AN EXPLORATION OF NOVICE TEACHERS’ MOTIVATIONS AND CONNECTEDNESS WITH COLLEAGUES AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN AMERICAN TEACHERS IN URBAN, HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Many novice teachers leave their teaching positions in urban, high-poverty schools within the first five years of their career (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Further, African American teachers leave their teaching positions at an even higher rate (Ingersoll et al., 2019; Su, 1997). Understanding teachers’ motivation for teaching in urban, high-poverty schools, as well as understanding their experiences working in this setting, may lead to the development of interventions to increase teacher retention and commitment. Research suggests that teacher race can influence their motivation to teach in urban, high-poverty schools, and how they view their role. Further, race may also influence how teachers connect with one another. Using extant data from a federally funded study, this exploratory qualitative study analyzed interviews with novice teachers ($n = 14$) across three schools to examine their motivation to teach, and their relationships with colleagues. Interviews were thematically analyzed using a structured approach as outlined by Braun and Clark (2004). Results indicated three themes that explain novice teachers’ motivation for teaching and that race plays an integral role in understanding teachers’ motivation for teaching in urban, high-poverty schools. The first theme included teachers’ internal drive to enter the teaching profession which was expressed across racial groups. The second theme, giving back to the community was expressed by African American teachers, whereas the third theme, fixing the flaws in high-poverty schools, was expressed by teachers of other races. Thematic analysis also indicated two distinct dimensions of connectedness within this sample of novice teachers, which included their relationships with other teachers and systemic contributors to connectedness. Results further suggest that teachers in this sample interpreted their interpersonal relationships with their colleagues as existing on a continuum, ranging from maintaining close, personal relationships to maintaining intentionally distant, yet professional relationships with
their colleagues. Additionally, novice teachers identified positive and negative systemic contributors to their experiences of connectedness, including how school administrators shape teachers’ experiences. Practical implications for the findings suggest that school psychologists should facilitate anti-bias training for teachers and administrators, as well as use culturally competent practices when working with teachers to address their concerns about students.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Urban, high-poverty schools are distinguished from rural and suburban schools by their geographic location in highly populated areas and racially and linguistically diverse student populations (Welsh & Swain, 2020). Most definitions of urban schools focus on the deficits and lack of resources often found within this setting (Milner, 2008; Walker, 2011; Weiner, 2003). Urban, high-poverty schools are often defined as having dangerous and deteriorating buildings, overcrowded classrooms, absent families, frequent student misbehavior, and low expectations for student success (Boutte, 2012; Frankenberg et al., 2010; Hampton et al., 2008; Milner, 2008; Ronfeldt et al., 2016; Welsh & Swain, 2020). Students attending urban, high-poverty schools are often exposed to countless stressors, such as exposure to violence and other traumatic experiences, exposure to environmental toxins, having inconsistent nutrition, as well as limited access to healthcare services (Ullucci & Howard, 2014). Furthermore, students are taught by teachers experiencing significant stress managing students’ needs and other responsibilities associated with their role (Camacho & Parham, 2019; Shernoff et al., 2011). Although urban, high-poverty schools are often defined by their weaknesses, many teachers and students are resilient and successful, especially when teachers reject the idea that students should be defined by their deficits (Milner, 2008).

Urban, high-poverty schools are chronically underfunded as a result of larger societal issues of inequality that stem from racism and classism (Bettini & Park, 2017; Boutte, 2012; Ronfeldt et al., 2016; Weiner, 2003). Within the school, these inequities are palpable, as students often have limited materials and resources to support their learning (Bettini & Park, 2017; Boutte, 2012). Furthermore, urban, high-poverty schools have a high proportion of student population receiving special education services and also tend to rely on punitive disciplinary
procedures to manage student misbehavior, which may result in student’s suspension or expulsion from school, and eventual school dropout (Aragon et al., 2013; Boutte, 2012; Skiba et al., 2014). Due to the unique challenges and stressors found in urban, high-poverty schools, students need high-quality teachers who are willing, able and committed to teaching students in urban, high-poverty schools (Aragon et al., 2013; Frankenberg et al., 2010; Milner, 2008).

With the negative perceptions and unique challenges found within urban, high-poverty schools, combined with the variety of school settings that teachers can choose to work, it is important to explore why teachers sought employment in urban, high-poverty schools. Understanding teachers’ motivations may provide insight into the factors that encourage or discourage teachers to continue teaching in urban, high poverty schools. Research suggests that a teacher’s motivation may influence their teaching beliefs and practices within the classroom and school (Castro, 2012; Thomson et al., 2012). Further, a teacher’s motivation may influence their willingness to connect with other teachers (Castro, 2012). Teacher’s race has been highlighted as an important factor in understanding teachers’ motivation to enter the teaching profession, and to teach in urban, high-poverty schools specifically (Magaldi et al., 2016; Su, 1997). According to a report by Ingersoll et al. (2018), approximately 80% of public school teachers are white. Additionally, teachers are overwhelming female, monolingual, and from middle class socioeconomic backgrounds, who typically have limited experience interacting with individuals who are different from their own cultural background and experiences (Frankenberg et al., 2010; Hampton et al., 2008; Watson, 2011). Students in urban, high-poverty schools are almost exclusively from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, due to decades of resegregation (Frankenberg et al., 2010). This difference between the teacher and student population will continue to expand, as it is projected that over 50% of students across the nation
will identify as from a minority group by 2025 (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008). African American teachers, along with other teachers from diverse backgrounds are more likely to work in urban, high-poverty schools (Fitchett et al., 2020; Ingersoll et al., 2018).

Once employed in urban, high-poverty schools, novice teachers often struggle to connect with, and rarely receive adequate support from, their colleagues to help them adjust to the demands of teaching. Further, a teacher’s race may influence how teachers connect with their colleagues. Teacher’s race has been associated with how teachers establish and develop trust among colleagues (Jones, 2019). Additionally, racial differences may reduce the likelihood of collaborating and connecting with colleagues (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Understanding a teacher’s motivation and connectedness with colleagues could lead to the identification and implementation of appropriate interventions to improve novice teacher’s retention in urban, high-poverty schools. The goal of this study is to explore teacher’s motivations for teaching in urban, high-poverty schools and to explore if there are differences in motivation for teaching based on teachers’ race. Additionally, this study will explore how teachers explain their experience of connectedness with their colleagues and investigate if there are differences across racial groups.

**The Dramatic Cost of Teacher Turnover**

In this section, I will discuss how teachers perceive urban, high-poverty schools, discuss how often novice teachers leave urban, high-poverty schools, and identify the stressors that propel novice teachers to leave this setting. Additionally, I will review the financial and social costs of chronic turnover on schools.

*Educator Perceptions of Urban, High-Poverty Schools*

It is important to understand the characteristics and experiences of preservice teachers, who subsequently teach in urban, high-poverty schools, to gain further insight into their
motivation for teaching in this setting (Thomson et al., 2012). Bauml et al. (2013) interviewed 20 preservice teachers to gain insight into their school experiences, thoughts about multiculturalism in schools and their interactions with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Additionally, researchers asked participants to choose between two opinions on multiculturalism and to respond to a hypothetical scenario in which participants described their thoughts and concerns about teaching in an urban setting (Bauml et al., 2013). Results indicated that preservice teachers who attended culturally diverse schools were willing to teach in an urban school (Bauml et al., 2013). Teachers who expressed concerns about teaching in urban schools cited concerns about cultural barriers between themselves and children and their families (Bauml et al., 2013). Furthermore, while some preservice teachers expressed concerns about relating and understanding families, other teachers believed that parents in urban settings did not care about their child’s education (Bauml et al., 2013). Preservice teachers also expressed concerns about managing disruptive behaviors, which echoed negative stereotypes about urban schools, and reported that teaching in urban, high-poverty schools would be too challenging during their first year of teaching (Bauml et al., 2013). Preservice teachers who expressed a desire to teach in urban schools identified a wish to correct their own negative experiences with teachers in urban schools, or to establish and maintain high standards of student success (Bauml et al., 2013).

Hampton et al. (2008) asked 41 preservice teachers two open ended questions to explore their perceptions of urban schools in terms of the environment of urban schools, available resources, teachers and students. Additionally, preservice teachers were asked to identify where they thought their perceptions originated (Hampton et al., 2008). Responses were qualitatively coded and then quantitatively transformed to assign teachers into one of five groups (Hampton et al., 2008). Preservice teachers’ perceptions were overwhelming negative, and teachers perceived
urban schools to be dangerous, disorganized and unclean environments with limited financial resources (Hampton et al., 2008). Additionally, preservice teachers, in this sample, believed that teachers in urban schools were driven by altruistic motivations, rather than extrinsic motivators, such as a high salary, for working in this setting (Hampton et al., 2008). Preservice teachers identified the media as the source of their perceptions about urban schools, which often depicts urban schools negatively (Hampton et al., 2008).

Some teacher preparation programs rely on field experiences to bridge the cultural divide between students and teachers, however these experiences often cement, rather than change, preservice teachers views of urban schools (Aragon et al., 2013; Frankenberg et al., 2010; Ronfeldt et al., 2016). Programs with courses dedicated to training preservice teachers on multicultural education often focus on preparing teachers to have a degree of cultural competence. Furthermore, courses often do not allow opportunities for preservice teachers to discuss their concerns about race and culture, or problem solve related challenges (Magaldi et al., 2016). Gorski (2009) analyzed 45 syllabi from multicultural education courses across the United States. Results indicated that nearly 70% of syllabi reviewed did not align with the principles of multicultural education and did not teach preservice teachers about using a multicultural education framework or how to structure their classrooms to be equitable learning environments (Gorski, 2009).

Ronfeldt et al. (2016) surveyed 1,002 preservice teachers prior to, and at the conclusion of, their student-teaching field experience to determine if their preferences for teaching in high-poverty schools changed following their field experience. Additionally, Ronfeldt et al. (2016) followed preservice teachers to determine if these preferences predicted teacher employment the following year. Using regression modeling, results indicated that prior to their student teaching
experience, African American preservice teachers had stronger preferences to teach students living in poverty than European American teachers ($\beta = .43, p < .05$; Ronfeldt et al., 2016). Following their student teaching experience, European American teachers’ preference to work with students living in poverty decreased, although preservice teacher’s preferences were not significant predictors of the location of their employment during their first year of teaching ($\beta = - .31, p < .05$; Ronfeldt et al., 2016).

Whipp and Geronime (2015) surveyed and interviewed 72 novice teachers at the end of their student teaching placement and at the end of their first year of teaching to identify factors predicting commitment, employment and retention in urban, high-poverty schools. Results indicated that a preservice teacher’s attendance in an urban, high-poverty school, volunteering in college in urban, high-poverty settings, and student teaching in an urban, high-poverty school, predicted a teacher’s commitment to working in urban, high-poverty schools ($\chi^2 (3, n = 68) = 32.437, p < .001$; Whipp & Geronime, 2015). Further, commitment to teaching in urban, high-poverty schools significantly predicted a teacher’s employment ($\chi^2 (1, n = 61) = 32.558, p < .001$, and retention three years later ($\chi^2 (1, n = 53) = 20.629, p < .001$) in urban, high-poverty schools (Whipp & Geronime, 2015).

**Rates of Turnover**

Many novice teachers, defined as teachers with five or fewer years of teaching experience, are employed in urban schools (Achinstein et al., 2010; Castro, 2012; Frankenberg et al., 2010; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Shernoff et al., 2016). Novice teachers often leave urban, high-poverty schools within five years and are typically replaced by less experienced teachers (Achinstein et al., 2010; Frankenberg et al., 2010; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Although many initiatives have been successful in increasing the racial and ethnic diversity
among teachers, teachers of color, especially African American and Latina/o teachers, leave the teaching profession at a rate 25% higher than their European American counterparts (Achinstein et al., 2010; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2019). Once teachers leave teaching in urban, high-poverty schools, it is difficult to replace them each year (Wronowski, 2018). As such, there are significantly more open teaching positions in urban, high-poverty schools when compared to suburban schools (Ronfeldt et al., 2016; Wronowski, 2018).

In order to fill teaching positions in urban, high-poverty schools, nontraditional training programs, such as Teach for America and other alternative certification programs, have been established to train and certify teachers quickly (Castro, 2012; Ronfeldt et al., 2016; Wronowski, 2018). These recruitment and certification methods are not designed to identify teachers who are committed to teaching in these settings long term. For example, over 50% of teachers recruited through Teach for America left after their initial two-year commitment (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). Heineke et al. (2013) surveyed 73 teachers trained through Teach for America to identify their plans to leave or remain in the profession after their initial commitment in the program ended, and to identify what factors led to their decision. Approximately 25% of the teachers, who left at the end of the initial two-year commitment, had never intended to stay in the field (Heineke et al., 2013). Furthermore, less than 7% of the teachers in the sample intended to establish a teaching career through Teach for America (Heineke et al., 2013).

**Reasons for Turnover**

Within the classroom, teachers encounter numerous challenges that they not prepared to account for within their teaching practices, which can lead to teachers experiencing high levels of stress and burnout (Camacho & Parham, 2019; Shernoff et al., 2011; Whipp & Geronime, 2015). Teachers often do not receive adequate professional support and development, such as
mentoring, administrative support and guidance on curricular and behavioral issues, which push teachers out of urban, high-poverty schools and at times, the profession (Frankenberg et al., 2010; Ingersoll et al, 2018). Furthermore, novice teachers are repeatedly assigned challenging classrooms and are expected to expertly teach and manage their classrooms without support from their colleagues, as there are limited opportunities for teacher collaboration and little trust amongst colleagues (Achinstein et al., 2010; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Kardos & Johnson, 2007).

