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## Improving Teacher Retention by Addressing Teachers' Compassion Fatigue

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IMPROVING TEACHER RETENTION BY ADDRESSING TEACHERS' COMPASSION  
FATIGUE

by

Jacquelyn Ollison

A Dissertation Submitted to the

Graduate School

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2019

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By

Jacquelyn Ollison

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is my love letter to educators. Everything that you do to ensure that all students, and especially urban students are given a fighting chance to succeed with an amazing education is worthy of the utmost gratitude and praise. You deserve as much support, respect, and attention as possible. Without you, no student would ever receive an education. Without you, I would not be where I am today. Thank you.

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## Improving Teacher Retention by Addressing Teachers' Compassion Fatigue

### Abstract

By Jacquelyn Ollison

University of the Pacific  
2019

California is experiencing a massive teacher shortage, and urban schools are disproportionately affected by it negatively. Retention efforts to date have not included strategies to address Compassion Fatigue (burnout and secondary trauma) teachers experience when working with traumatized students at urban schools. This dissertation explores whether Compassion Fatigue is an unaddressed reason for teacher attrition at urban schools. A mixed method practical action research approach using the Professional Quality of Life Scale Version Five (ProQOL 5) and qualitative interviews, portions of which were turned into illustrative vignettes drove the exploration. Approximately 114 teachers completed the ProQOL 5. Statistical analysis of the ProQOL 5 results showed that female teachers experience more compassion fatigue than male teachers; compassion fatigue is more acute with beginning teachers than with veteran teachers; and that teachers working at high-poverty schools experience statistically significant differences in compassion satisfaction and fatigue than teachers at low poverty schools. Correlation tests revealed statistically significant relationships between compassion fatigue and the school's racial demographics even when controlling for the socioeconomically disadvantaged status of the school and teacher ethnicity. Linear regression models showed that the percentage of African American students in the school is a statistically significant predictor of compassion fatigue. Qualitative interview analysis showed that

secondary trauma from students is not the only trauma teachers are experiencing, and that school climate and conditions matter when attempting to retain teachers. In the final phase of the action research, a policy brief was developed through a collaborative and iterative process, based both on the findings and engagement with stakeholders. If California is serious about producing and retaining high-quality teachers at all urban schools,' efforts to mitigate compassion fatigue should be undertaken immediately.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Teachers who work in inner-city urban schools have a calling (Brunetti, 2006). They work at these types of schools because of an awareness of the impact their presence can have on urban students. Urban teachers are resilient: even while confronting the difficulties of working with students who are experiencing troubling circumstances, they remain in the profession at urban school sites because it is where they feel they belong (Brunetti, 2006). Likewise, principals who choose to work at urban schools feel called to do so and have a similar capacity for resilience (Theoharis, 2007). Despite these remarkable proclivities, urban educators are leaving the profession in droves (Brown & Wynn, 2009).

A review of research discussing the attrition rates of urban educators (here defined as both teachers and administrators), shows that teacher attrition rates are higher in low-income, urban schools. One in every ten teachers transfers away to other schools, especially those considered new to the profession who have taught for five years or less (California Teacher Shortage Fact Sheet, CTA, 2016; Gray and Taie, 2015; Futernick, 2007). Principal attrition rates do not fare much better and tend to be just as high in poor, urban schools (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Horng, 2010).

In urban schools with a large population of students of color, principals often leave the school site for other schools or leave the principal position for another role in the education system (Gates et al., 2006). Understanding exactly why principals and teachers are leaving urban schools at such high rates is still a topic of great confusion and one that is worth exploring for the students' sake (Loeb et al., 2010). Furthermore, exploring the working conditions and climate experienced by urban educators is also key to understanding their attrition rates, given

that 27% of teachers leave school sites due to school conditions (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

As a result of teacher attrition and thus the teacher shortage urban students are receiving sub-par educations reflected in persistent and pervasive achievement and opportunity gaps (Education-Trust West, 2015). For example, in California, African-American and Hispanic students score on average 8 to 11 percentage points lower than the state average in Mathematics and English Language Arts; and, when compared directly with white students the difference widens to 17 to 20 percent less (CAASPP, 2016). Additionally, urban students are usually the first to be suspended and to be taught by ineffective teachers (Education-Trust West, 2015). I do not believe this gap is urban students' fault. Systemic social and academic inequities make successful education attainment difficult, if not impossible, for most urban students (Statistics, 2015).

