitize classrooms, hallways and the exterior of the campus; to ensure the campus is safe and secure; and to be the disciplinarian for unruly students, amongst other tasks (O’Keeffe, 2016; Yang & McNair, 2019). These men are sometimes not trusted with tasks commonly executed by women administrators, such as curriculum/instructional-driven tasks, creating instructional focus calendars, and leading data-chat discussions with teachers and department chairpersons. In my 20-years of experience as an educator, I can attest that gendered role assignments are still commonplace.

James was not exempt from these perceptions of gendered roles. As the director of the magnet school, James was tasked with facilitating his first parent night meeting to discuss the upcoming 8<sup>th</sup> grade field trip to Boston. He was prepared with food and refreshments, a PowerPoint with all the information that parents would need and a take-home, informational pamphlet. But no amount of preparation would suffice for the mothers who would have preferred that women led this effort.

I was running the magnet program; I did my first parent meeting for the eighth-grade field trip to Boston. That was my field trip. I was very organized. I remember, after the fact, that all these parents went kind of around me as the contact and asked the other teachers who were women all this information, you know, even though I was right there.

It was like they only wanted to hear the information from other women because only then could the information be trusted. They wanted to make sure that the women teachers were going on the field trip too! Like, I was going along just to

be the fun, cool chaperone – hanging out and passing out potato chips! I guess they thought that I would lose a kid, or something (Interview 2, December 28, 2020).

The level of disrespect that James felt, during that meeting, was unfathomable. He found himself in the same state of mind as the first time he resigned and moved from Miami with his then girlfriend. Once again, disenchantment with his colleagues, the teaching profession, and the parents was coming back to the forefront.

You spend all that time making all that work and thinking, you know, five moves ahead so that, you know, there's no questions, you know? You have everything covered, you plan it all out, and yeah, people look over your stuff to make sure there wouldn't be any questions and you're still being undermined. And there's no validity, like there isn't a reason to it. Why? Why is that the case? Because men are riskier? Or is it because as a as a teacher, I don't care as much... like what? “Well, he's stoned or he's aloof... I'm not sending my kid 1000 miles away with this guy that I don't trust. I want to make sure that there's somebody else going to be more reliable.” (James, Interview 2, December 28, 2020)

James's assertions that his parents were distrusting of his intentions are not uncommon as the literature discussed earlier shows. Historically, men have been questioned as it pertains to their motives for choosing to work in the teaching profession. Prior research highlights widely held fears about men working with young children and the stigma and marginalization of men who teach still abound as they are on occasion accused of wrong doings in schools (Cruickshank, 2019; Mills et al., 2004; Yang & McNair, 2019).

Men in the teaching workforce must consistently contend with an array of allegations, from dealing with suspicions of being gay, to being pedophiles because they have chosen to work with young children in a profession dominated by women (Cruickshank, 2019; Mills et al., 2004; Yang & McNair, 2019). The reactions and distrust of James's parents provide a specific example of his experience of being distrusted and his perception that this was related to his gender and a variety of other personal characteristics. James felt he was operating under an intense aura of suspicion (Sargent, 2004). He felt he was being watched suspiciously as he carried out his daily tasks and interacted with children, peers, administrators, and the children's parents (Sargent, 2004).

### ***The Straw that Broke the Camel's Back***

I could sense that telling this story and reliving the experience was difficult for James. During this time in his teaching career, James was feeling beaten and weathered by the events that had taken place with his colleagues and parents at the school site. When I asked James, "What was the catalyst that prompted you to resign – the metaphorical straw that broke the camel's back?" He took a deep breath, paused, and began recalling an instance where he had an issue with another teacher and he felt the principal didn't defend him.

There was a lot of infighting at the school that year. We lost one member, they retired, from our global team. And they gave us somebody new and I don't know if it was my fault or the other director's fault or how it all [came to be.]  
But the new person who came in was just vicious.



It was the most asinine, immature thing – an argument over the school garden access hours. Like I was there, like eight o'clock tilling and dropping blocks for our garden. For five weeks, I made contacts, got donations for our gardens. This wasn't for me. And this lady had also done some of the gardening on the side. So, we were just trying to merge, and she wanted me to let her know when I was going to be in the garden, and I said, "That's fine."

I guess the way I said "fine" was kind of... mind you, this is in a text message... was kind of facetious, or not genuine. This was the foundation of her argument... that I didn't give her an 'equitable voice.'"

She went into the office and, like, really, really lied, to be honest, she told a bunch of lies about how we had treated her and [completely] made things up! I literally showed the principal our group text messages – which told the truth, and she didn't stick up for me. She didn't believe me. She told me it was more important for her to keep the peace.

I loved this lady, fall on a sword type of lady, you know, like, I owed her a lot, and I was pissed that she let this lady walk free after talking all this shit about me. After, how many times I felt that I stood up for this principal, you know? I was her guy, you know, one of her people, and man, that hurt. At that point I was like, forget it man, like, what's the point? I didn't want her to, like, you know, to denounce this person. I just wanted competing claims, man. As a professional, I wanted to sit face-to-face with this person and the principal and have an adult

conversation about the event. I never got that. (James, Interview 2, December 28, 2020)

It became clear to James that the dynamics of his relationship with his principal had changed. He had grown to love his principal. He was a teacher because of her efforts. He was loyal to her, and that loyalty was not reciprocated when he needed it the most. From his perspective, it was more important for her to keep the peace than for her to side with him in this situation. James never received closure and looked upon this as an act of betrayal.

### ***The Grass Is Greener – Part II***

Although James had not begun looking for another job, when a unique opportunity presented itself, his feelings over the recent events with his parents, colleagues, and principal allowed him to easily make the decision to resign from M-DCPS for a second time. He was already disconnected. “I met a girl....” yet, another life-altering decision where a girl was at the forefront of the decision.