Camacho and Parham (2019) surveyed 164 teachers in urban schools to identify the stressors that they experienced in their classrooms. Teachers endorsed a variety of challenges, which included student misbehavior, aggressive student behavior, student motivation, lack of effective consequences, and behavioral health problems (Camacho & Parham, 2019). Additional challenges included limited administrative support, community factors (e.g., stressors originating outside of school such as ill-fitting clothing, or family conflict), a high workload, value conflict, an uncollegial atmosphere and diversity factors (e.g., differentiating instruction and cultural misunderstandings; Camacho & Parham, 2019).

Shernoff et al. (2011) interviewed 20 teachers working in urban high poverty schools to identify the stressors they experienced at school and analyzed the qualitative data through the consensual qualitative research approach. Teachers identified stressors such as having limited resources (e.g., supplies and personnel), an overwhelming workload, difficulty differentiating instruction, and struggles managing behavior (Shernoff et al., 2011). Additional stressors included difficulties outside of the classroom, such as navigating organizational obstacles, meeting accountability standards, and addressing the associated challenges of poverty (e.g., concerns about students’ safety and limited access to resources) while not being adequately
trained (Shernoff et al., 2011). Veteran teachers expressed frustration of observing novice teachers burnout after a few years (Shernoff et al., 2011).

**Cost of Turnover**

Urban, high-poverty schools, which are already underfunded and under resourced, must allocate funding to attract and hire new teachers annually (Aragon et al., 2013). Nationwide, urban high-poverty schools spend over 2 billion dollars to recruit and replace teachers annually (Aragon et al., 2013; Borman & Dowling, 2008). Aside from the economic costs, there are unquantifiable costs to the school’s culture and trust among staff, as urban, high-poverty schools are constantly adapting to the flux of teachers who leave and enter the schools (Guin, 2004; Ronfeldt et al., 2016). Teachers may not have the opportunity to establish a trusting, working relationship with their colleagues, or may not attempt to establish a relationship with new colleagues who often lack experience and leave shortly after starting at the school (Guin, 2004; Shernoff et al., 2011).

Ronfeldt et al. (2013) reviewed eight years of administrative data from the New York City and New York State Departments of Education to determine the impact of turnover on student achievement on students in NYC elementary schools. Specifically, Ronfeldt et al. (2013) investigated the effects of turnover on student achievement in English language arts and mathematics. Turnover was defined through two models (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). The “lagged attrition” model defined turnover by the proportion of teachers, within a grade level, who left the school, whereas the “proportion new to school” model defined turnover as the proportion of teachers, within a grade level, who are new to the school (Ronfeldt et al., 2013, p. 10). Results indicated that regardless of the model and content area, students performed worse during years where there was high turnover, compared to years where there was low turnover (p < .01 for all
models, Ronfeldt et al., 2013). The impact not only affect the students who were taught by incoming teachers, but the entire school, even after accounting for teacher quality, as measured by both models (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Across models, the effect of turnover was most pronounced in urban, high-poverty schools ($p < .01$, Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

**Established Theories of Motivation to Teach**

An important step in stemming the tide of turnover includes examining why teachers choose to work in urban, high-poverty schools. Understanding a teacher’s motivation for seeking employment in urban, high-poverty schools may improve induction supports, as teacher’s motivations influence their teaching pedagogy and practices, and how they leverage the resources within the school to be successful in the classroom (Castro, 2012; Thomson et al., 2012). In this section, I will review the established theories of motivation for entering the teaching profession, followed by the perceptions and motivations for teaching in urban, high-poverty schools. Next, I will discuss the specific motivations for teaching for African American teachers.

Since Brookhart and Freeman (1992) published their seminal article on the characteristics of preservice teachers, motivation for entering the teaching profession has been conceptualized through intrinsic, altruistic and extrinsic motivators. Intrinsic motivators for teaching are defined as the reasons that drive individuals to teach, which are within the individual, and drive interest into the profession without external rewards (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Thomson et al., 2012). Examples of intrinsic motivators include enjoyment of teaching, enjoyment in the subject area(s), and the enjoyment of working children and adolescents (Fray & Gore, 2018). Extrinsic motivators for teaching are defined as the stimuli that encourage and reward the individual for being a part of the teaching profession, such as having desirable working hours and consistent
salary and benefits (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Fray & Gore, 2018; Thomson et al., 2012). Altruistic motivators are factors that drive the individual’s desire to improve society, such as valuing service to others and aspiring to improve students’ lives (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Fray & Gore, 2018; Thomson et al., 2012).

Watt and Richardson (2008) expanded on the research of Brookhart and Freeman (1992) by using the expectancy-value theory to develop a standardized measure of motivation. The Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) Scale is a rating scale used to assess the motivations for teaching on 12 factors, ranging from intrinsic (e.g., intrinsic value), altruistic (e.g., social utility values), and extrinsic (e.g., personal utility values) motivators (Watt & Richardson, 2008). Although the FIT-Choice scale provides a standardized conceptualization of motivation, and has improved the measurement of motivation, it limits the opportunity to identify additional motivating factors for teaching (Fray & Gore, 2018). In a recent systematic review, Fray and Gore (2018) found that over 50% of articles investigating the motivations for entering the teaching profession between 2007 and 2016 used the theory of motivation through the intrinsic, altruistic and extrinsic conceptualization. Among the 70 articles reviewed within the study, 17 studies used the FIT-Choice scale, which was the most used measure (Fray & Gore, 2018).

Thomson et al. (2012) surveyed 215 preservice teachers and conducted interviews with 25 teachers, to explore how teacher’s motivation for teaching was related to their teacher beliefs. Results identified three motivational profiles, which differed on the level of intrinsic, altruistic and extrinsic motivators that influenced their decision to enter the teaching profession (Thomson et al., 2012). Groups differed based on their career dedication, teacher’s beliefs about how students develop and teacher’s beliefs about how students learn (Thomson et al., 2012). Group
one, enthusiastic, believed teaching was a valuable tool for improving society and felt responsible to students’ academic success (Thomson et al., 2012). They also wanted to work with people outside of their classroom (Thomson et al., 2012). Group two, conventional, believed that teaching was confined to the classroom and underscored the importance of being a competent teacher. The third group, pragmatic, believed teaching was a temporary career, rather than a lifelong commitment, and did not express specific ideals about teaching practices and standards. Results suggest that teachers motivation influences their teaching philosophy, strategies and commitment to the profession (Thomson et al., 2012).

Castro (2012) diverged from Brookhart and Freeman’s (1992) theory of motivation and interviewed 13 preservice teachers during their first semester in an alternative certification program, within a group and individually, to identify their visions, metaphors and motivations for teaching in urban schools. Castro (2012) used affinity clustering to identify themes within the focus group and then continued to analyze the interviews using the constant-comparison method. The results indicated four groups of core motivational profiles (Castro, 2012). Visionaries were defined as teachers who sought employment in urban schools to improve the community, whereas Reformers sought to improve the conditions within schools, rather than the community at large (Castro, 2012). Opportunists sought employment in urban, high-poverty schools due to the external values provided such as a paycheck and health insurance (Castro, 2012). Saviors utilized a deficit paradigm to understand students in urban, high-poverty schools. They expressed a desire to “save” children who they viewed as “vulnerable” due to living in an urban environment (Castro, 2012, p. 147). Saviors believed that they, alone, could improve urban schools (Castro, 2012).
Racial Differences in Motivation to Teach in Urban, High-Poverty Schools

Nationally, approximately 20% of teachers identify as culturally and/or linguistically diverse, and only 7% are African American (Ingersoll et al., 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Many teachers of color are employed in urban, high-poverty schools (Ingersoll et al., 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2019). Studies suggest that teachers of color may have specific motivations for teaching in urban, high-poverty schools (Magaldi, et al., 2016; Su, 1997). For example, teachers of color often cite a desire to teach students who are racially similar to themselves, which Achinstein described as a “humanistic commitment” (Achinstein et al., 2010, p. 85; Aragon et al., 2013; Ronfeldt et al., 2016). Su’s (1997) seminal research investigated the preservice teachers perspectives of the teaching profession. Su (1997) surveyed 148 preservice teachers and interviewed 56 preservice teachers within the sample to compare their perspectives about the teaching profession, as well as the motivations for teaching among European American, African American, Hispanic, and Asian American teachers. Preservice teachers within this sample identified intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for teaching, but African American teachers identified a desire to be a change agent to make schools equitable for students of color (Su, 1997). Williams et al. (2009) analyzed interviews from 33 preservice, African American teachers to understand their motivations, and readiness for, teaching in urban, high-poverty schools using a grounded approach. Preservice teachers, in this sample, identified motivating factors for teaching, such as having family members who were employed as teachers and having an opportunity to serve others and make a difference in someone’s life (Williams et al., 2009).

Urban, high-poverty schools are considered challenging places to work for many teachers, however, every year novice teachers apply to work in urban, high-poverty schools
(Aragon et al., 2013). Previous research captures the perspectives of preservice teachers but does not extend to exploring and understanding why novice teachers applied for and accepted positions in urban, high-poverty schools (e.g., Bauml et al., 2013). The focus on this study is to fill the gap in the literature by exploring why novice teachers choose to work in urban, high-poverty schools by using qualitative methods to identify themes that may not be identified with current quantitative methods (e.g., Fray & Gore, 2018; Watt & Richardson, 2008). Furthermore, this study will extend the literature by exploring how teachers describe their motivations for teaching in urban, high-poverty schools across racial groups within the same sample.

**Connectedness with Colleagues**

Since teacher’s motivation may influence their teaching beliefs and practices, motivation may also influence how teachers view and connect with their colleagues (Castro, 2012; Thomson et al., 2012). Although teachers often work in isolation within their own classrooms, teachers depend on one another, to varying degrees, to support student advancement, behavior management, their own learning, and other miscellaneous tasks outside of the classroom (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Kuriloff et al., 2019; Podgodzinski, 2013). Research suggests that positive collegial relationships among teachers lead to improved job satisfaction and longevity within the field for teachers, as well as improved academic achievement for students (Banerjee et al., 2017; Fall & Billingsley, 2011; Johnson et al., 2004; Sikma, 2019). Connectedness among colleagues, as defined in this study, is the experience of receiving support through positive collegial relationships, a feeling of trust among colleagues and opportunities for collaboration (Banerjee et al., 2017; Bryk et al., 1999; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard et al., 2007; Goddard et al., 2009; Pogodzinski, 2013; Shernoff et al., 2016; Siciliano, 2016; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). In this section, I will elaborate on the experience of connectedness among staff in schools. Next, I will
discuss the importance of connectedness for novice teachers and discuss the challenges of feeling connected with colleagues for African American teachers.

Positive collegial relationships can foster teacher learning, as teachers take professional risks to improve and adapt their teaching practices and support school initiatives and goals (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Shernoff et al., 2011). However, before implementing new practices, teachers consider their personal opinions and current practices, as well as the perspectives of their colleagues (Coburn & Stein, 2006). As teachers experience positive collegial relationships, trust can emerge, as teachers unite toward common goals (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Coburn & Stein, 2006). Teachers must be able to trust one another before they are willing to engage in collaboration with their colleagues (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Trust in colleagues allows teachers to step outside of the bounds of their classroom which may improve their effectiveness within the classroom (Kardos et al., 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). When teachers have a high degree of trust in their colleagues, the fear of being vulnerable in front of their colleagues decreases and teachers are able to be open and honest about their challenges, which fosters effective collaboration among teachers (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2001).

Bryk and Schneider (2002) investigated how trust and faculty connections can lead to differences in organizational functioning in three schools in Chicago. Trust was conceptualized as enabling teachers to problem-solve challenges, support one another, and improve morale over time (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Results indicated that racial tensions among teachers were particularly contentious in schools with low levels of trust, especially when there was not a single ethnic group that represented the majority of the school population (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). School that reported racial conflict among teachers reported significantly less trust among teachers ($\beta = -2.31, p < .001$; Bryk & Schneider, 2002).
Goddard et al. (2009) surveyed teachers from 78 public schools in Michigan to investigate the association between faculty trust and academic achievement in elementary school teachers instructing fourth and fifth grades. Results indicated that there was a positive association between faculty trust and academic achievement in math achievement ($r = .704, p < .001$) and reading achievement ($r = .631, p < .001$). Additionally, there was a negative relationship between trust and the proportion of the population of students of color ($r = -.730, p < .001$) and the proportion of the student population eligible for free or reduced-price lunch ($r = -.770, p < .001$). Using hierarchical linear modeling, Goddard et al. (2009) found that faculty trust predicted student mathematic achievement ($\beta = .39, p < .05$) and reading achievement ($\beta = .28, p < .10$), even when school characteristics such as student race, socioeconomic status, and school size were accounted for in the analyses (Goddard et al., 2009).

When given the opportunity to collaborate, teachers can discuss curriculum, plan lessons and monitor student progress, which may improve a teacher’s practice, adherence to the curriculum and teacher morale (Banjeree et al., 2017; Goddard et al., 2007). Collaboration among teachers can occur through formal and informal meetings, although teachers do not always have the time to collaborate with their colleagues (Goddard et al., 2007). Goddard et al. (2007) surveyed 452 teachers within 47 elementary schools in one school district to examine the relationship between teacher collaboration and the academic achievement of fourth grade students in mathematics and reading. Statistically significant results indicated that teacher collaboration is associated with positive student academic achievement in mathematics with an .08 $SD$ increase, and reading with an .07 $SD$ increase ($p < .05$; Goddard et al., 2007). Banerjee et al. (2017) extended the literature by investigating the relationship between teacher job satisfaction, student achievement, and the organizational culture of schools by analyzing data
from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey for Kindergarten. Findings suggest that there was a significant relationship between teacher’s job satisfaction and student academic achievement, which is moderated by the professional community of the school and teacher’s collaboration (Banjeree et al., 2017).