Urban students face many barriers to achieving success both academically and economically (American Psychological Association, 2005; Bischoff & Reardon, 2013). Two significant barriers include California's pervasive teacher shortage problem (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016) and the recruiting and retention of quality administrators at urban school sites (Cooley & Shen, 2001). Many urban schoolteachers are woefully underprepared to deal with the most significant issue faced by urban students' trauma. For example, 71% of high-poverty districts hire teachers with substandard credentials, and 29% hire substitutes to teach core academics such as Mathematics and English Language Arts (Podolsky et al., 2016).

Schools in urban areas tend to have large populations of students of color such as African Americans and Hispanics, as well as immigrant children of low socioeconomic status (Jiang,

Ekono, & Skinner, 2014; American Psychological Association, 2005). Some urban areas are rampant with high rates of poverty, violence, and homelessness (Berman, 1996; American Psychological Association, 2005). Students who live in urban areas can experience environments that are overpopulated and contain scarce resources, inadequate housing, and high rates of crime (Osofsky, Weivers, Hann, & Flick, 1993). The violence urban residents experience, both directly and indirectly, affects the physical and mental health of their entire community, including children (Hart et al., 2013; American Psychological Association, 2005).

Research found that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is often an urban student condition (Schwartz, Bradley, Sexton, Sherry, & Ressler, 2005; Thompson Jr. & Massat, 2005; Osofsky, Weivers, Hann, & Flick, 1993), where PTSD is defined as “an anxiety disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of a traumatic event” (Hamblen, 2009). Symptoms of PTSD in urban students can manifest as poor behavior including withdrawing, exaggerated startle responses, rudeness, irritability, truancy, risky sexual behavior, drug and alcohol abuse, classroom misbehavior, and academic difficulties (American Psychological Association, 2005; Breslau, Chilcoat, Kessler, & Davis, 1999).

Therapists, social workers, and first responders are more vulnerable to compassion fatigue if they are working with victims of childhood trauma (Knight, 2013; Figley, 1995). The impact negatively affects their mental, psychological, emotional, and physical health (Knight, 2013). Terms such as “vicarious trauma,” “secondary traumatic stress,” “indirect trauma,” and “compassion fatigue” are often used interchangeably to describe the impact to practitioners (Knight, 2013; Figley, 1995). For this study, the term “compassion fatigue” will be used to describe the costs endured by caring support professionals when working with victims of trauma (Figley, 1995; Elwood, Mott, Lohr, & Galovski, 2011). Included in these costs is the likelihood

of practitioners experiencing and reacting to the trauma expressed by their clients in a fashion like that of their clients, as if the trauma is contagious (Knight, 2013; Figley, 1995). Costs also include general physical and emotional exhaustion and significant decreases in the ability to feel compassion and empathy for others (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017, p. 172).

One reason that compassion fatigue is considered a hazard for practitioners is because they are taught to use empathy when working with clients (Nelson-Gardell & Harris, 2003). Empathy consists of three components: “1) the affective response to another’s emotions and actions; 2) the cognitive processing of one’s affective response as well as the other person’s perspective; and 3) the conscious decision-making to take empathic action” (Gerdes & Segal, 2009, p. 121). Use of empathy allows the practitioner to better understand the phenomena their client is experiencing, which in turn may lead to the practitioner simultaneously, if indirectly, experiencing that trauma (Harris, 1995).

Growing awareness of compassion fatigue as an occupational hazard in mental health and social work fields resulted in a call for its inclusion into trauma training curriculum, preparation programs, support programs, and self-care strategies (Butler, Carello, & Maguin, 2017; Bride, 2007; Bride, Radey, & Figley 2007; Figley, 1995;). Ethically, it is imperative to inform those working with victims of trauma, especially childhood trauma, that their job may negatively affect their mental, psychological, emotional, and physical health (Figley, 1995). Knowledge of compassion fatigue as a professional hazard that requires mitigation could help prevent practitioners from leaving the profession (Nelson-Gardell & Harris, 2003).