She worked in the office that managed the island. We were sitting, talking, and she said that the caretaker at the time was leaving and without thinking... I gave her my resume right there and then we're talking about, like, December in the middle of the school year.

I was on top of up of my game in this school, you know, running the program. I'm doing good, and, uh, yeah, it was just too good to be true, you know? The idea of obtaining a master's degree for free and then being able to come back to teaching eventually with, you know, a little bonus in my pocket. That would be nice.

I liked the idea that I was gonna finally have, you know... getting a master's was so otherworldly to me at that point. But I knew education was, you know, my great equalizer. I was gonna be able to finally put some money away. That was awesome. You know, like, I've never been able do that, I've had to work since I was a kid.

So, you know, it was finally a point where I was going to be able to, like, kind of catch up, and make gains. Being a teacher... I was always gonna be, uh, you know, trying to catch up" (James, Interview 2, December, 28, 2020).

In the end, James, although disenchanted with the teaching profession and his colleagues, insisted that he was not dismayed with the students; in fact, they were the best part of teaching for James.

When I left, I left because I was hoping for an opportunity to improve the longevity of my career. I didn't leave because, you know, it was hard, you know. I wasn't enamored with the profession anymore. I still loved to teach. I still identify as a teacher. I still wanna be in my classroom. I still want to be there. I still think there's- I think even these three years that I've been out here, I think I've already learned so much and reflected so much on my career. That was a big part of doing the Masters, not just to get it for the money, but to continue to expand my ability to reach my kids (James, Interview 2, December 28, 2020).

## *Summary*

Chapter 4: Part 1 illuminated the recollections of the study participants' experiences of being teachers at M-DCPS through the participants' quotes and the researcher's own interpretations of the interview data. Chapter 4: Part 2 provides a detailed interpretation of the participants' experiences highlighting over-arching themes and sub-themes. Chapter 5 closes out the study with limitations, implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 4: Part II – Findings**

### **Their Reasons for Leaving**

This qualitative interview study was conducted with the goal of illuminating the experiences of three men who were former teachers for M-DCPS. Interview questions were formulated and shaped in a way that would reveal their experiences and feelings with respect to their rationales for resigning.

The findings outlined are based on the thematic analysis. The goal of thematic analysis was to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of study participants' experiences vis-à-vis the research question (Krathwol, 2000). The strength of thematic analysis is its ability to help reveal underlying complexities as you seek to identify tensions and distinctions, and to explain where and why people might differ from a general pattern (Krathwol, 2000).

### **Kevin**

For former teacher Kevin, his decision to leave M-DCPS was a direct result of his lived experience of feeling underprepared, undervalued, and under supported. Thematic analysis revealed three overarching themes: (a) Kevin experienced significant pedagogical challenges, (b) he experienced a lack of support from both the administration and the department chairperson, and (c) these experiences left him feeling undervalued and marginalized as a teacher.

**Table 7**

*Summary of Themes for Kevin*

Themes	Subthemes
Pedagogical Challenges	Lack of teaching experience. Assigned the lower-level students. Lack of classroom management.
Lack of Support: Administrative, Dept. Chairperson	Department chair not approachable. Told to write detentions instead of referrals. No guidance/support for a new teacher in the building.
Feeling Undervalued	Feeling like a placeholder, warm body in a classroom. Told contract would not be renewed for budget reasons & classroom management. Offered job haphazardly at EOY party in the cafeteria.

***Pedagogical Challenges***

For Kevin, the data related to the theme of Pedagogical Challenges chronicled the various issues he encountered during his lived experience as a teacher. In this theme, the participant discussed the pedagogical challenges due to having a lack of teaching experience. Kevin was a neophyte teacher. Before M-DCPS, Kevin taught at a small Catholic school for six months; then he taught for M-DCPS for one year.

Kevin was not the product of a teacher preparation program; he received no pedagogical preparation. He was a beginning teacher who had not taken courses in teaching methods and strategies, learning theory or child psychology—all predictors of potential challenges for a newer teacher (Ingersoll, 2012). At the point of being hired, Kevin had to learn how to build a lesson-plan, study and implement the state-mandated curriculum, and follow the district’s pacing guides without any educational background

or training. Compounding this issue even further, Kevin was assigned students with low-reading and math scores. Admittedly, Kevin did not have the tools to handle minor classroom disruptions. His lack of classroom management skills became a concern for the administration and was used as a secondary reason (administration cited budget issues initially) to not renew his teaching contract for the following year.

### ***Lack of Administrative Support***

For the second theme, Lack of Administrative Support, the data revealed that Kevin was not provided the support that he needed to be a successful first-year teacher. He claimed that his department chairperson was not approachable. During their conversations, he felt she was content knowledgeable about her field and felt she was a decent leader of the department but noted that she was “unapproachable” making him reluctant to seek additional help from her.

During their last conversation, he approached her regarding help with managing discipline issues. Her solution for him was to write detentions, as many as he would like. She discouraged Kevin from writing referrals as they were frowned upon by the administration. Unable to write referrals and not being provided the necessary resources Kevin needed to resolve the disruption problems in his classes left Kevin feeling unsupported and alone.

### ***Feeling Undervalued***

The final over-arching theme presented by the data revealed Kevin felt undervalued as a teacher. Kevin felt like a placeholder, just another warm body in a classroom. He noted that he became a teacher in response to the push for more teachers

and felt that he would be needed in this profession. He did not receive the welcome that he was expecting. He felt that if the administration had someone minimally teaching the content and supervising the students, then the administration was content.

His feelings of being undervalued were solidified when he initiated a conversation with the administration about renewing his contract for the following year. During that conversation, the assistant principal (the principal would not meet with him) cited budgetary constraints would not allow them to renew his contract. After Kevin pressed for additional information, the administrator admitted that Kevin's lack of classroom management was indeed a concern for them.