Kolleck (2019) conducted a systematic review of the literature on teacher collaboration and teacher motivation. After analyzing 25 articles from around the world, Kolleck (2019) found that personal characteristics, such as age, gender and experience, may explain a teacher’s likelihood of collaborating with their colleagues, with younger, female teachers being the most likely to collaborate with their peers across studies. Furthermore, the organizational climate of the school may influence teachers’ willingness to collaborate with other teachers (Kolleck, 2019).

**Connectedness for Novice Teachers**

Connectedness with colleagues may be an essential determinant in novice teacher’s decision to stay in the field (Bettini & Park, 2017). It is important to explore how novice teachers experience their schools, in their own words, to understand what factors may encourage novice teachers to stay in their schools, and in the field. Novice teachers may look for cues from their colleagues on how to interact with and manage students, how to engage with their fellow staff, and how to orient their practice in the classroom (Kardos et al., 2001). Many novice teachers have limited contact with their colleagues and seek out support from their colleagues (Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Pogodzinski et al., 2013; Shernoff et al., 2011). Kardos and Johnson (2007) surveyed 486 novice teachers throughout the United States to understand their experiences during their first two years teaching. Nearly 50% of novice teachers identified that they work alone, meaning they plan and teach their lessons without the support of their colleagues (Kardos
& Johnson, 2007). Furthermore, novice teachers reported that they did not receive any additional support than veteran teachers received, yet were expected to figure out the challenges of teaching on their own and perform at the same level as a veteran teacher (Kardos & Johnson, 2007).

Teachers enact agency when deciding if, and how, they engage with their colleagues (Pogodzinski et al., 2013). Teachers may identify and establish relationships with colleagues who hold similar personal and professional values and interests (Lane & Sweeny, 2019; Pogodzinski et al., 2013). Sikma (2019) interviewed, and observed, four novice teachers to identify the type of support novice teachers needed, through formal and informal relationships, during the first two years of their careers. Novice teachers, in this sample, identified five types of support they desired from their colleagues (Sikma, 2019). Novice teachers sought varying levels of emotional support, such as discussing the stressors of the day, and contextual support, such as learning the procedures for events within the school building (Sikma, 2019). Novice teachers also desired academic support to improve their teaching and knowledge of the curriculum, as well as social support and relational support, which included participating in social events within and outside of school and finding a colleague to relate to their feelings (Sikma, 2019). Overall, the teachers within this sample sought emotional support more than any other type of support (Sikma, 2019).

Lane and Sweeny (2019) conducted interviews with 18 novice teachers to understand how, and with whom, novice teachers develop relationships with their colleagues using social networking analysis. Many novice teachers initially formed close relationships with their grade-level colleagues (Lane & Sweeny, 2019). Some novice teachers did not initiate relationships with grade-level colleagues, due to personality differences and teaching ability, but instead reached out to organizationally distant colleagues such as instructional support coaches, and
administrators (Lane & Sweeny, 2019). Teachers, in this sample, did not have a close relationship with 94% of their colleagues in the school (Lane & Sweeny, 2019). Novice teachers continued to exhibit agency when establishing weak ties with organizationally distant colleagues, which were used to obtain information, support and resources (Lane & Sweeny, 2019).

Hertzog (2002) interviewed, surveyed and observed 12 novice teachers, who trained through alternative certification programs, to understand how teachers sought help from their colleagues in urban high-poverty schools. Novice teachers, in this sample, sought help for organizational challenges, classroom management, and curriculum planning and instruction (Hertzog, 2002). Although all novice teachers in this sample were assigned mentors, novice teachers initially sought advice from another novice teacher before seeking assistance from their assigned mentor (Hertzog, 2002). Furthermore, novice teachers also sought assistance from teachers who had classrooms nearby, or were teaching the same grade level (Hertzog, 2002). Lastly, novice teachers consulted their personal support network (e.g., family members, professors) when addressing interpersonal challenges with colleagues (Hertzog, 2002).

Pogodzinski et al. (2013) surveyed 184 novice teachers to investigate if novice teacher’s connectedness with their colleagues was related to their intention to continue teaching in their school. Using multiple regression, connectedness was a statistically significant \( p < .01 \) indicator of intent to remain in their school according to the best-fitting model (Pogodzinski et al., 2013). Hopkins et al. (2019) followed 47 novice teachers during their first five years of teaching to investigate if social conditions in schools, along with teacher’s individual characteristics predicted if teachers stayed or left their schools. Contrary to the initial hypothesis that feeling close to colleagues would predict turnover, Hopkins et al. (2019) discovered that teachers in the sample had different types of relationships, or social ties, with their colleagues.
Results suggest that teachers sought out some colleagues to gather advice or information (i.e., “instrumental ties”), whereas teachers sought other colleagues for emotional support and problem solving (i.e., “expressive ties”; Hopkins et al., 2019, p. 299). Additionally, trusting colleagues was more predictive of teachers staying in the school than other variables, such as self-efficacy ($p < .05$; Hopkins et al., 2019).

Johnson et al. (2004) surveyed 374 novice teachers to compare the support provided for novice teachers in low-poverty and high-poverty schools. Results suggest that novice teachers in high-poverty schools had less support than teachers in low-poverty schools, which was evident as early as the hiring process (Johnson et al., 2004). In this sample, teachers in low poverty schools interviewed with the principal more often than teachers in high poverty schools (difference = 18%, $p < .01$). Furthermore, teachers in high poverty schools were more likely to be hired after the school year started (difference = 20%, $p < .05$). Once hired, many teachers in high-poverty schools were not assigned to mentors for support (difference = 26%, $p < .01$). If novice teachers in high-poverty schools received a mentor, their mentors were less likely to work in the same school (difference = 29%, $p < .05$) or teach the same grade (difference = 33%, $p < .001$). Further, novice teachers with mentors in high-poverty schools were less likely to focus on challenges within the classroom, such as classroom management (difference = 26%, $p < .05$) and planning lessons (difference = 22%, $p < .05$; Johnson et al., 2004). Additionally, many novice teachers in low-income schools received less support around understanding and using the curriculum (Johnson et al., 2004). Fall and Billingsley (2011) extended the literature by using a larger sample to compare the experience of 957 novice, special education teachers in high-poverty and low-poverty schools. Results indicated that novice teachers in high-poverty schools
reported feeling less supported by their principal \( (F(1, 642) = 12.306, p < .05) \) and colleagues \( (F(1, 642) = 5.641, p < .05) \) than teachers in low-poverty schools (Fall & Billingsley, 2011).

**Connectedness with Colleagues among African American Teachers**

African American teachers experience similar challenges to those faced by their European American colleagues when they enter the classroom, such as having limited training in teaching culturally and linguistically students and managing student behavior (Magaldi et al., 2016). However, African American teachers may have fewer support networks within their schools (Bristol & Shirrell, 2019; Magaldi et al., 2016). It is important to consider how racial differences may influence how a sense of connectedness develops within a school (Madsen et al., 2019).

Madsen and Mabokela (2000) interviewed seven African American teachers working in suburban schools to explore and understand their relationships with their colleagues. Using the constant-comparison method to analyze themes, teachers reported challenges working due to feeling monitored at all times and feeling responsible for representing all African Americans (Madsen & Mabokela, 2000). Additionally, African American teachers felt that they had to constantly adjust their natural behavior to match the culture of the school (i.e., code switching), and field questions about African American culture from their colleagues (Madsen & Mabokela, 2000). Further, teachers reported challenges in navigating their personal differences in pedagogy and classroom management from the rest of the school community (Madsen & Mabokela, 2000).

Jones (2019) analyzed the rate of teacher retention for 49,668 teachers in Wisconsin schools, and surveyed approximately 30% of teachers within the sample on their experience of trust with their colleagues and principals \( (n = 14,817) \). Results indicated that African American and Latina/o teachers reported less trust with their colleagues than European American teachers,
regardless of the demographics of the school (Jones, 2019). Madsen et al. (2019) observed monthly staff meetings and weekly grade level meetings and interviewed nine European American teachers about their perceptions of African American teachers teaching practices and contributions in the school. European American teachers, in this sample, expressed concerns about the skills and preservice training of African American teachers (Madsen et al., 2019). For example, African American teachers were subjected to a more intensive interview process than European-American applicants and were expected to be a role model for African American students and other students of color (Madsen et al., 2019). Furthermore, European American teachers, in this sample, viewed African American colleagues as cultural brokers on African American culture and requested their support both within the classroom (e.g., discipline), and outside the classroom (e.g., general questions about African American culture and working with parents; Madsen et al. 2019).

Connectedness with colleagues for African American teachers can vary depending on the number of teachers of color within a school (Bristol & Shirrell, 2019; Madsen et al., 2019). Bristol and Shirrell (2019) used social network data in two school districts to investigate how African American and Latina/o teachers interacted with their colleagues. Across both school districts, African American and Latina/o teachers were solicited for advice at the same rate as European American teachers (Bristol & Shirrell, 2019). African American and Latinx teachers asked for advice from their colleagues at a different rate, depending on the racial composition of staff at the school, meaning that when there were fewer teachers of color in the school, African American and Latina/o teachers sought out less advice from their colleagues (Bristol & Shirrell, 2019).
This exploratory study was designed to address the gap in the literature by exploring how novice African American and European American teachers experience connectedness with their colleagues in urban, high-poverty schools. Previous research has explored the experiences and challenges novice teachers encounter working in urban, high-poverty schools, but has not investigated how a teacher’s race could affect their experiences with their colleagues (e.g., Bettini & Park, 2017; Fall & Billingsley, 2011; Johnson et al., 2004; Kardos et al., 2001; Pogodzinski et al., 2013; Sikma, 2019). A separate area of research has investigated the experiences of African American teachers but has focused on teachers working in suburban districts at various points in their careers (e.g., Bristol & Shirrell, 2019; Madsen & Mabokela, 2000; Madsen et al., 2019). Although emerging research has explored the differences in trust in African American and European American teachers (e.g., Jones, 2019), quantitative methods were used to capture differences, which limited the opportunity to explore how teachers experience schools differently. This study seeks to extend the literature by merging these separate areas of research to explore how African American and European American teachers experience connectedness with their colleagues in urban, high-poverty schools using qualitative methods to explore how novice teachers explain their relationships with their colleagues.

**Aims and Research Design**

Although many novice teachers work in urban, high-poverty schools, studies document that novice teachers leave urban, high-poverty schools, or the field altogether, after several years of teaching (Aragon et al., 2013; Ingersoll et al., 2018). A teacher’s motivation for teaching may influence their overall philosophy and practices within the classroom and the school overall (Thomson et al., 2012). Previous literature has conceptualized the motivations for teaching through evaluating intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivators for entering the field, and has
identified specific altruistic motivations for African American teachers (Fray & Gore, 2018; Su, 1997; Watt & Richardson, 2008). Once novice teachers are employed in urban, high-poverty schools, they are expected to perform with the same effectiveness of a veteran teacher, but with minimal support (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). When novice teachers enter into schools with an unsupportive environment, it may contribute to teachers leaving their school or the field (Hopkins et al., 2019). Teacher’s motivations may influence how teachers engage with students and other teachers within a school (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Pogodzinski et al., 2013). Previous research has focused on specific components of connectedness, such as collaboration and trust, and has investigated what types of relationships novice teachers establish in schools but has not explored how teachers experience their relationships with their colleagues (Banjeree et al., 2017; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard et al., 2007; Hopkins et al., 2019; Jones, 2019; Lane & Sweeny, 2019; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Furthermore, African American teachers may experience connectedness with their colleagues differently than their European American counterparts (Magaldi et al., 2016; Jones, 2019). Exploring these constructs may provide insight into the factors that encourage teachers to stay in the profession, or propel them to leave their school or the field altogether.

The purpose of the current, exploratory, study was to identify novice teacher’s motivations for teaching, employment in urban, high-poverty schools, as well as their experience of connectedness within their schools. Further, this study explored if teacher’s motivations and experiences differed based on teacher’s race. Qualitative measures were used to explore teacher’s motivations for teaching and to explore what motivated teachers to teach in urban, high-poverty schools. Qualitative measures also explored teachers experience of connectedness within their schools.
The current investigated the following research questions:

1. How do novice teachers, in this sample, explain what motivated them to teach and what led them to teach in urban, high-poverty schools?

2. Are there differences in how novice teachers, in this sample, describe their motivation to teach generally and teach in high poverty schools based on their race?

3. How do novice teachers, in this sample, explain their experience of connectedness with their colleagues (i.e., positive collegial relationships, trust among colleagues, collaboration with colleagues)?

4. Are there differences in how early career teachers in this sample describe their experience of connectedness with their colleagues based on their race?

Chapter II: Methods

Setting and Sample

This study analyzed extant data from a larger, federally funded, research project investigating a coaching model to improve the classroom management and connectedness among novice teachers in urban, high-poverty schools (Shernoff et al., 2016). Within the larger study, teachers attended monthly professional learning communities, and novice teachers were observed, coached weekly and mentored by veteran staff (Shernoff et al., 2016). Baseline data was analyzed in order to explore teacher’s motivations and connectedness before any changes occurred that could be attributed to the intervention.

Schools

Participating schools were selected from a list of 75 schools within a large urban district in the midwestern United States (Shernoff et al., 2016). Schools were considered for inclusion in the study if they included 85% or more low-income students, with average reading scores below
the 30th percentile on statewide assessments ($M = 26, SD = 3.8$), and a school population within one standard deviation of the school district mean ($M = 702, SD = 306$; Shernoff et al., 2016). Three, prekindergarten through eighth grade schools were selected for participation in this study (Shernoff et al., 2016). In participating schools, 97% of students received free or reduced-price lunch and 95% of students identified as African American (Shernoff et al., 2016). In participating schools, between 56% - 72% of teachers identified as African American. All administrators also identified as African American.

**Novice Teachers**

Novice teachers, defined as having five or fewer years of teaching experience, were recruited through informal meetings where researchers shared information, facilitated discussion, and provided informed consent about the study (Shernoff et al., 2016). Seventeen novice teachers were eligible to participate in the study, and 88% of eligible novice teachers consented and participated in the study ($n = 15$). Two teachers declined to participate in the study due to limited availability to participate in the study after school hours and a planned medical leave. One teacher joined the study late, and a baseline interview was not conducted. The final sample included seven European American teachers, six African American teachers and one Asian American teacher ($n = 14$) who taught for an average of 2.4 years ($SD = 1.73$; range = 0-5; Table 1). African American teachers were an average age of 30.83 years old ($SD = 5.42$; range = 23 – 39) whereas teachers from other races were an average of 28.75 years old ($SD = 5.70$; range = 23 – 41). Novice teachers taught within a range of grades (pre-kindergarten to third grade, $n = 5$; fourth to eighth grade, $n = 4$) and content areas (art or physical education, $n = 4$). Two special education teachers participated in the study as well. Eighty-six percent of teachers were women ($n = 12$). Participants were trained through alternative certification programs ($n = 6$) and
traditional preservice programs \((n = 8)\), and 64\% of novice teachers were enrolled in graduate programs, or already earned Master’s degrees \((n = 9)\).

Table 1

**Demographic Characteristics of Novice Teachers**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>African American Teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female, 34 years old, 5\textsuperscript{th} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alexa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female, 30 years old, 4\textsuperscript{th} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kendra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female, 39 years old, 5\textsuperscript{th} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Maurice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male, 23 years old, 1\textsuperscript{st} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brittany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female, 31 years old, 3\textsuperscript{rd} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Naomi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female, 28 years old, 1\textsuperscript{st} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>European American and Asian American Teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European American, Female, 26 years old, 3\textsuperscript{rd} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ashley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian American, Female, 27 years old, 1\textsuperscript{st} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European American, Female, 28 years old, 2\textsuperscript{nd} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European American, Male, 29 years old, 4\textsuperscript{th} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European American, Female, 32 years old, 3\textsuperscript{rd} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Shannon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European American, Female, 23 years old, 2\textsuperscript{nd} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Stephanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European American, Female, 24 years old, 2\textsuperscript{nd} year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Julie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European American, Female, 41 years old, 3\textsuperscript{rd} year teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Measures

Novice teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol that explored teachers’ professional backgrounds, experiences with classroom management, and connectedness with their colleagues (Shernoff et al., 2016). Within the larger study, novice teachers were interviewed three times throughout the study (baseline, at the end of Year 1, at the end of Year 2), with a total of 43 interviews conducted by the end of the study (Shernoff et al., 2016). Only the semi-structured interviews conducted at baseline were analyzed in this study in order to explore what led to teachers to the profession and their experience of connectedness prior to the implementation of the intervention (Appendix A).

Interviews were developed based on the empirical literature on professional development for novice teachers (Shernoff et al., 2015). Each section followed the funnel method in which open ended questions (e.g., During your first few years of teaching, can you describe the types of support you received?) were followed by specific probes (e.g., Was the support that you received what you needed?; Shernoff et al., 2015). The protocol was organized into five sections. The first section included questions about the teacher’s background and experiences being a teacher. The second section focused on novice teacher’s experiences in managing their classrooms. The third and fourth sections included questions surrounding teachers help seeking behaviors and connectedness with their colleagues. The final section of the interview protocol focused on the professional community of the school. In sum, the interviews contained 12 questions with a range of two to five probing questions.

All interviews were conducted in-person, by the principal investigator of the federally funded study. The principal investigator was a White woman, which may have influenced how participants expressed their perceptions of the setting, the students and their families. The
interviews were conducted by establishing trust and building rapport with novice teachers and using nonverbal communication to support and encourage responses (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Interviews lasted an average of one hour ($M = 58.71$ minutes, $SD = 11.8$), were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and checked against the audio recording for accuracy (Shernoff et al., 2015).

**Procedures and Data Analysis**

I am an African American woman, who was a practicing school psychologist in an urban, high-poverty school district. I recognize that as the sole coder of the interviews within this study, and being a member of the group of interest, my experiences and perspectives may have influenced the interpretation of the data. I sought to explore and monitor my biases by looking for interpretations outside of what I expected to uncover based on my previous experience. Furthermore, I implemented several procedures to increase the trustworthiness of the data to validate findings, as detailed below.

This study included secondary data analysis from extant data. Qualitative measures were used to understand novice teacher’s motivations to teach in urban high poverty schools and experiences of connectedness. Thematic analysis was used to identify and analyze themes to explore teacher’s motivation for teaching, for teaching in urban schools, and to explore teacher’s experience of connectedness within their school (Braun & Clarke, 2006). NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, was used to code interviews. Prior to analysis, teacher’s race was identified and matched with their interview. Interviews were arranged in an alternating pattern by race (e.g., an interview was read from a European American teacher followed by an interview from an African American teacher) in order to identify themes across racial groups.
Using the six-step guidelines detailed by Braun and Clarke (2006), interviews were read to generate initial ideas for codes. During the second step, the author developed initial codes which were applied across all interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A codebook was developed and refined during the initial coding process to define the code with inclusion and exclusion criteria and example passages of each code (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). During the third step, after all codes were identified, codes were organized into themes for further analysis. Themes were reviewed to determine if there was a pattern among coded text within the theme, or if select passages should be recoded into another theme or discarded. During the fourth step, themes were reviewed to determine if they aligned with the overall dataset, or if new themes needed to be created to appropriately reflect those data. Themes were developed until theoretical saturation was identified. Themes reflected a cohesive picture of the data and were distinguishable from one another (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the fifth step, themes were refined to illustrate the core component of each theme. Lastly, the results are presented below using examples from the data, to highlight and explain the themes (Appendix B).

**Procedures for Determining Trustworthiness of the Data**

Four methods were used to strengthen the validity and trustworthiness of the results (Creswell & Miller, 2000). First, triangulation was used across interviews to verify themes related to motivation and connectedness (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Second, the researcher stated her beliefs and biases to allow readers to consider how her beliefs and biases may influence findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Third, an audit trail documented the process and procedures used to analyze these data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). An external auditor reviewed the initial codes, themes, and narrative description to confirm that results were identified credibly and logically from the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Fourth,
the researcher provided robust quotes to illustrate themes and support findings, which are presented below (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Chapter III: Results

Motivation to Teach

Thematic analysis of interviews provided insight into the multiple factors that led novice teachers to the profession, and to teach in urban, high-poverty schools. Additionally, thematic analysis also provided insight into differences in motivation by teacher race. Motivation, as defined by interview data, included the personal interests and desires to teach, inspire and support students’ academic and personal growth. Three themes emerged via thematic analysis: (1) internal drive to teach (2) giving back to the community, and (3) fixing the flaws in urban, high-poverty schools (see Figure 1). Findings are presented below, including differences by race, with quotes from novice teachers to illustrate each theme.

Figure 1. Dimensions of Motivation for Teaching and Teaching in Urban, High-Poverty Schools
Internal Drive to Teach

Internal drive to teach was conceptualized as the traits, strengths, and interests that resided within the teacher that, when acknowledged and noticed, led them to the teaching profession. Thematic analyses suggest that teacher’s acknowledgment of their motivation to teach occurred at different times for different teachers. Some novice teachers recognized their deep-seated desire to teach as a child or adolescent, while other teachers established careers in different professions before accepting their internal drive to teach. In this sample, there were no meaningful thematic differences in how teachers described their internal motivation to teach when comparing African American versus European American/Asian American novices.

Several novice teachers \((n = 9)\) identified an internal drive to teach. Some novice teachers identified their internal drive to teach while in childhood. For example, Jessica, a European American novice teacher, explained her motivation to teach as follows: “I’ve always wanted to be a teacher. I always did. … I always knew… when I was going to college, I was going to get it in teaching.” Kyle, a European American novice teacher, explained that his internal drive to become a teacher emerged in high school, along with a strong desire and vision to be in this role. He explained: “I loved math in high school … [and] I always wanted to work with kids. …It’s just what I always wanted to do, so I just kind of imagined myself as a teacher and a coach.”

Maurice, an African American novice teacher, recognized his internal drive to teach while in college. During the interview, he recalled that he reflected on his strengths and interests while in college and realized that he “like[d] working with kids.” In contrast, Sara, a European American novice teacher, considered alternative careers before acknowledging and accepting her internal drive to teach. She explained, “I had always … gone back and forth about going back to school and becoming a teacher.” Ultimately, Sara realized, “I always felt like I was meant to be a
teacher. … It’s one of those things … I want.” Ashley, an Asian American teacher, realized she was drawn to the profession after having a career in accounting. She discovered her interest and desire to teach after having the opportunity to train others in her job. Ashley explained, “I was sent over to help teach the new staff the way to do an American tax return and the process. … They were a lot younger, … a lot of them were right out of college … and just being in that teacher role.. I found that I really, really liked it. … So, when I came back, I decided I needed a change.”

Other novice teachers acknowledged their internal drive to teach after volunteering and mentoring experiences. For example, Shannon, a European American teacher, acknowledged her interest in teaching after volunteering in a classroom while in college. After volunteering, Shannon reflected on her personal strengths, interests and skills, and realized, “I always liked working with kids and so I knew I wanted to be a teacher.” Alexa, an African American teacher, also recognized her interest in teaching after volunteering. Alexa volunteered in the youth program at her church. She stated, “We did part of the teaching, so that was something I really looked forward to and enjoyed. I put a lot of time and effort into that …even though it was for my church, and I wasn’t getting paid.” Brittany, an African American teacher, also acknowledged her internal drive to teach after tutoring and mentoring students within a variety of programs. Brittany realized that she was “really good with the kids, and they really liked me.” She thought that she could help students improve their self-esteem and her connections with students made her think, “I can be a teacher and I can be a good teacher … not just one of the teachers who comes to work for a paycheck.”
**Giving Back to the Community**

Giving back to the community was operationalized as intentionally seeking employment in urban, high-poverty schools to support, encourage, and inspire African American children as a way to improve the African American community. Giving back to the community was a pattern that emerged across 4 of the 6 African American teachers who were interviewed and none of the European American/Asian American teachers. Novice teachers, who grew up in urban, high-poverty communities, emphasized using their skills to improve academic rigor and provide emotional support for African American students. Drawing from their life experiences, these novice teachers sought to be positive role models to inspire African American children to overcome obstacles and lead successful lives.

Kendra explained her motivation to work in urban, high-poverty schools as follows: “I want to give back to the community. I wanted to give back to those kids who were just like me.” Kendra felt that she received an insufficient education, which pushed her to design lessons that would engage students and teach them academic and life skills. She explained that by drawing upon her experiences, growing “up in the neighborhoods that they’ve grown up in,” Kendra tried to “relate [life experiences] to schoolwork.” She continued:

Sometimes I [have to] go down to their level and then say, but this is how I’ve learned, I know so much. I know how to do this, I know how to do that, and I know how to co-exist in all kinds of settings.

Several African American teachers ($n = 4$) also viewed themselves as a “role model” for students. In the interviews, teachers described a desire to represent an example of success and inspire students to overcome challenges. Alexa, for example, explained the motivation to teach in urban, high-poverty schools as follows:
I wanted to work with African American children because I am. I just felt like I would relate more to them and would be able to help them more because they see I made it. I got a degree and came from where they live, ‘cause I grew up in [the] projects as well. … So they can see that and I can talk to them and inspire them, then they feel like they can do it too.

Brittany similarly perceived herself as a positive role model. During the interview, Brittany referred to herself as someone who had overcome significant personal adversity, including “growing up in rough neighborhoods” and being raised by parents battling alcohol and drug addiction. Brittany conceptualized these experiences as directly related to her motivation to teach in urban, high-poverty schools and viewed her teaching as an opportunity to inspire and support students. She explained:

I didn’t always have the shot to be who I am, so I just felt like coming in and being able to tell the students like, “I come from where you come from and look at me” would help them realize…“I don’t have to be like everyone else in my family, I can be different.”

Maurice, the only African American male teacher in this study, also chose to work in urban, high-poverty schools to “give back,” and also wanted to be a positive representation of a Black male. Maurice reflected on his own school experience and recalled only having three Black male teachers in his elementary and secondary educational career. Maurice explained:

It’s just not seeing those images in school. … If I’m there and I can have an impact on maybe one or two kids, like someone had on me and my brother, it would be something that’s worth it, because a lot of the kids, who I went to middle school with, who I graduated from my grammar school with, a lot of them are locked up in jail, [or] dead. … Just seeing how they didn’t have those [positive] influences unfortunately, and
fortunately for me, through basketball, … if I could do that for a student, then it would be worth it.

*Fixing the Flaws in High Poverty Schools*

Fixing the flaws in urban, high-poverty schools was operationalized as teacher’s choosing to work in urban, high-poverty schools to help the children who they perceived as needing the most help. Fixing the flaws in high-poverty schools was a pattern that emerged across all interviews with European American/Asian American teachers (n = 8 of 8) and no interviews with African American teachers. This theme reflected a deficit perspective as there was an emphasis on weaknesses and deficiencies within urban, high-poverty schools. Examples include focusing on the achievement gap, emphasizing the lack of resources, highlighting the perceived lack of parental involvement, and frequent disruptive behavior among students. These teachers also identified themselves as the ones to fix the perceived challenges. As part of their solution, novice teachers talked about deemphasizing academic content in order to focus on discipline. These teachers also emphasized their role as a stable adult to counterbalance perceived instability and adversity.