During the final days of school, Kevin was approached by the principal in the middle of a faculty end of the year celebration in the cafeteria. The principal told Kevin that if he wanted to come back to school the following year, that he could. Kevin could not believe the principal took the opportunity to approach him in such a manner about a position in front of colleagues, at an end of the year celebration. Furthermore, it had only been days since she refused to see him and he was told, by the assistant principal, that his contract would not be renewed for the upcoming year.

It was painfully obvious to Kevin that the school, the students, the principal, and her team, did not value him as a teacher. For Kevin, this was the straw that broke the camel's back prompting him to resign, not only from M-DCPS, but the teaching profession. He declined her offer and did not return.

Kevin afforded me a candid collection of feelings and experiences which enabled me to uncover three superordinate themes and a host of subthemes. Glimpses into Kevin's





**Table 8**

*Summary of Major Themes for Larry*

Themes	Subthemes
Low Salary	Teachers Don't Make Enough. After 14 years – Still Not Making Enough.
Heavy Workload	Do More to Supplement Income. Home Life Suffered.
Feeling Unappreciated	Pay Me What I'm Worth. Or, Private School Will.

***Low Salary***

For Larry, the data revealed the over-arching theme of Low Salary as one of the major contributors to his decision to leave M-DCPS as a teacher. In this theme, the participant lamented his concerns over salary. The teaching profession does not yield high wages. Larry loved teaching. He loved his students. But, as the “bread winner” of his household, Larry felt that he, and his colleagues, should not have to fight for consistent and healthy pay increases from M-DCPS or the State of Florida. Although Larry was receiving pay increases, according to the M-DCPS Teacher Step Plan, he felt they were minimal and not aligned to the rising costs of living in Miami, Florida.

***Heavy Workload***

For the second over-arching theme, Heavy Workload, the data revealed that Larry encountered a number of challenges contributing to his burnout as a teacher. After 14 years of working for M-DCPS, Larry’ teacher-based, annual salary was \$46,000. Larry became angry at the fact that he was forced to add on additional responsibilities to supplement his salary.

A considerable bump in pay was generated when Larry picked up a seventh period course. This also meant that each year, Larry would not have a dedicated planning period which meant he would have to plan during late hours at the school, or on the weekends at home. In his relentless quest for more money, he coached several athletic teams throughout the year. Coaching positions added additional dollars to his paycheck in the form of “supplements” but also demanded a great deal of after school and weekend hours. The heavy workload was demanding and exhausting. He was exerting too much time and energy to his job; logging 12 hours days at the school was physically and mentally taking its toll. Thus, Larry’s home life began to suffer. The workload was also taxing on his relationship.

### ***Feeling Unappreciated***

The final over-arching theme presented by the data came in the form of Larry Feeling Unappreciated as a highly effective teacher. In the world of men teachers, Larry is was considered exemplary. He looks great on paper and knows that with his credentials, any school would find him a worthy candidate for employment. He is bilingual, Hispanic, certified in Earth Science and Biology. He has experience teaching AP Biology and has received Highly Effective Summative Evaluations for all, but one year of his 14 years long teaching career.

Knowing his worth, Larry demanded to be paid accordingly. Long gone were the hopes of receiving commensurate pay increases that matched his credentials and efforts inside the class, or even pay that was aligned to the high costs of living in Miami, Florida. Fed up, Larry began looking for other means of employment that would yield a higher



**Table 9**

*Summary of Themes for James*

Themes	Subthemes
Searching for Better Opportunities	Followed Love to Tampa Free Master's Degree
Battled Stigmas	"Pot Head" Persona Men Not Curriculum Driven Cool Teacher/Not a Disciplinarian
Gendered Division of Labor	I am the "Yes" Man

*Searching for Better Opportunities*

For former teacher James, the data related to the theme of Searching for Better Opportunities encompassed James' reasons for the leaving the teaching profession, not once, but twice. He was chasing love and his aspirations to better himself during his time as a teacher.

His first resignation from M-DCPS and the teaching profession was to follow love across the state of Florida. His girlfriend landed an attractive job and set the wheels in motion to move. James made the decision to relocate with his girlfriend. At the end of the school year, James spoke to his principal and revealed that he had fallen in love and that he would be relocating to start a new life with his girlfriend.

After his principal graciously rehired James after a year away, he taught for a full year. During that year, he encountered difficulties with parents, colleagues and his principal. There was heavy infighting going on in the school. His colleagues had become judgmental of his demeanor and lifestyle. One colleague in particular challenged James concerning their mutual garden project. Once very supportive of James, during this issue,

the principal did not defend James, choosing to keep the peace instead of showing James the support he so desperately needed. James viewed this as an act of betrayal and was left feeling angry and unsupported by a principal he cared about and supported in every capacity.

Dinner and drinks with a friend during a night out proved to be the precursor for his next exit from the teaching profession. James was presented with an opportunity that he could not refuse.

James was already disenchanted with the teaching profession. Yet, he insisted he was not dismayed at the students. His issue was more about being given a fair assessment from parents and his colleagues. At the end of that year, James made his second decision to leave M-DCPS and the teaching profession.

### *Stigmas*

An analysis of the data revealed a second over-arching theme of Stigmas. James was the victim of several perceived stigmas that were attached to his work ethic and reputation by colleagues and parents. The first stigma that James battled against was his “Pot Head” persona. James reported that the way he looked and behaved, while seeming approachable to middle school students, was off-putting to his colleagues.

The second stigma that James battled against was the perception cast by the administration that only “Slacker Teachers” left at dismissal with the students. It was an unspoken rule at James’s school that dedicated and loyal teachers, who were truly there for the kids, did not leave school at dismissal – there was always work to catch up on. He

noted another teacher's plight and expressed just how hard he fought to keep the administration from pinning the slacker teacher label on his back.

It would not take long before the slacker stigma was attached to James and his work ethic. During a conversation with his principal, before his second exit from the teaching profession, it became evident that his principal had already begun to think differently about James.