In order to support students, several novice teachers prioritized discipline and providing stability for students over academic rigor. Novice teachers also expressed negative biases regarding student’s family life and shared that discipline and behavior management were the most challenging and most important aspects of teaching in urban, high-poverty schools. For example, Kyle explained how challenging it was for him to observe and manage students’ behavior within his class, and he explained student behavior as a reflection of the students’ personalities. He expressed, “It was pretty weird walking in there, and kids are just running around, doing whatever they want. And a lot of them didn’t have respect for the teachers, or the
other kids, or anyone at all.” Kelly also experienced difficulty managing student behavior and changed her philosophy about teaching to focus on discipline. Kelly explained:

I think an urban setting is completely different than any other setting because it’s so much about control and discipline and it’s only a small percentage about teaching. The teaching stuff seems easy. It’s all the other stuff that’s difficult.

Some novice teachers positioned themselves as the ones to solve students’ problems by being a stable presence in students’ lives. Jessica decided to teach in urban, high-poverty schools, “where the resources are just not always there” and where “the children need really good teachers.” Further, she chose to teach in urban, high-poverty schools over suburban schools because she believed that she would be most useful. She explained, “I just feel like I could help them more … because these children don’t have the parental support at home.” Shannon also felt that it was important to be a constant presence in students’ lives to fill the gap of support. She explained, “you see it every day with these kids who don’t have mom who do this or that.” In order to fix the problem, Shannon turned to a mentor who explained:

Showing up every day is going to make such a huge difference…even if you’re not teaching them all the material as best as you can…you’re coming every day and … giving them routines is something that they might not have at home and you know, giving them respect and showing them that you’re here for them every day is something that these kids are going to … appreciate and hopefully remember for the rest of their lives.

Some novice teachers noted that they stayed in their current teaching position, even if they were unhappy, in order to continue to provide what they perceived as needed stability for these students. Some teachers contrasted their relationship with students to other adults who were described as unreliable and undependable. Some teachers also shared concerns about not wanting
to disappoint students. Julie, for example, had an opportunity to transfer to a new school, but she felt it was more important to stay in her current position. She explained:

The worst thing to do to these students is to leave them, because that’s what’s in their life every day. You know, they—they’re used to people walking out of their lives on a regular basis. They need stability.

Further, Julie explained how art was an important part of students’ lives, and how she fixed some of the flaws in high-poverty schools, and by extension, student’s lives by starting an animation club. She continued:

I’ve had students that have made great strides just being in art. It’s the one good thing in their life. It’s the one thing they’re good at, you know, that they just wanna come. I mean … I was beating them off with a stick before I had an animation club. They all wanted to hang in my room after school.

Connectedness with Colleagues

Connectedness with colleagues was defined as the relationships among colleagues that supported and/or hindered teachers’ ability to teach within the classroom and work effectively with their colleagues. Two themes emerged from the analysis to explain the various dimensions that influence connectedness: (1) personal relationships with other teachers and (2) systemic contributors of connectedness (see Figure 2). Once initial codes were identified, they were reviewed at the school level. There were no meaningful differences in the coding at the school level.
**Figure 2. Dimensions of Connectedness with Colleagues**

**Relationships with Other Teachers**

Personal relationships with teachers was defined as the interactions that novice teachers experienced with other teachers. Thematic analysis highlighted that teachers’ personal relationships with other teachers not only influenced their experience of connectedness at their school but also fell on a continuum from close to distant illustrated in Figure 2 and described in detail below.

**Close, Personal Relationships.** Close personal relationships with their other teachers was operationalized as the relationships that developed outside of novice teacher’s professional obligations (e.g., developing curricula, reviewing student data). These novice teachers were comfortable sharing personal information about themselves and sought the opportunity to get to know their colleagues in different contexts. Novice teachers developed these close relationships
by choice and spent time with their colleagues outside of school. During school hours, novice teachers relied on these friendships for emotional support throughout the day. Close relationships with other teachers was a pattern that emerged across 2 of the 6 African American teachers who were interviewed and 3 of the 8 European American/Asian American novices.

Some novice teachers spent time with their colleagues either as a group, or individually. Kendra, an African American teacher, periodically spent time with a group of her colleagues outside of school. She explained, “On occasion, with some of us, we’ll hang out after work…have lunch together…talk about our day.” Alexa, an African American teacher, also spent time with a group of her colleagues outside of school. Alexa explained that with some of her colleagues, “we converse on the phone…and sometimes, some of us may go out…on a Saturday or something every once in a while, not often, but we may do it.” When asked about her conversations with colleagues outside of work, Alexa responded that she would deliberately try to “not make it all work…it may just be about something funny that happened to somebody or … about something that’s going on or what we heard on the news or you know we talk about like what girls would talk about.” Other novice teachers cultivated a deep relationship with a single colleague. Ashley, an Asian American teacher, developed a close, personal relationship with a colleague with whom she would go shopping with after school.

Several teachers leaned on their personal relationships for emotional support during the school day, which helped discuss their emotions and improve their teaching practices. Kelly, a European American teacher, cultivated close relationships with several of her colleagues. One relationship blossomed after Ashely supported her colleague in the classroom every morning. Although they “talk a little bit more about more personal stuff,” Kelly’s relationship also helped her understand her student’s lives and become a better teacher. Kelly explained, “At the end of
the year, we actually went out for lunch after the last day of school and … talked for hours about
this person is cousins with this person, and these people… and everyone is related.” Kelly
“became really good friends” with another teacher who was her “biggest resource … and was
just amazing.” Kelly provided and received professional support from another colleague who
“was struggling with … not being able to be creative in her classroom as much as she would like
and so we had a lot of really good discussions about that. We actually shared some books over
the summer about teaching.” Kelly and her colleague “would try to, at least once a day, to get
together for five minutes and see how each other were doing” to give one another emotional
support. Kelly’s friend left the school, which left Kelly without another relationship to provide
emotional support. Shannon, a European American teacher, also used her close relationship for
emotional support. Shannon and her colleague lived in the same neighborhood “so we talk all the
time, and we vent to each other all the time and we try to problem solve together.” She
continued, “we always talk about stuff that goes on in school…[the] issues we have in our
classrooms, or things that we have to do for the administration that is somewhat outrageous
sometimes, so, she’s a definite support for me.”

**Desire for Closer Relationships.** Desire for closer relationships was defined as having
frustration, disappointment, and/or sadness regarding the lack of meaningful relationships with
colleagues and a desire to bond more with colleagues. This theme emerged across 3 of the 8
European American/Asian American teacher interviews and none of the African American
teacher interviews. These teachers wanted to delve beyond the surface-level interactions with
their colleagues to develop deeper relationships to learn more about, and learn from, their
colleagues. Ashley, for example, experienced surface level interactions with her colleagues and
did not know about “each other’s social lives and … family and all that.” Ashley described her
interactions with her colleagues as “surgical,” as she felt that her conversations with colleagues occurred for the purpose of getting the information she needed about a student. Prior to entering the school, Ashley expected to form close, personal relationships with her colleagues and lamented that did not occur. She recalled knowing other teachers who attended family gatherings and major milestones such as weddings and baby showers and commented: “I don’t think that’s necessarily the case here.”

Kelly also had a desire for closer relationships with her colleagues and felt sad and disappointed with the surface-level interactions that she had with her colleagues. She explained:

Everyone’s very nice… but they’re not… very interested. Like, there’s a little bit of a separation, like, they’re always very nice to you and [ask] “how is your day going?” and “how are you doing?”, but… I don’t feel like they really care. … The teachers that I’ve sort of gotten… friendly with or whatever, they’re always very nice but they don’t really know what’s going on in your life. You know, I really don’t know much about them either.

She continued to express her desire for closer relationships stating that her colleagues were “not someone that I would invite to a major event in my life… which is sad. … it’s sad because we spend every day together.” Kelly wanted to learn more about her colleagues, both personally and professionally as she believed that would help them support one another. Kelly explained:

Our day is so short, so we never have time during the day to talk to each other, ever. … I would love to have a forty-minute time where we could all sit and eat lunch together. That would be amazing! … I think the communication … like… “Well, this student’s having a bad day” or “This student is doing this…” would be … really valuable.
Shannon similarly reflected on her desire to cultivate deeper relationships with her colleagues in order to increase professional support and collaboration. She believed that there was too much emphasis on following the schedule, rather than focusing on building connections with her colleagues. Shannon explained:

There’s less dialogue between teachers about their personal goals and what they enjoy doing in their free time because it’s so often, like work, work, work, got to get to the gym, got to get to the library, we have to go here, here, and here, give this test, so there’s not time for teachers to talk to teachers about things… not even just [as] friends, just like people who are nice to each other.

**Professional Relationships.** Professional relationships were defined as interactions with colleagues that were established for the express purpose of fulfilling professional responsibilities. Most novice teachers \( n = 13 \) revealed during their interviews that they had received instrumental support and advice from colleagues in order to improve instruction and complete administrative tasks. Some novice teachers established and maintained professional relationships with teachers on their grade level team, while other teachers established professional relationships with various teachers throughout the school. Several novice teachers established one professional relationship, which they believed provided all the support they needed. Professional support was a theme that emerged across 5 of the 6 African American teachers who were interviewed and all 8 European American/Asian American teachers.

Several novice teachers found support within their grade level team. These relationships developed out of convenience, as grade level teams interacted with one another frequently. Stephanie, a European American teacher, stated, as a “grade level, we have to communicate a lot just because we do switch.” Teachers had an opportunity to meet with one another through
scheduled meetings, such as common planning times. Teachers collaborated to standardize lessons, share materials and coordinate how to meet student’s needs and monitor student behavior. For example, Naomi, an African American teacher, collaborated with other first grade teachers to standardize work across the grade. She explained, “we do a lot together like extended response. We’re doing the exact same extended response in our classrooms.” Kendra, an African American teacher, collaborated with her colleagues to identify ways they could work together to support student learning and behavior within one another’s classrooms. She explained:

We collaborate a lot. We talk about children, “well how’s he acting with you” … or …
“what does he need help on in your class?” … I’m teaching … reading too. … I’ll sit with him when he’s in my room and work a little bit more on that strategy. Or [a teacher will ask] “Can you give him a little bit more math?” [and we’ll] “sit and do math.”

Kendra and her colleagues met every morning. They had morning meetings where “we talk in the morning, we come in here and grade papers, briefly chat, … [and] we help each other, we do as best as we can.” Jessica, a European American teacher, received all of her support from her immediate coworkers. As a special education teacher, Jessica worked collaboratively with other special education teachers, case managers, assistants and her co-teacher. Jessica received instrumental support from her colleagues to complete the administrative tasks. Jessica explained:

Well, the special ed teachers and my case managers, … I go to them for questions on IEP’s and stuff because I have a lot of IEP’s to write. … It’s been new since like, I guess last year, it’s all online IEP’s, so there was a lot of learning with how that goes, so I go to … [another teacher] and the other special ed teachers on, you know, information pertaining to that.
Jessica explained during her interview that she felt supported professionally by her colleagues. She continued, “I do love it here. … The kids and … my co-teachers and my assistant that I work with, you know, the people I actually work with… I love them, they’re great.” The support she received encouraged her to stay in her position. She explained, “I haven’t had any major … things for me to not like it or want to be somewhere else.” Brittany, an African American teacher, noticed how students improved as a result of her collaboration with colleagues. She remarked that the students “have come a long way in this classroom and they’re doing a really good job upstairs as well because they’re getting peer support from their teachers and I’m in constant communication with both of their teachers.” Further, Brittany had common prep time to prepare lessons with her colleagues. She explained, “we have the same preps so, … I was team-teaching math for seventh grade and we would meet literally every Thursday and Friday to get lesson plans together for the next two-week period of lesson plans.”

Some novice teachers found professional support among various teachers within the school. For example, Julie, a European American art teacher, expressed that receiving support from her colleagues was the most important contributor to her success. She explained, “I have many teachers in the building. I have the old art teacher. That’s the other thing that helped me.” Julie received support and encouragement from the previous art teacher to figure out how to grade student work. Julie continued that the teacher, “would really help model for me on a daily basis, or if I was really struggling about something or grading.” Sara, a European American teacher, received support from the reading coach, a veteran teacher, who was initially impressed by Sara’s work ethic. Over time, the reading coach, who worked in a different section of the building, became Sara’s mentor. As Sara explained:
There was a teacher, she’s not here anymore …, but for some reason, she … took me under her wing. … She came in one day, and I was cleaning my room … and she just took a real liking to me and we got along great and she just really helped me out. … when she saw me cleaning, that kind of like sparked a dialogue for her to be like you know “Why are you cleaning and what are you doing?” and you know, she was like impressed.

The reading coach used her expertise to guide Sara’s professional growth. For example, the reading coach “showed me, or she gave me a lot of things like ‘here, use this’ or ‘you should [be] doing this’ or ‘try this’ or ‘go to this professional development.’” Further, the reading coach allowed Sara to feel comfortable asking for help because Sara knew “she was on my side.”

**Intentionally Distant Relationships.** Some novice teachers \((n = 4)\) maintained professional relationships, where they did not share personal relationships with one or more colleagues. Novice teachers identified various reasons for maintaining more detached relationship, such as not trusting their colleagues, differences in pedagogy and a general mismatch in personal interests. Only African American teachers endorsed a deliberate decision to distance themselves from colleagues. Naomi decided to kind of keep it …professional, because I don’t really know them.” Naomi maintained distance relationships because “I’m new and I really don’t know what to expect. … I’m more of a person who…as time goes on, we might form a better acquaintance.” When asked if she would explore personal relationships with her colleagues over time Naomi responded, “Over time it probably will because I’m a personable person. I’m just careful as far as work and friendship.” Although Jada worked with her colleagues for “four years or more,” she conceptualized her relationship with colleagues as being “just associates.” Jada limited her conversations with her colleagues to “the students, … or maybe something that’s due…. or maybe I’m reminding them about something… Things like
that.” Brittany chose to distance herself from select colleagues within the special education department due to differences in teaching philosophy. Brittany strongly believed in teaching on grade level with all learners, including students receiving special education. She explained, “I like to teach my special ed students on grade level as much as I can because it helps them, and it boosts their esteem, and they can actually do some of the work.” Brittany’s colleagues didn’t share her teaching philosophy. Brittany explained:

[My colleague] says things that are inappropriate, she talks down to me because I’m young, and she feels like she knows the whole book about special ed when a lot of her theories are old. …They’re old school theories and they don’t work anymore, and she doesn’t have academic rigor. …So, I have no respect for her, so I don’t speak to her.

Maurice felt supported by his colleagues when it came to receiving advice about instructional strategies, however he did not associate with colleagues on a personal level and instead deliberately maintained a distant relationship because he felt his colleagues treated him as less than “equal.” He explained, “I felt as if she was talking to me more so, as if I were one of her nieces, her nephews, … not to the level of the students, but not as an equal.” Maurice explained that he wanted to show respect towards his colleagues because they are his “elders.” Maurice continued:

I respect them because … they’re my elders. …Out of respect I listen to them more… but… it’s frustrating … I try to just grin and bear it and move away from it. And then I also don’t want the kids to see that.

Maurice maintained his distance from his colleagues when there were opportunities for personal conversations, such as during lunch. Maurice instead used his lunch period as an opportunity to “be by myself … [and] to regain my sanity.” Maurice also shared that the times
that he joined his colleagues for lunch, he regretted his decision. Maurice highlighted gender differences as the reason why he chose to distance himself from his colleagues. Further, Maurice identified age differences as another barrier to close relationships with his colleagues. He explained, “I feel like I connect more with the kids than I do the teachers. …. I’m 23… I listen to the music they listen to, … [and] I live in the area that they live in … so I can relate more to the kids.

Systemic Contributors to Connectedness

Systemic contributors to connectedness were defined as the interactions and experiences that occurred throughout the school which influenced teachers’ perception of the school environment. Novice teachers identified multiple factors that contributed to their experience of connectedness, which were experienced outside of their interactions with individual colleagues but permeated through school norms and/or through their relationships with administrators. Thematic analysis highlighted that novice teachers identified experiences that contributed positively or negatively to their connectedness with colleagues. Positive contributors to connectedness (described below) reflected teacher perceptions that the school was a friendly and welcoming environment with supportive colleagues and administrators. Most novice teachers \( n = 13 \) identified factors that positively contributed to their connectedness with colleagues. In contrast, fewer novice teachers \( n = 9 \) identified barriers to connectedness, which focused on feeling disrespected by colleagues and administrators, frustration with an administrator’s leadership style, and larger systemic challenges that made it difficult to teach and collaborate with colleagues. Most of the teachers \( n = 7 \) of 9 who shared barriers were European American or Asian American.
Positive Contributors to Connectedness. Positive contributors to connectedness included experiences within the school that influenced the novice teachers’ positive experience of connection with colleagues ($n = 13$). Several novice teachers identified the “friendly” and “welcoming” environment as a positive contributor to their experience of connectedness with colleagues. For instance, Naomi, an African American teacher, shared: “Nobody is mean or turns their nose up at me. … I’ve got a lot of ‘Welcome to [the school].’” Alexa, an African American teacher, also noticed how “welcoming” the staff was when she started at the school. She described the staff as “very friendly. [They] have a lot of suggestions and input on what you can do and things like that. So it’s very welcoming. Very.” Shannon, a European American teacher, was new to her school. Compared to her previous school, Shannon appreciated how her colleagues welcomed her into the school. She explained:

The staff here is much nicer, and … people came up to me when I started here, and they introduced themselves to me. … I was like… that’s nice. They’d recognize me as a new person, as a new teacher, and … they were just all very kind and welcoming. My last school, people just kind of ignored us the whole time and no one really associated with us.

Several novice teachers expressed that a supportive environment helped them feel connected to their school and to their colleagues. Novice teachers explained that support permeated throughout the school and was available from many teachers. Jada, an African American teacher, felt like “if I had a question or if I had a problem, I feel like I could go to any of the teachers … and get support.” Jessica, a European American teacher, also felt that colleagues were available for support. She explained, “everyone seems to be pretty close and help each other out if someone has a problem.” Kyle, a European American teacher, noticed how
supportive his colleagues where, especially when it came to addressing disruptive behaviors. He explained, “all the teachers try to help each other out, with a few exceptions.” He continued, “There hasn’t been anyone that has not been helpful…especially when the kids are not behaving the right way.” Maurice echoed this sentiment, as teachers supported one another to address disruptive behavior when they saw it. He explained:

If we see [disruptive behavior] in the hallway with kids… no matter what grade level it is, teachers are stepping in to separate it, and that choice is being respected. It’s not just like “don’t talk to my kids, I can handle it” it’s just like “Oh, go ahead.

Naomi, an African American teacher, described how teachers work with one another to address student needs, as a way to prevent disruptive behavior from occurring within the classroom. She described how colleagues were “supportive” of one another and may “send the child down here to help another student, … or send someone in their class for extra support. … That’s something I found that [was] common within the school.”

Novice teachers identified receiving support from administrators as an additional positive contributor to connectedness. A healthy relationship with administrators was important as administrators determined teachers teaching position, and overall experience throughout the year. Sara, a European American teacher, explained:

Especially because this district is so principal driven, it’s like your relationship with your principal … [and] their teaching philosophy and your teaching philosophy has to be in alignment and has to be in somewhat of the same track, because if it’s not, that really effects your teaching experience.

Several teachers shared that principals or other administrators, who all identified as African American, were “helpful” with academic and instructional challenges and were
accessible to provide such support when it was needed. Jada, an African American teacher, appreciated that her principal had an “open-door policy” and that the principal was “always willing to listen … and give you feedback.” Stephanie, a European American teacher, felt empowered by her principal’s support to try new strategies within the classroom. Stephanie never felt “uncomfortable” when a strategy was unsuccessful and felt supported by her principal. Stephanie explained, “I think the principal, that’s a good thing about her, [she is] open to trying different things. … which is … helpful in a lot of ways. … She says, ‘… try it, see if it works.’” Kendra, an African American teacher, also had a positive relationship with her principal and received assistance and support from administrators on numerous occasions, noting the length at which the principal went to support her. Administrators assisted her in the classroom and had “gone to the extent of getting lessons plans for me and talking to me” to help plan for lessons and support her instruction. Although Sara’s principal used a different approach that included giving Sara explicit directions on what to change in her classroom with limited feedback, Sara acknowledged how the principal pushed her to improve throughout the year by urging her to learn new skills because she will “always going to have challenges in [her] room.” After a particularly challenging year, Sara appreciated that her principal recognized the hard work she did to improve her teaching and classroom management practices.

Some novice teachers received support from administrators to address non-instructional, administrative obstacles. When Maurice, an African American teacher, needed guidance on selecting his healthcare benefits, he asked his principal for help. Maurice, who described his principal as “really helpful” and “available” was grateful for her assistance. The principal scheduled an appointment with Maurice for the same day and guided him through the process of selecting his benefits. “As a beginning professional … that’s something you need help to learn.
It’s not something they … teach you how to get in class. … she helped me out a lot.” Maurice further noted that he appreciated that his principal supported him with all aspects of his job.

**Barriers to Connectedness.** Barriers to developing connectedness included experiences outside of personal relationships with individual teachers that negatively influenced novice teachers’ connection with their colleagues and the school. Some novice teachers felt disrespected by their colleagues and administrators. Novice teachers, especially teachers who taught content areas (e.g. art, physical education) felt that they were not treated as equals. Kyle, a European American gym teacher, felt that he, along with the technology and music teachers, was being treated with less respect than classroom teachers because he was not included in staff meetings. He explained:

[It feels like we] babysit the kids for an hour so the other teachers can get a break.

…They’re going to meet on Wednesdays while we’re babysitting the kids. … I don’t know how else they could do it. I don’t think there is another way, but – I’m sure they could move the schedules around.

Kelly, a European American art teacher, conveyed a similar sentiment. She expressed, “I don’t feel very important, being an art…being the prep. … I feel really bad, too, because I don’t want to be seen as a prep. I want to be seen as… another class.” Further, Kelly felt that she was perceived as a secretary by her colleagues, as they asked her to do various tasks, even if it was not appropriate for her or related to her job. She explained, “Because I’m a prep, some of the teachers think that means I have more time to do things for them, so they ask me to do little things for them all the time.” The underlying message that art was a secondary, and therefore a less important subject, was upheld by administrators, and Kelly did what she could to prove her worth. Kelly explained that she felt so unsupported by administrators and not in a position of
power that she did what she could to “keep them on [her] good side” by using few of her allotted resources, supplementing resources into the school from the community, and avoiding asking for help. She explained:

I really try not to ask the administration for help because I don’t want to overstep my boundaries and ask too many times, and I also … want to keep them on my good side all the time. And I don’t like to have to play games like that but … that’s the only way that really … it works. … I don’t even use my hundred dollar budget because I want them to see that I can be valuable, like in my entity, without asking other people for help in terms of money. … I also try to bring a lot of other outside resources to come into the school. … I don’t really ask for help very much, and it seems like when I do, nothing really happens.

Some novice teachers identified disorganized administrative leadership along with limited support led them to feel frustrated and disconnected from the school. Kelly expressed her frustrations regarding the lack of communication and support from administrators, explaining that “it’s also sort of this unwritten rule that [you have to] suck-up to our administration to get something.” Although she wished “that it didn’t always have to be like that,” Kelly continued to hope for administrative support. “I would love more suggestions from my administration on my teaching, but they just don’t come in my class. Ever.” Julie, a European American teacher, felt that she was unsupported by administrators who disregarded her complaints and concerns. She was frustrated by the lack of time she had to prepare her classroom. She felt that she was “not regarded as something that needs prep time. I’m regarded as someone that gives prep time.” Further, Julie was disappointed that her concerns were ignored by administrators. She explained:
I have gotten no accommodation from anyone. … What just really hurt was the snappiness of my AP this morning at me like I’m a whiner. … In fact, I’m being assertive. I’m telling you what I need. I’m tell[ing] you what I would like to do. Now, you can say yes or no, but you don’t have to go off on me and tell me you’re sick of everyone complaining.

In addition to the lack of tangible support, Julie expressed how the lack of administrative support and follow through following a fight in her classroom led to ineffective discipline, disregard for consequences for violence, and left Julie feeling unsupported. Julie explained, “Here, if I have a fight, I have to write it up myself, I have to call the parents, I have to try to find someone to sign it. And that’s what’s difficult.”

Other novice teachers expressed frustration with administrators’ leadership style, and lack of enforcement of school procedures. For example, Jessica, a European American teacher, was aggravated that she had to continuously remind the administrators about getting paid and what school she was in on a given day. She explained, “Here, you have to remind them about things, … especially as it pertains to, your pay, because …there’s several days where I haven’t gotten paid and you have to keep reminding them.” Stephanie, a European American teacher, was irritated by the lack of follow through and enforcement from school administrators, who let other teachers forgo implementing school wide policies and procedures. She compared it to the expectation of working in the corporate world. She explained, “if you didn’t get something done there it’s like you’d be fired, wherein the school level, there’s always an excuse.” Stephanie was also frustrated with the lack of enforcement of policies throughout the school. She continued:
It’s school-wide, too. Just enforcement of policies isn’t done, and that’s frustrating to me because I always try to be a person who gets everything done. And then when you show up at a meeting…there’s only a few people that have done what they need to have done.

Novice teachers identified systemic challenges that contributed to their poor connectedness with colleagues. Brittany pondered the effect of constant observations on teacher’s stress on collaboration among teachers. She stated:

I think the lack of collaboration was due to just all the testing and the stress that we had for keeping this building. … We had walk-throughs frequently, we had a lot of people coming through to see what we were doing, and I think that’s why there wasn’t a lot of collaboration cuz no one had time to do anything else but test and prepare for people to come through the building.

Stephanie believed that more time should have been devoted to improving academic achievement of students and was frustrated by the policies that did not focus on improving instruction. She explained:

Seeing what the focus is sometimes is frustrating as well. So thinking about your bulletin boards – bulletin boards need to be this or this needs to be that way or those things that I like to do. …but a lot of times, I feel like those are more the central focus for when people come in and visit; that’s kinda of what’s cared about rather than the actual instruction of the students.

Stephanie continued that aside from disagreement on instructional priorities, she also felt unsupported by the way administrators did not follow written policies. She explained, “It gets really frustrating … just the kind of policies of school or things that aren’t followed through on.”

Several novice teachers expressed how structural policies and practices limited support for
teachers. Ashley was “disheartened” by the lack of mentorship and support available to her as a career changer but figured that “because there are not colleagues more like me, … you serve the mass, as opposed to the individual.” She continued, “it’s hard for me because there’s no one else going through it with me or … close to it so I need to kind of figure it out on my own.” Although Julie was assigned a mentor, systemic challenges, such as lack of coverage, left her unable to meet with her mentor.

Ninety percent of the time … the communication was so bad that the subs wouldn’t be here on the day she told me, or the day would have moved and nobody told me. And so I would constantly have to stand these people up, which was just ridiculous. … I got no support. It was ridiculous. And I had so much paperwork to do for it.