The third stigma that James battled against was that men are not curriculum-oriented, organized, or capable of coordinating major events. He chronicled his experience as the director of the magnet program. The parent informational night that he organized and facilitated was an eye-opening experience for James as certain mothers were not comfortable with him taking a leadership role on the field trip.

### ***Gendered Division of Labor***

The final over-arching theme presented by the data was revealed in the form of gendered division of labor—these are “masculine” roles that James, and men teachers, may find themselves assigned by the administration. As prior research shows, such divisions of labor may occur because some may believe men are good at manual labor – and will readily work long hours without complaint (Yang & McNair, 2019).

As a young teacher without a family or a spouse, James was the perfect candidate to assume these roles and responsibilities and it was his perceptions that he was expected to do so.

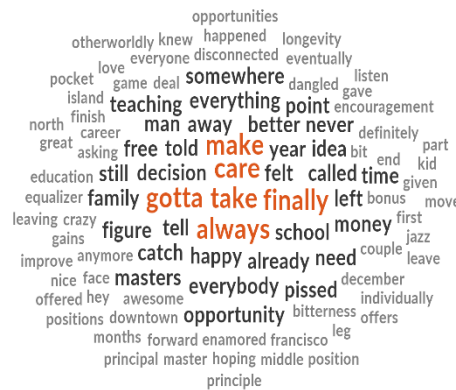
With a desire to be loyal to his principal, the person who hired him, he said yes, each time she asked James to coach a sport, become the athletic director over all sports

activities, and eventually take on the magnet program director’s position which involved certain manual labor tasks like maintaining a garden. He was her “Yes” man, yes to whatever she asked of him and thus, the subtheme of being the “Yes” man was illuminated.

Saying yes to his principal and taking on additional roles and responsibilities also meant trying to mitigate an increasingly heavier workload; James began to log long hours at the school, and it began to take a toll.

**Figure 3**

*James’s Word Frequency – Better Opportunities*





## **Revisiting the Research Questions**

Through my own experiences as an educator for over 21 years, I offer my interpretation of the experiences of these men as we revisit and answer the research question:

What are the reasons men decide to leave their teaching positions in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS)? This question is accompanied by the following sub-questions:

1. What organizational characteristics contributed to these men's decision to leave M-DCPS?
2. What individual circumstances contributed to these men's decision to leave M-DCPS?
3. What social & cultural factors contributed to these men's decision to leave

### ***For Kevin***

There were three over-arching themes identified which contributed to Kevin's decision to leave M-DCPS: Pedagogical Challenges, Lack of Support, and Feeling Undervalued. These overarching themes fall under the umbrella of *Organizational Characteristics* as the contributing factors in Kevin's decision to resign from M-DCPS.

### ***For Larry***

There were three over-arching themes identified which contributed to his decision to leave M-DCPS for a private institution: Low Salary, Heavy Workload, Feeling Unappreciated. These overarching themes fall under the umbrella of *Organizational Characteristics* as the contributing factors in Kevin's decision to leave M-DCPS.

### ***For James***

There were two over-arching themes identified which contributed to his decisions to leave M-DCPS, not once, but twice: Searching for Better Opportunities, Battling Against Stigmas, and navigating through Gendered Assigned Roles. These overarching themes fall under the umbrella of *Organizational Characteristics* as well as *Individual Circumstances* as the contributing factors in James's decision to leave M-DCPS.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented a thematic analysis of three men's individual experiences; their perceptions and recollections of their experiences and were illuminated and discussed through my own interpretation of the data.

Despite the details outlined in the study participants' experiences, their decisions to leave M-DCPS were not a universally tragic decision for them. Despite pedagogical challenges, lack of support and feelings of being undervalued as a teacher, Kevin, for instance, is currently enrolled in graduate school. Larry is currently teaching at a private school and earning considerably more money than he was making at M-DCPS. In his case, he was happy being a teacher and wanted to continue to teach. He was unhappy with the heavy workload and feelings of being unappreciated by a district that would not pay him what he thought he was worth. Lastly, James, loved teaching and pleasing his students and principal. James left the teaching profession twice: the first time was in his quest to follow love and the second time was in his quest for better opportunities, which would mean a better way of life. James is also currently enrolled in graduate school.

## **Chapter 5: Limitations, Implications and Recommendations**

### ***Limitations***

This qualitative interview study investigated the experiences of three men who exited M-DCPS. The goal was to portray their experiences and identify their rationales for resigning from the fourth largest school district in the nation. Creswell (2012) defined limitations as influences that the researcher cannot control and place restrictions on what claims and warrants a researcher might be able to justify in a study.

During the study, I encountered the following limitations: a) I am currently employed as an assistant principal by M-DCPS, which contributed to my understanding of these participant's experiences, but also required me to engage in reflexivity throughout and inevitably influenced my research design and interpretations; b) the sample size included only three participants in one district; c) and the interview and questionnaire provided only one set of data from which to draw conclusions.

First, I conducted this study as an employee of M-DCPS. Although exercising reflexivity was difficult, to the best of my ability, I did not allow what I already know about the M-DCPS, and my own experiences, attitudes, and pre-existing thoughts and notions to overshadow the study participants' voices (Josselson, 2013).

A second notable limitation in this study was the sample. The sample size of this study included three men who left M-DCPS. Additional study participants would have been ideal as the goal was to present a holistic picture of how men experience being a teacher and their reasons for leaving M-DCPS. Clearly this study's sample does not represent all men who resigned from M-DCPS. In addition, this study offers a unique

perspective specific to the context of Miami, Florida (a very large urban center). A heartier sample size of additional participants from a variety of schools would have made a substantial contribution to the literature on the attrition of men from the teaching profession.

The semi-structured interview protocol may have limited important background information I collected from Kevin. For instance, while analyzing Kevin's data, I realized I did not capture certain information about his life's history that would allow me to paint a more holistic picture. Kevin did not speak about his parents, or where he was raised, or how his parents made a living. If shared, this might have spoken directly to his motivation for becoming a teacher. Additionally, we did not explore his work history or types of jobs he held before becoming a teacher in his late 40's. Kevin was my first study participant and I learned as I proceeded with each participant how to dig deeper with my questioning to gain more pertinent information.

Even with these limitations, this study contributes to our understandings of the recruitment and retention of men in the teaching workforce as it provides valuable qualitative data on teachers who are men and the experiences related to their exit decisions (Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014).

### ***Implications***

The participants in this study represent what some have characterized (McGrath & Bergen, 2017) as an endangered species of professionals that have left M-DCPS, men who wanted to "give back" to their communities and contribute to society through teaching. The findings in this study suggests areas that a number of things can be done to

help recruit and retain more men teachers, thus addressing the dramatic underrepresentation of men in the teaching profession. Based on conclusions drawn from the findings of this study recommendations for practice include:

a) Federal, state and school district leaders must work to increase teacher salaries.

Teaching is historically an underpaid profession (Skinner, 1905). By providing monetary incentives, i.e., signing bonuses, competitive starting salaries, and strong compensation packages – making the teaching profession as attractive and comparable to other professions would incentivize more men to become teachers.

b) M-DCPS school administrators must be committed to molding and developing newly hired teachers. This is especially true for teachers hired without possessing an educational background, or degree. Systems must be put in place that would provide adequate preparation and pedagogical methods for teachers be successful, individualized prescribed support by way of professional development, and continuously monitoring in-house mentorships for new teachers is also recommended (Ingersoll, 2001).

c) M-DCPS school administrators must demonstrate to men that they are valued, with no expectations of having to conform to traditional notions of gendered roles. Inviting men into opportunities to be curriculum and instructional leaders showcasing their pedagogical knowledge and expertise as teachers and leaders may help maintain their motivations to stay in teaching.

d) Perhaps the best ways to discover why men are resigning from M-DCPS and other school districts is to ask them (Ingersoll and Smith, 2003). Examining exit

interview data would be most valuable to school districts and may help the district justify making policy changes that would aid in the retention of men in the workforce.

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

What is needed is further research exploring the lived experiences of men as teachers and their rationales for leaving M-DCPS and other school districts. With further research, more data could be collected from a broader variety of men, thus contributing to the very limited body of research and ideally across different school and district settings. This research can help leaders who set policies for states and districts like M-DCPS to acknowledge the importance of understanding the reasons and rationale prompting teachers who are men to resign.

### ***Conclusion***

In revisiting the literature from my introduction, we are reminded that in the United States, 50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Curtis, 2012; Ingersoll, 2003; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). It is important to note that Kevin and James were newly hired teachers with no pedagogical preparation and, although they left M-DCPS for different reasons, they resigned within the time frame confirming patterns in the research presented.

Kevin and James's experiences highlight prior research citing common themes contributing to early career attrition: lack of administrative support, and lack of student motivation (Curtis, 2012). Additional common themes were in line with other studies citing subject matter knowledge (knowing what to teach) and teachers' pedagogical skills

(knowing how teach) – all stemming from the amount and quality of preparation that a new teacher has or has not received prior to being hired (Ingersoll et al., 2012). Veteran teacher Larry's experience was also in line with prior research citing the demand and calls for increased teacher salaries (Mills, et al., 2004; Andin, et al., 2017).

Collectively, the key findings of this study revealed the contributing factors to these men's decision to resign from M-DCPS were pedagogical and classroom management challenges, lack of support from administration and department chairpersons, low salary, heavy workload, the need to fight against stigmas, navigating gendered division of labor, feelings of being unappreciated and undervalued. In the end any combination of these factors made them feel that they did not belong at M-DCPS.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Interview #1 Questionnaire**

#### *Introduction*

Hello, my name is Tierney Hunter. It's such a pleasure to meet you. I would like to thank you for taking time out of your very busy schedule to be interviewed; I really appreciate it. This interview will not take longer than one hour.

I am a doctoral student at Florida International University conducting research as part of my dissertation program. My goal in conducting this research is to illuminate the experiences of former teachers who are men and who left M-DCPS. During this interview, I will ask you a series of questions about your experiences and/or challenges that prompted your decision to leave M-DCPS and/or the teaching profession. This is something that as a field, we don't know enough about, so I think it is important to turn to those who have experienced it to try to reach a better understanding. I am here to listen and be educated about your experiences.

Before we begin, I want to go over a few things about how the interview will be conducted.

1. I would like to tape record our discussion to make sure that we have accurately captured the information you are providing, but if you prefer that we not tape record, that's okay too. Is it okay with you to tape record?
2. If at any time, you would like me to stop the recorder, please let me know. If you are ever reluctant to continue to participate in the interview, let me know that too. We will stop at any time you wish.
3. Finally, in order to participate in this study, I need to make sure that you have signed a consent form.

### ***Formal Consent***

Before we get started, I must introduce a bit of formality as I am required to have formal consent from each participant in my research. This form is mandated by the university, and I have to ask you to sign. It basically states that you give consent to be interviewed and that you understand that whatever you tell me will be kept completely confidential, that whatever I write about this conversation will disguise your identity so that no one will be able to identify you, and – most important – that you can stop talking to me at any point if you wish to stop. Okay, so now we move onto the interview.

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### ***The Introduction (Warm-Up)***

1. Please restate your name, number of years employed as a teacher and current occupation.
  
2. Please share with me what motivated / influenced you to become a teacher?
  - a) Did you have conversations with friends/family about becoming a teacher?
  - b) What points were made to encouraging you to become a teacher?
  - c) What points were made to encourage you to not become a teacher?
  - d) What benefits did you anticipate that helped guide your decision to apply?
  