**Chapter IV: Discussion**

Many novice teachers leave their teaching positions, or the profession, within the first five years of their career (Aragon et al., 2013; Ingersoll et al., 2018). Urban, high-poverty schools, in particular, have been described as “hard-to-staff” schools due to frequent teacher turnover (Achinstein et al., 2010). Research suggests that novice teachers leave urban, high-poverty schools due to high levels of stress, limited support, and eventual burnout, which may differ across racial groups (Camacho & Parham, 2019; Fitchett et al., 2020; Shernoff et al., 2011; Whipp & Geronime, 2015). The present study sought to explore novice teacher’s motivation for entering the teaching profession and for teaching in urban, high-poverty schools. Understanding teachers’ motivation may provide insight into their goals for teaching and how to keep them engaged and committed to the profession (McLean et al., 2019). Once novice teachers start working in urban, high-poverty schools, they establish relationships with their colleagues. Connectedness with colleagues can influence retention, particularly in urban, high-poverty
schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard et al., 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Racial differences among staff may influence how collegial relationships are developed and maintained over time (Bell, 2002; Jones, 2019; Magaldi et al., 2016). The present study also explored how novice teachers defined their relationships with colleagues, the systemic contributors to connectedness, and explored if there were differences in connectedness across racial groups.

**Motivation to Teach and to Teach in Urban, High-Poverty Schools**

One pattern that emerged in the thematic analysis was that many novice teachers identified an internal desire to teach as a key motivation for entering the teaching profession. This pattern was observed across racial groups. Identifying an internal desire to teach as a reason for entering the profession aligned with decades of previous research suggesting that teachers often cite an intrinsic motivation as one of their reasons to enter into the profession (e.g. Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Fray & Gore, 2018; Thomson et al., 2012; Watt & Richardson, 2008). Intrinsic motivation, which is the desire to teach to fulfill personal needs, included traits such as having a passion for teaching, enjoying a specific subject, and a desire to work with children and adolescents. For example, in their scoping review, Fray and Gore (2018) found that intrinsic motivation was frequently identified as a motivation for teaching across 70 studies. Furthermore, an intrinsic motivation was found, regardless of the theoretical conceptualization of motivation and research methodology used to explore motivation across studies.

The current study adds to the existing literature on motivation to teach by finding that novice teachers acknowledged their internal drive to teach at different times in their lives. Some teachers knew they wanted to teach as children and had not considered working in other careers at any point in their lives. Other teachers recognized their internal drive to teach during college when they reflected on their skills, strengths, and weaknesses. Several novice teachers
recognized their internal drive to teach after being in an informal teaching role. Their experience teaching others, outside of an educational setting, led teachers to acknowledge their drive to teach. Research suggests that professional commitment may be influenced by how early teachers acknowledge their desire to teach. Evans (2011) interviewed 49 novice teachers, in both traditional training programs and alternative certification programs, to explore their motivation to teach. Novice teachers who entered their teacher education program immediately following high school described their aspiration to be a teacher as part of their identity, whereas teachers who acknowledged their desire to teach later in life reported less commitment to the profession (Evans, 2011). Although the current sample was not followed longitudinally, differences in when teachers acknowledged their internal motivation to teach in the current study is noteworthy and suggests the importance of cultivating an interest in the profession as early as possible to potentially stem the tide of attrition.

Additional themes emerged that explained what led novice teachers to work in urban, high-poverty schools. Teachers identified a desire to help and support students, which is defined as an altruistic motivation (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Fray & Gore, 2018; Stotko et al., 2007; Thomson et al., 2012). The underlying motivation to teach in high-poverty schools differed according to teacher’s race. In this study, most African American teachers described a desire to “give back to the community” in order to teach and support African American children. This commitment to use their skills and abilities to uplift African American students, which is also referred to as a “humanistic commitment,” aligns with the collectivistic cultural identity of many African Americans (Achinstein et al., 2010, p. 85; Carson, 2009, Su, 1997; Williams, 2009). A collectivist cultural identity stresses that an individual supports the improvement of the group by being responsible for supporting others within the larger community, rather than only
biologically related family members (Carson, 2009). In the context of the current study, the collectivistic cultural identity was reflected in teacher comments regarding their intentional choice to work in urban, high-poverty schools to teach African American children specifically. For example, African American teachers drew on their life experiences to develop engaging lessons with academic rigor and to be a role model for African American students.

In this study, all of the European American and Asian American teachers, on the other hand, expressed a desire to fix the flaws in urban, high-poverty schools. Teachers focused on the weaknesses and deficiencies within urban schools (e.g., lack of resources) and within students attending those schools (e.g., lack of parent involvement, frequent disruptive behavior). It is important to consider how teachers defined what needed “fixing” in urban, high-poverty schools. Research suggests that White novice teachers often have limited, meaningful, interactions with people from different cultures and as a result, may hold harmful beliefs about African American students (Hampton et al., 2008; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Quinn, 2017; Walker, 2011). Although it is unclear the extent to which teachers in the current study have had meaningful interactions with African American children prior to teaching, it stands to reason that they negatively compared students in urban, high-poverty schools to a standard set by their experiences in other school settings (Watson, 2012). Thematic analyses suggested that European American and Asian American novice teachers, brought their negative perceptions about urban schools, as well as their beliefs and attitudes about African American children with them to work (Hampton et al., 2008; Quinn, 2017). Even if teachers do not recognize their biases, or explicitly state their racial attitudes, their attitudes and beliefs shape their perspective of students and their teaching practices (Quinn, 2017; Watson, 2012).
Studies highlight that teacher perceptions influence their beliefs about African American students’ academic ability and the meaning of their behavior (Minor, 2014; Okonofua et al., 2016; Quinn, 2017). Some research suggests that teachers perceive African American students to have low intellectual ability and, as a result, hold students’ to less rigorous academic standards (Miller & Harris, 2018; Minor, 2014; Quinn, 2017). For example, Minor (2014) analyzed results from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (kindergarten cohort) to explore teachers’ perceptions about African American children. Results suggested that teachers perceived African American students to have low academic ability in the fall, and those perceptions were maintained throughout the school year (Minor, 2014). In the present study, European American and Asian American teachers conveyed in their interviews a deficit perspective related to students they teach, and blamed student disruptive behavior and school failure on students’ lack of ability, motivation, family dynamics, and culture (Walker, 2011). Furthermore, these teachers viewed student struggles as deficits found within the child and their family (Walker, 2011). For example, in the present study, teachers believed they were successful teachers if they were able to provide stability for students, rather than teaching the required academic content.

Behaviorally, teacher biases may lead them to believe that African American students are dangerous, which may change how they address student behavior (Picower, 2009). Further, teachers may view student misbehavior as a personality trait, rather than a reaction to stimuli (Okonofua et al., 2016; Picower, 2009). Okonofua et al. (2016) identified how biases can lead to the establishment of a cycle in which teachers respond to student misbehavior through increasingly harsh punishments, which in turn encourages students to feel rejected and disengaged from school.
In order to fix the perceived flaws in urban, high-poverty schools, non-African American teachers in this study shifted their focus away from teaching academic content and focused on discipline, control, and providing stability for students who were perceived as coming from volatile, unsafe, and unstable homes (e.g., Bell, 2002; Picower, 2009). This explanation may have allowed novice teachers to ignore how race influenced their teaching practices, as they identified a solution that allowed them to “save” students while ignoring their role in maintaining the challenges (Castro, 2012; Miller & Harris, 2018; Picower, 2009). This finding that non-African American teachers were motivated to teach in urban, high-poverty schools to rescue students is consistent with Castro’s (2012) profile of saviors who viewed their role as “fighting against the environment where students come from” (Castro, 2012, p. 143). When teachers view themselves as the savior, they often use deficit and colorblind beliefs, which devalue and/or ignore students’ cultural and individual strengths, and view students as incapable of improving without their help (Miller & Harris, 2018; Walker, 2011). Further, saviorism allows the teacher to feel good about themselves for helping, while ignoring how racism established and maintained the status quo, nor does it eliminate systemic barriers to address the problem in the future (Miller & Harris, 2018).

**Interpersonal Relationships are Key**

The present study also explored how novice teachers experienced connectedness with colleagues within their schools. Previous research indicates that the professional community influences teachers job satisfaction, retention in schools, and student achievement (Banerjee et al., 2017; Goddard et al., 2007; Hopper et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2012). In the present study, themes represented two dimensions of connectedness: (1) personal relationships with other teachers, and (2) systemic contributors to connectedness. Although most teachers in the present
study identified professionally supportive relationships with other teachers, teachers differed on their comfort with sharing personal information about themselves with their colleagues. The thematic analysis highlighted that relationships represented a continuum of closeness ranging from close, personal relationships with other teachers, to having intentionally distant relationships with colleagues. Further, non-African American teachers appeared to feel more comfortable sharing personal information about themselves compared to African American teachers in this sample. Current literature has focused more frequently on understanding how novice teachers’ develop and use their professional relationships but has not explored if teachers’ relationships extend outside of school (e.g. Campoli & Popova, 2017; Hopkins et al., 2019). In an extension of the literature, the findings of the present study suggest that teacher’s professional relationships were influenced by how they felt about their colleagues personally and professionally.

**Administrators Shape School Climate and Culture**

In this sample, connectedness extended beyond the interpersonal relationships between colleagues and included the school climate, culture, and leadership style of the administrators (Johnson et al., 2012; Stearns et al., 2015; Waddell, 2010). Positive contributors to connectedness included working in a warm, friendly and supportive school climate. School climate, or the individual’s feeling of the school, has been tied to job satisfaction, job performance and burnout (Hammelgarn et al., 2006). In the current study, novice teachers described how the positive school climate facilitated feeling valued as a colleague and feeling comfortable asking for support when they needed suggestions or guidance from their colleagues. Barriers to connectedness included feeling disrespected by colleagues and administrators, which made novice teachers feel undervalued, overlooked, and at times, neglected. Further, some
novice teachers, often teachers who taught elective subjects, felt isolated and felt that they did not receive adequate support. Novice teachers, across racial groups, identified administrators as providing both positive and negative contributions to connectedness. In this sample, African American teachers identified administrators as adding more positive contributions than teachers of other races. Conversely, European American and Asian American teachers identified administrators as contributing negatively to connectedness more often than African American teachers. All of the administrators within this study were African American. These findings shed light on how race may contribute to different perceptions of administrator’s abilities, which has been explored across a variety of studies (Brezicha & Fuller, 2019). Further, findings suggested that systemically, novice teachers experiences were largely influenced by the administrator, rather than broad district policies and practices. This finding, which highlights the importance of administrative support, contributes to the literature which suggests that administrative support improves retention for all teachers, regardless of a teacher’s race (Campoli & Papova, 2017; Hopper et al., 2021; Stearns et al., 2015; Waddell, 2010).

**The Inextricable Role of Race**

While exploring the findings of this study, it is important to consider how centuries of racism and oppression influence how teachers interact with one another across racial groups (Brezicha & Fuller, 2019; Fitchett et al., 2020). Bell (2002) explored how teachers address intergroup conflict across racial groups. Results indicated that conflict between teachers of different racial groups was due to their incompatible goals for teaching in an urban, high-poverty school (Bell, 2002). In alignment with select themes within the present study, teachers of color defined their role by being a role model and a cultural broker for students (e.g., giving back to the community), whereas European American teachers defined their role as being an authority
figure by focusing on classroom management and discipline (e.g., fixing the flaws in urban, high-poverty schools; Bell, 2002). Furthermore, teachers experienced conflict due to their different perspectives on pedagogy (Bell, 2002).

While having fundamental differences about their role, teachers may experience the working environment differently as well. Fitchett et al. (2020) explored the relationship between teacher race, school context and teacher stress. Results suggested that African American teachers reported having less stress than teachers of other races in schools where children matched their race and/or ethnicity (Fitchett et al., 2020). Additionally, teachers of color interpreted the stress and demands of teaching differently than their White colleagues (Fitchett et al., 2020). These findings, coupled with the findings of the present study, may suggest that motivation for working in a specific school context may influence how teachers perceive the school setting, stress, and the level of support needed to be a successful teacher (Fitchett et al., 2020). It is important to consider how staff perceive the shared values and expectations for teaching students and working with colleagues, as it relates to their willingness to work toward common organizational goals (Stearns et al., 2015). Viano and Hunter (2017) also explored how race influenced the relationship between teachers and principals. Results indicated that European American teachers were more satisfied with their jobs when they worked for a European American principal compared to when they worked for an African American principal (Viano & Hunter, 2017). African American teachers did not indicate a significantly different level of job satisfaction according to the principal’s race.

Findings of the present study suggest that African American teachers and teachers of other races have a different level of comfortability of when, or if, to share personal information with their colleagues. The discrepancy between teachers’ definitions of appropriate professional
relationships may have influenced the development of strong connectedness, which is regarded as a positive aspect of a healthy school culture (Brezicha & Fuller, 2019; Farinde-Wu, 2018; Madsen & Mabokela, 2000; Madsen et al., 2019). The unaddressed tension and conflict between racial groups may influence how relationships develop among teachers and administrators as well. Brezicha and Fuller (2019) found that there was greater trust between teachers and administrators of the same race, compared to racially mismatched relationships. Additionally, although administrators establish the tone within the school, teachers must accept, or reject, the values introduced by the administrator. Findings from the present study suggest that some of the novice teachers entered the school with different motivations and perspectives on how to best teach students according to their race, which may influence their agreement with the administrator’s organizational goals.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this study. First, this study analyzed extant data to explore motivation and connectedness across racial groups, which was not the original purpose of the initial study. As such, additional questions to explore teachers’ experiences (i.e., experiencing microaggressions, racial stress) may have provided greater depth of understanding of the experience of novice teachers across racial groups. Research suggests that African American teachers often experience racial stress at school (e.g., Hancock et al., 2020), which was not fully explored within this study. Furthermore, the sole interviewer was a White woman, which may have influenced how participants talked about their race as it related to their motivation and connectedness with colleagues. The second limitation of the present study was the small sample of novice teachers’ perspectives analyzed in this study. This study reviewed teachers’ perspectives during the baseline phase of the intervention only. It is important to consider the
findings for this sample, while not assuming these findings generalize broadly to all teachers in urban, high-poverty schools. Additionally, the results, which did not include the perspectives of veteran teachers, administrators, and other support staff, may have also limited generalizability to a larger sample, and may inhibit the development of appropriate interventions to improve connectedness and retention in urban, high-poverty schools. The third limitation of the study was that initially, teachers with four or fewer years of experience, but was expanded to include another year of experience to account for turnover within the schools and the inclusion of newly hired employees. As such, novice teachers who had greater experience may have had different perceptions of the environment than teachers within their first year of teaching. The fourth limitation of the study is that themes were identified by a single coder. Although practices were implemented to increase the trustworthiness of the findings, including creating an audit trail, stating the researcher’s positionality and triangulating findings across participants, the study may have been strengthened by the use of a coding team to identify and analyze themes along with procedures for assessing reliability.

**Implications and Future Directions**

Findings of this study suggest that novice teacher’s personal perceptions may influence how they view students and their colleagues. School psychologists are in the unique position to work with teachers to address perceived challenges within their classrooms (Parker et al., 2020). Further, school psychologists are expected to work toward developing equitable and safe school environments for all students, and as such should facilitate training to combat bias and discriminatory policies and practices within the organizational and individual levels. School psychologists can partner with school administrators to use data to explore common organizational practices that may be discriminatory to a particular group of students (e.g.,
discipline). School psychologists already use the consultative process to help teachers process cultural differences with students, as well as address academic and behavioral concerns (Erchul & Martens, 2012; Parker et al., 2020).

Consultation often begins with identifying the problem in specific, observable terms (Erchul & Martens, 2012). Understanding a teacher’s motivations and connectedness may provide insight into how teachers’ view the problem that they are meeting with the school psychologist to address. During this phase, school psychologists can use a culturally responsive perspective to challenge teachers’ conceptualizations of the student and their colleagues and/or support the teacher. During the next phase of consultation, problem analysis, the environment is observed to understand how the student’s challenges are exacerbated or maintained by the environment. Once data is collected, a plan is designed and implemented to address the problem. School psychologists can use these phases to validate teacher’s concerns, as well as encourage teachers to get ideas, and support, from their colleagues. The school psychologist can also provide support to design an intervention that highlights the teacher’s strength and teaching style, while also supporting them as they implement the intervention.

Although this study has provided insight into the racial differences in motivation and connectedness among novice teacher, future research is needed to further explore this interaction. Most of the research conducted to explore how African American teachers experience connectedness with their colleagues have been explore in schools where African American teachers were in the minority (e.g., Bristol & Shirrell, 2019, Madsen et al., 2019). In this study, African American teachers were part of the majority group, with schools having between 56% - 72% of staff identifying as African American. Future research should explore if novice teachers feel more connected in schools where they are not racially isolated. Furthermore,
research should explore if being an African American teacher, in a school with a majority African American staff and students, is related with increased job satisfaction and retention as well as decreased racial stress.

**Conclusion**

Overall, results from this exploratory study suggest that novice teachers expressed different motivations for teaching and for teaching in urban, high-poverty schools according to their race. Motivation for teaching may influence teachers beliefs and practices as well as how they connect with colleagues. Connectedness with colleagues occurred interpersonally and systemically. Differences according to teacher’s race suggest that teachers may have different expectations for their professional relationships. School psychologists explore teacher’s motivation for teaching and for teaching in urban, high-poverty schools to gain insight into their perspective of students and student challenges when defining a target for intervention. Further, school psychologists can support teachers during the consultative process by providing emotional support and connecting teachers with colleagues who may provide additional instructional support. Supporting teachers, in the way they need it, may encourage teachers to stay in the field.
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Appendix A

TEACHERS SUPPORTING TEACHERS IN URBAN SCHOOLS
TIME 1 EARLY CAREER TEACHER INTERVIEW INTRODUCTORY SCRIPT

Background
1. So, tell me about your experiences teaching so far. I would like to get a general sense of how things are going and what your experience has been so far.
   Probes:
   a. How many years have you been teaching?
   b. Have you taught at the same school? If not, what other schools have you taught at and what was that experience like?

2. How did you decide to teach? What other career options did you consider?
   Probes:
   a. If teaching is not first career, what did you do before you decided to teach? Why did you decide to leave that field?
   b. What led you to teaching?
   c. How did you end up in an urban school?

3. What were your expectations of being a teacher prior to becoming one?
   Probes:
   a. Did your expectations match your reality? Why? Why not?
   b. What parts of teaching have been most rewarding?
   c. What parts of teaching have been most challenging?

4. What type of teacher preparation did you have? Do you feel sufficiently prepared to teach?
   Probes:
   a. Are you certified by the state?
   b. Do you have alternate certification, such as Teach for America? Emergency certification?

5. How prepared do you feel to teach in an urban setting?
   Probes:
   a. What parts of teaching in an urban school do you feel you were better prepared for?
   b. What parts of teaching in an urban school have you felt less prepared for?

Experiences in the Classroom
6. What have your experiences been like running your classroom so far?
   Probes:
   a. As a new teacher, what parts of running your classroom have come easily to you? Why do you think that is?
   b. What kinds of skills do you think you brought with you that made running your classroom go well?
c. What parts of running your classroom have been more challenging? Why do you think that is?

7. How much control do you feel you have in your classroom?
   Probes:
   a. How much do you believe you can control students’ disruptive behavior? How much do you believe that you can get students to follow the rules of your classroom?
   b. How much do you believe that you can get students engaged in learning?
   c. How are you feeling about your ability to manage future challenges that come up in your classroom?

Help Seeking
8. During your first few years of teaching, can you describe the types of support you received?
   Probes:
   a. Was the support that you received what you needed? Why? Why not?
   b. If it was a person who provided you with support, what was their role (in school, out of school)?
   c. Did you find that support helpful? In what ways was it helpful and not helpful?
   d. Was that support enough and when you needed it? Could you have used more?
   e. If you obtained support from other sources (Internet, books, others), in what ways was support from other sources helpful and not helpful?

Connectedness
9. What is it like to teach at [Name of School]?
   Probes:
   a. How would you describe the feel of the school, especially for a new teacher?
   b. What type of contact do you have with other teachers at your school?
   c. How often do you talk to other teachers? What do you tend to talk about?

10. Do you feel close to some or all of your colleagues?
   Probes:
   a. How emotionally close do you feel to your colleagues? Is it a tight knit group of teachers? How are newcomers welcomed?
   b. How much cohesion and trust is there among faculty at [Name of School]?
   c. Do people pull together when needed?
   d. How much can you count on your colleagues?

Professional Community
11. Are there specific norms and expectations at [Name of School] for teaching?
   Probes:
   a. What types of norms and values exist regarding strategies for managing disruptive behaviors? Can you describe those norms/values?
   b. What types of norms and values exist regarding strategies for motivating learners? Can you describe those norms/values?
c. How did you learn about how things are typically done at your school as a new teacher? How were they communicated to you?

d. Do teachers agree on those norms and values?

12. How comfortable are teachers with reflecting (thinking carefully and seriously) and sharing their beliefs about their practices as a teacher?

Probes

a. What opportunities are there for teachers to plan lessons together?

b. What opportunities are there for teachers to reflect on how a lesson/instructional strategy was implemented in their classroom?

c. What opportunities are there for teachers to reflect on challenges they experienced implementing a lesson/instructional strategy?

d. What opportunities are there for teachers to work together to improve their instruction?

e. How comfortable are teachers sharing the parts of teaching that are hard?
### Appendix B

#### Motivation for Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Drive to Teach</strong></td>
<td>Teachers identified an innate draw to the teaching profession</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Inclusion criteria:</strong> Explanation for teaching is built on teachers’ personal interest for being a teacher. Rationale for teaching is focused on the teacher’s needs, wants and/or desires for joining the profession.</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Exclusion criteria:</strong> Teachers identify motivators that are external to the individual (e.g. pay, family encouragement)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1011: And I really enjoyed it and then it increased to where I would do, um, for our youth program, they had tutoring so then I joined that and then we did part of the teaching you know so that was something I really looked forward to and enjoyed. I put a lot of time and effort into that and even though it was for my church and I wasn’t getting paid. So my husband was like why don’t you try to do it you, know, full time where, you know, cause I think you'll be better plus you’ll get paid for it. So um that’s when I kinda started researching on the internet and um, I found, you know that they did have people, you know, who had a different career but still wanted to go into the field of teaching. Um, that you can do that, so, I signed up for that and I went through the program which was like a year and half and then I just became a teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Giving Back to the Community</strong></th>
<th>Teachers intentionally sought employment in urban, high-poverty schools to support, encourage, and inspire African American children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Inclusion criteria:</strong> Teachers expressed a desire to specifically teach African American children. Teachers identified a desire to support the African American community at large. Teachers were a member of the group, and therefore also African American.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Exclusion criteria:</strong> Participants identified a general desire to help children in urban, high-poverty schools</td>
</tr>
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</table>

1014: Well, when I was a kid I hated school. And then I learned that, okay I had some teachers that cared and they spent time with me, and ahh, I said you know I want to give back to the community. … I want to give back to those kids who were just like me. Scared, and felt like nobody paid attention, who cared anyway, and, I just, and then I felt like I didn't get all my education that I really needed when I was in grammar school So I umm, I went back to school and a lot of stuff I should have learned in elementary school I didn't. I didn't learn till I went to college. So I just thought I would give back to the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Fixing the Flaws in Urban, High-Poverty Schools</strong></th>
<th>Teachers expressed a desire to help students in urban, high-poverty schools, and were external to the community of the children and families of the school.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Inclusion criteria:</strong> Teachers identify a general desire to help; teachers identify the failures, dangers, and/or challenges as central to their desire to teach in urban, high-poverty schools; teachers express a desire to save students</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusion criteria:</strong> Teachers explain students through a strength-based approach.</td>
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**3004:** Yeah, umm, I don’t know, I just feel like the children really need good teachers, especially in urban environment so I just feel like I could help them more where as, you know, school, school districts that aren’t urban, you know, they need good teachers too but it’s not as needed as much [I01: Mm-Hmm, so you feel like] because, they, you know these children don’t have the parental support at home so they’re coming in school behind so I really feel like I could really, they could really use the help more

I01: So for you there’s such a need [3004: Mm-Hmm] for, umm, good instruction and for that kind of support you feel, it sounds like to me like you feel like you can just really make a really good difference

3004: Yeah, that’s exactly, I feel like I can make a big difference

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**Connectedness with Colleagues**

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Relationships with Colleagues</strong></th>
<th>Teachers discuss their interpersonal relationship(s) with their colleagues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusion criteria:</strong> Teachers talk about their direct relationship(s) with colleagues within the same school</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusion criteria:</strong> Teachers discuss relationships with colleagues who do not work within the same school; teachers discuss general practices and experiences within the school</td>
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**Close, Personal Relationships**

Teachers identify factors that contribute to a close relationship with (a) colleague(s) throughout the schools and/or with individual colleagues working within the same school. Relationships may extend outside of school and may also provide emotional support within the building.

**3015:** Yeah, and well, the one, umm, one of the [Program 14] teachers from my old school, she’s here now [I01: Right] [3027] is here [I01: Right] and so she’s still [3015 Laughs] my support and, umm, she actually just moved to my neighborhood [I01: Oh, even better] so now we’re neighbors, umm yeah, so we talk all the time and we vent to each other all the time and we try to problem solve together

**Desire for Closer Relationships**

Teachers identified a desire for deeper, more personal relationships with their colleagues.

**1021:** Sometimes Ms. [1018]. She’s a good person to talk to. But, I mean, not really… Like, I just – I feel very, like, surface with all of them. Um… yeah, I mean, not someone that I would invite to a major event in my life, you know, which is sad but… um… Yeah, I mean, and it’s sad because we spend every day together. [Laughs]

**Professional Relationships**

Teachers established relationships with colleagues for the express purpose of fulfilling professional responsibilities

**2050:** I’ll say, with, with the team that we have and with the middle school team, I kind of name a lot of the teachers, but umm, [2011], [2220] and then umm, [2017] who I’m in the classroom with, me and her, I kind of lean on them a lot at school
Intentionally Distant

Teachers maintained professional relationships, where they did not share personal relationships with one or more colleagues

3061: I01: And, and, over time, like did, do you think over time you’d want things to be different or do you, in terms of like getting to know folks personally?
3061: Over time it probably will because I’m a personable person, I’m just careful as far as work and, and friendship, you know

Systemic Contributors to Connectedness

Teachers identified interactions and experiences that occurred throughout the school which influenced teachers’ perception of the school environment.

Inclusion criteria: Teachers discuss interactions and experiences that occur within the larger group of teachers, administrators, or overall

Exclusion criteria: Teachers identify interactions with specific colleagues

Positive Contributors to Connectedness

Teachers identify experiences that make them feel more connected with their colleagues

1011: Uh, it’s um, I think it’s very welcoming, you have a lot of teachers who are very helpful. They help you as much as they can. Very friendly and have a lot of suggestions and input on what you can do and things like that. So it’s very welcoming. Very

Negative Contributors to Connectedness

Teachers identify experiences that make them feel disconnected from their colleagues

1021: I don’t feel very important, being an art… being the prep. Um… I see a lot of meanness when, for instance, we go on a field trip, and they may miss one of my classes. They do not like that at all. And I feel really bad, too, because I don’t want to be seen as a prep. You know, I want to be seen as this is another class. And I would love to take their kids twice as much as I do now but that’s just not something I control.