3. Please share with me your achievements as a teacher?
  - a) How did those achievements make you feel?
  
4. What were your roles and responsibilities as a teacher?

- a) Did you feel supported as a teacher?
  - b) What type of support did you receive... or not receive... and from whom?
  - c) What are your thoughts on support for teachers?
5. Please explain how was life, as a teacher, was for you?
- a) What did a good day look like?
  - b) What did a bad day look like?
  - c) Describe what your relationships with colleagues look like?

## Appendix B: Interview #2 Questionnaire

### *Digging Deeper*

6. How would you describe your level of commitment to the teaching profession?
  - a) Was there a significant instance that precluded a change in your commitment?
  - b) Please, tell me about that experience.
  - c) How did that make you feel?
  
7. How do you construct the way others viewed you as a teacher?
  - a) Could expound on your thoughts?
  - b) Why do you feel that way?
  - c) Was there an event that precipitated these feelings?
  - d) Did you experience other similar events?
  
8. Was there a specific event that changed your perception of the teaching profession?
  - a) What precipitated that event?
  - b) How did you feel after that event?
  - c) How did you interpret that event?
  - d) Did you experience other similar events?
  
9. Was there ever a time when you felt like an outsider — that you did not fit?
  - a) Could you paint a picture describing the instance you began feeling that way?
  - b) Did you speak to anyone about what happened?
  - c) How did you feel after that conversation?
  
10. Can you remember when you began contemplating leaving the teaching profession?
  - a) What precipitated that event?

- b) How did you feel after that event?
  - c) How did you interpret that event?
  - d) Did you experience other similar events?
11. Did you have conversations with friends/family/colleagues as you were contemplating leaving the profession?
- e) What points were made to encourage you to stay?
  - f) Who made those points?
  - g) Did those points make a difference?
  - h) What points were made to encourage you to leave?
  - i) Who made those points?
  - j) Did those points make a difference?
12. What was the catalyst that prompted you to resign? Was there a metaphorical “straw that broke the camel’s back” for you?
- k) What precipitated that event?
  - l) How did you feel after you resigned?
  - m) How did you interpret your resignation?

### ***Conclusion***

This concludes our time together. I am so grateful to you for sharing your experiences with me. I would like to thank you, again, for your time and your contribution to my research. Our interaction has been meaningful to me and I will keep you in my thoughts during my interviews with other participants learning about their shared experiences also. Although this is the end of our interview, I would like your permission to call you if there is further clarification needed during the time I am analyzing the recording.



Before we leave, I'd like to share with you about what I will do with this interview. I'm going to analyze it along with the interviews of other participants and try to reach some general understanding about the shared experiences of former, teachers who are men and who left the teaching profession. Then, I will selectively make use of the material from the interviews to write about what I think I have understood. So, my focus won't be on writing about you or about this experience we've just shared, but about how men experience teaching – trying to make sense out of what I've learned from you and the other people I've interviewed.

## **Appendix C: Consent to Participate Human Subjects Consent-to-Participate in Research Form**

Teachers' Exit Decisions:  
A Qualitative Interview Study Examining the Experiences of Men Who Left Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS)

Individual Informed Consent – Study Participant

### **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of my research is to illuminate the shared experiences of former teachers who are men, and have resigned from Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) and/or the teaching profession. The goal is to discover their reasons and rationales for the district and to characterize their experiences in rich detail. The goal of my research will be to rely as much as possible on the participants' view of their lived experiences, their perceptions, and the way they made sense of their decision to leave.

### **PROCEDURES:**

- Prior to the interview, I will ask you to complete a survey in order to obtain educational background, certification, and demographic information.
- I will conduct two one-hour interviews with you which will be audio recorded with your permission. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview audio-recorded. Questions we will explore relate to your specific experiences as a teacher. You will be asked to answer the questions as openly and honestly as possible. You will have the option to not answer a question if it makes you feel uncomfortable or uneasy or to terminate your participation in this study at any time. After completion of the study, I will destroy all audio recordings and notes that might identify you.

### **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Even after you agree to participate in the research or sign the informed consent documents, you may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise have been entitled. You may choose not to answer any questions and may refuse to complete any portions of the research you do not wish for any reason.

### **RISKS / BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:**

There are no known risks to you concerning your participation in this study. Although, some of the information afforded during the interview process may be personally

sensitive, I will retain and analyze the information you provide up until the point you have left the study, unless you request that your data be excluded from any analysis and/or destroyed. Your decision to do so will be kept confidential. The benefits of this study will rest on the interpretation of the findings, which will be used to better understand men teachers' experiences and their decisions for leaving the teaching profession— findings will have direct implications for M-DCPS policy and practice for recruiting and retaining teachers.

**ANONYMITY/CONFIDENTIALITY:**

The data collected in this study is confidential. All data will be coded in a manner that your name will not be linked or readily identifiable. Additionally, the data will be made available only to the researcher associated with this study. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Furthermore, the Institutional Review Board (see below), the sponsor of the study, and University officials will be responsible for monitoring this study and may inspect all records.

**SHARING OF RESULTS:**

The findings of this study will be shared with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, board policymakers, other educators, and researchers through reports, articles, and presentations so that other educators can learn from it.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB):**

Research at Florida International University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, any complaints about your participation in the research study, or any problems that occurred in the study, please contact the student investigator: Tierney E. Hunter (305-490-1162, or at Thunt010@fiu.edu) Doctoral Candidate, School of Arts, Sciences & Education, Florida International University, Modesto A. Maidique Campus, 11200, S.W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street., ZEB 364A, Miami, Florida 33199, 305-348-4086.

If you have any questions that have not been answered by this investigator, or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, you may contact Florida International University's Institutional Review Board Coordinator Maria Melendez-Vargas via email at mdemelen@fiu.edu or 305-348-8311.

One copy of this document will be kept together with the research records of this study. Also, you will be given a copy to keep for your records.

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH:**

My signature below indicates my willingness to participate in this study as described above. I understand that participation is voluntary; that the confidentiality of those who participate will be protected as aforementioned; that no data will be collected without the participants' written consent; that all data will be stored on a password-protected computer and in a locked cabinet/room until data analysis is complete; after which all data and key identifiers will be destroyed.

I understand I can refuse to answer any of the questions with no repercussions. Further, I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time and that my decision to withdraw will be kept confidential. I have read, or been informed of, the information about this study.

I hereby consent to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (printed) Title and District

A. \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Email Address

Please sign below if you are willing to have this interview audio recorded. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

B. \_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

### Appendix D: Code Book – Kevin Walker

Code	Description
Individual Characteristics	Sub-Question #2
Appreciated	Feelings of being appreciated by employers, supervisors, etc.
Bitterness	Feeling bitter about something that happened... an issue that took place.
Current Occupation	What is the study participant doing now?
Depression	Did the study participant experience depression during this time?
Disgruntled	Did the study participant display characteristics of being disgruntled?
Happy	Was he ever happy teaching?
Not Appreciated	Events that sparked this feeling.
Sad	Events that sparked this feeling.
Self Esteem	What your observation of the study participants' self-esteem?
Work Ethic	What actions speak to his commitment to his job?
Relationships	Did he foster any relationships with students, colleagues, administration, parents?
Administrators	Did he get close with any administrators?
Extended Colleagues	Outside the participants' department, other teachers, custodians, etc.?

Code	Description
Immediate Colleagues	Within the participants' department?
Role Model	Did the participant feel he was a role model? Did he try to establish this connection under this premise?
Students	Did he foster any relationships with students?
Organizational Characteristics	Sub-Question #1
Accountability	Mandated testing, i.e., EOC's, FSA, etc.
Assistant Principal	Interactions with the administrators.
Credentials	Education/Certification
Environment	Descriptions of the environment/culture of the school.
Evaluation	Feedback from Admin., IPEGS, Summative Reviews
Gender Inequity	Did he experience favor because of his gender?
Principal	Interactions with the principal.
Support	Who helped along the journey of being a teacher?
Administrative	What was his perception of support received?
Colleagues	What was his perception of support received?
District Personnel	What was his perception of support received?
Immediate Supervisors	What was his perception of support received?
Parental	What was his perception of support received?

Code	Description
Workload	What did that look like? Did he take on too much?
Reasons for Becoming a Teacher	Internal and external motivations.
Reasons for Leaving M-DCPS	Internal and external motivations.
Discouraged	Who was involved? What did they say?
Encouraged	Who was involved? What did they say?
Feeling Undervalued	What were the circumstances?
Neutral Reasons	Whatever those reasons look like goes here...
Salary - @ the District and State Level	Was salary a factor for Larry? This code is for the overall raises that teacher ar given by the state.
Support	Who helped along the journey of being a teacher?
Administrative	What was his perception of support received?
Colleagues	What was his perception of support received?
District Personnel	What was his perception of support received?
Immediate Supervisors	What was his perception of support received?
Parental	What was his perception of support received?
Reasons for Staying	What did he get out of staying for however long as he did?
Benefits of Teaching	What did he consider a benefit of teaching?
Subjects Taught	How many preps did he have to contend with?



Code	Description
Social & Cultural Factors	Sub-Question #3
Lack of Prestige for Teachers	Where does teaching fall into the realm of professions?
Role Models Needed	This is a sub-question... does the participant feel like he was a role model?
Teaching Experience	How long?
Education - Certification	What is the participant's certification?
Leadership Positions	What roles did he play outside of the classroom?
Pedagogy	Was he experienced enough? Did he teach well?
Philosophy of Teaching	What did he ascribe to concerning the profession?
Self-Reflection	He no longer works there, but is still able to evaluate his contribution to the profession and to his kids.
Teaching Experience	How many years did he teach?

### Appendix E: Code Book – Larry Brooks

Code	Description
Demographic Information	Any information that contributes Larry's past.
Individual Characteristics	Sub-Question #2
Appreciated	Feelings of being appreciated by employers, supervisors, etc.
Bitterness	Feeling bitter about something that happened... an issue that took place.
Depression	Did the study participant experience depression during his time teaching?
Disgruntled	Did the study participant display any characteristics of being disgruntled - angry about anything at work?
Happy	Was the participant ever happy while teaching? Did teaching make him happy?
Not Appreciated	Did the participant experience feelings of not being appreciated?
Sad	Was the participant ever sad while teaching? Did teaching make him sad?
Self Esteem	What the observation of the participant's self esteem?
Gender	Did he experience any gender-related issues?
Relationships	Did he foster any relationships with students, colleagues, administration, parents?
Administrators	Did he get close with any administrators?

Code	Description
Extended Colleagues	Outside the participants' department, other teachers, custodians, etc.?
Immediate Colleagues	Within the participants' department?
Role Model	Did the participant feel he was a role model? Did he try to establish this connection under this premise?
With Parents	What did that look like with Parents
With Students	Did he foster any relationships with students?
Sexual Orientation	Was he candid about his sexual orientation? Did he let it slip out? Was it apparent?
Subordination	Operate outside Hegemonic idea. Involves primarily the relegation of fay men to the bottom of the gender hierarchy among men.
Organizational Characteristics	Sub-Question #1
Accountability	Mandated testing, i.e., EOC's, FSA, etc.
Assistant Principal	Interactions with the administrators.
Credentials	Education/Certification
Environment	Descriptions of the environment/culture of the school.
Evaluation	Feedback from Admin., IPEGS, Summative Reviews
Gender Inequity	Did he experience favor because of his gender?
Principal	Interactions with the principal.

Code	Description
Salary - @ the school level	What must he do to acquire additional responsibilities, i.e., teaching an extra period, coaching, sponsor of a club to supplement his salary?
Workload	What did that look like? Did he take on too much?
Reasons for Becoming A Teacher	Internal and external motivations.
Discouraged	Who was involved? What did they say?
Encouraged	Who was involved? What did they say?
Motivation	Person? Past History with Teachers? Family Members?
Neutral Reasons	There was no trigger that motivated the him either way...
Reasons for Leaving M-DCPS	Internal and external motivations.
Discouraged	Who was involved? What did they say?
Encouraged	Who was involved? What did they say?
Feeling Undervalued	What were the circumstances?
Neutral Reasons	Whatever those reasons look like goes here...
Salary - @ the District and State Level	Was salary a factor for Larry? This code is for the overall raises that teacher ar given by the state.
Support	Who helped along the journey of being a teacher?
Administrative	What was his perception of support received?
Colleagues	What was his perception of support received?

Code	Description
District Personnel	What was his perception of support received?
Immediate Supervisors	What was his perception of support received?
Parental	What was his perception of support received?
Reasons for Staying	What did he get out of staying for however long as he did?
Benefits of Teaching	What did he consider a benefit of teaching?
Social & Cultural Factors	Sub-Question #3
Lack of Prestige for Teachers	Where does teaching fall into the realm of professions?
Role Models Needed	This is a sub-question... does the participant feel like he was a role model?
Was Race a Factor	In any context...
Teaching Experience	
Classroom Management Skills	Was he able to control his class? Was it a factor in leaving or staying?
Achievements as a Teacher	Self-proclaimed achievements as well as well documented achievements.
Bad Day	What did that look like?
Challenges of Teaching	What did that look like?

Code	Description
Classroom Management Skills	Was he able to control his class? Was it a factor in leaving or staying?
Current Job	Where is he working right now?
Education - Certification	What is the participant certified in...content knowledge?
Good Day	What did a typical good day look like?
Migrating Between Schools	School Hopping... Jumping from One School to the Next
Pedagogy	Was he experienced enough? Did he teach well?
Philosophy of Teaching	What did he think about the act of teaching? About the profession itself?
Previous Experience - Before Becoming a Teacher	What other jobs did he hold?
Qualifications	School? Certification?
Teaching Experience	How many years did he teach?
Work Ethic	What type of teacher was he? What was his philosophy?

## Appendix F: Code Book – James Walker

Code	Description
Individual Characteristics	Sub-Question #2
Appreciated	Feelings of being appreciated by employers, supervisors, etc.
Bitterness	Feeling bitter about something that happened... an issue that took place.
Depression	Did the study participant experience depression during his time teaching?
Disgruntled	Did the study participant display any characteristics of being disgruntled - angry about anything at work?
Happy	Was the participant ever happy while teaching? Did teaching make him happy?
Fell In Love	Relationship with a woman is why he left - the first time.
Humility	Expressed this feeling in our discussion about former students taking the oath to become teachers.
Not Appreciated	Did the participant experience feelings of not being appreciated?
Sad	Was the participant ever sad while teaching? Did teaching make him sad?
Self Esteem	What the observation of the participant's self-esteem?
Work Ethic	What the observation of the participant's work ethic? What did he display at work?
Stigma	What category was the study participant placed in?

Code	Description
Relationships	Did he foster any relationships with students, colleagues, administration, parents?
Administrators	Did he get close with any administrators?
Extended Colleagues	Outside the participants' department, other teachers, custodians, etc.?
Immediate Colleagues	Within the participants' department?
Role Model	Did the participant feel he was a role model? Did he try to establish this connection under this premise?
Organizational Characteristics	Sub-Question #1
Accountability	Mandated testing, i.e., EOC's, FSA, etc.
Assistant Principal	Interactions with the administrators.
Credentials	Education/Certification
Environment	Descriptions of the environment/culture of the school.
Evaluation	Feedback from Admin., IPEGS, Summative Reviews
Gender Inequity	Did he experience favor because of his gender?
Support	Who helped along the journey of being a teacher?
Administrative	What was his perception of support received?
Colleagues	What was his perception of support received?
District Personnel	What was his perception of support received?



Code	Description
Immediate Supervisors	What was his perception of support received?
Parental	What was his perception of support received?
Principal	Interactions with...
Salary - @ the school level	What must he do to acquire additional responsibilities, i.e., teaching an extra period, coaching, sponsor of a club to supplement his salary?
Support Received	Who helped along the journey of being a teacher?
Workload	What did that look like?
Previous Experience - Before Becoming a teacher	What else did he do?
Reasons for Becoming a Teacher	Internal and external motivations.
Discouraged	Who was involved? What did they say?
Encouraged	Who was involved? What did they say?
Motivation	Person? History with Teachers? Family Members?
Neutral Reasons	There was no trigger that motivated him either way.
Reasons for Leaving the M-DCPS	Internal and external motivations.
Bad Days	What did that look like?
Better Career Opportunities	The free master's degree and other opportunities that would further his career.,

Code	Description
Challenges of Teaching	What did that look like?
Discouraged	Who was involved? What did they say?
Encouraged	Who was involved? What did they say?
Feeling Undervalued	What were the circumstances?
Happy	Was the participant ever happy while teaching? Did teaching make him happy?
Fell In Love	Relationship with a woman is why he left - the first time.
Reasons for Staying	What did he get out of staying for however long as he did?
Benefits of Teaching	What did he consider a benefit of teaching?
Subjects Taught	How many preps did he have to contend with?
Social & Cultural Factors	Sub-Question #3
Lack of Prestige for Teachers	Where does teaching fall into the realm of professions?
Was Race a Factor	In any context...
Teaching Experience	What did this look like?
Classroom Management Skills	Was he able to control his class? Was it a factor in leaving or staying?

Code	Description
Education - Certification	What is the participant's certification?
Leadership Positions	What roles did he play outside of the classroom?
Pedagogy	Was he experienced enough? Did he teach well?
Philosophy of Teaching	What did he ascribe to concerning the profession?
Self-Reflection	He no longer works there, but is still able to evaluate his contribution to the profession and to his kids.
Teaching Experience	How many years did he teach?
What Did He Miss About Teaching	The interaction with students. The relationships.

## VITA

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