### **Problem of Practice**

Urban educators work with victims of childhood trauma—their students. A search for literature relating compassion fatigue with urban teachers yielded few citations linking compassion fatigue to teacher attrition (Abraham-Cook, 2014; Hoffman, Palladino, & Barnett,

2007; Tepper & Palladino, 2007; Walrond et al., 2018). The existence of this literature, though small in number, suggests that there is a relationship between compassion fatigue and educator attrition (Walrond et al., 2018). However, more research is necessary to determine which specific actions can be employed to mitigate the effects of compassion fatigue on teachers' perception of school conditions and climate and teacher attrition at local and state levels.

Recognition of the contagious nature of trauma among helping professionals such as mental health therapists, social workers, law enforcement, first responders and medical personnel working with traumatized clients resulted in the inclusion of the concept of compassion fatigue in helping professions training program curricula and a call for more trauma-informed sensitive practices in schools (Butler, Carello, & Maguin, 2017; Cole et al., 2005; Cornille & Meyers, 1999; Figley, 1995; Finzi-Dottan & Bercovith Kormosh, 2018; Nelson-Gardell & Harris, 2003). The inclusion was also warranted considering the myriad adverse childhood experiences of urban students (CDC, 2016; Feliti et al., 1998). For example, African Americans and Hispanic students have an approximately 30% chance of experiencing adverse childhood experiences at least three or more times under the age of 18 in their lifetime (Feliti et al., 1998). If trauma is understood to be contagious to helping professionals because they work with trauma victims, then it is plausible that trauma could also be contagious for urban educators who work with traumatized urban students.

Although teachers may not readily come to mind when thinking about helping professionals, urban teachers do serve, support, and teach trauma victims. "Any professional who works directly with traumatized children and is in a position to hear the recounting of traumatic experiences, is at risk for secondary traumatic stress" (NCTSN, n.d.). That risk is greater among helping professionals who are women, highly empathetic people, carry heavy

caseloads, isolated, and underprepared to effectively support traumatized children (NCTSN, n.d.). The similarities in the work of helping professionals and educators are too great to ignore.

Abraham-Cook (2012) did notice the similarities and conducted a study on compassion fatigue in educators. Cook found that 91% of urban educators scored an average raw score of 24 on the ProQOL for compassion fatigue (Abraham-Cook, 2012; Stamm, 2010). A score of 17 indicates a high risk for compassion fatigue and these urban educators scored well above that (Abraham-Cook, 2012). Furthermore, 43% of these teachers were also at high risk for burnout. In other words, urban educators are overwhelming likely to suffer from compassion fatigue (Abraham-Cook, 2012), a fact which underscores that compassion fatigue as conceptualized by Stamm (2010) is a critical issue for urban educators.

In a qualitative study of educators working at trauma-sensitive urban schools, Hill (2011) found that the experience of working with traumatized students personally impacted the teachers. Impacts included “distressing emotions, powerlessness, intrusive imagery, and physiological arousal, somatic complaints, and constantly being on call as a teacher” (p. 72). One of Hill’s (2011) educators described how teaching affects you professionally and personally: “you take it home with you, and you don’t shut it off...It is one of those things that you don’t let go easily because they are people. They are kids” (p. 83).

Understandably, these issues can adversely affect teachers’ ability to create, experience, and perceive their school’s climate positively; where school climate can be defined as “the quality and character of the school” (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012, p. 1191). Wang and Degol (2016), contend that despite the sometimes less than ideal home and neighborhood life conditions students may experience outside of school, inside the school grounds “schools should be able to buffer these effects by providing students with a safe and healthy place to learn,

socialize, discover, and explore” (p. 343). Determinants of school climate include “the quality of relationships between individuals at a school, the teaching and learning that takes place, collaboration between teachers and administrative staff, and the support present in a particular school” (Collie et al., 2012, p. 1191). Pursuing the improvement of school climate is a worthy reform effort given its ability to improve student well-being (Wang & Degol, 2016).

It is not just students’ well-being that is improved when a school’s climate is improved. Improving school conditions and climate also impacts educators positively by decreasing teacher turnover and improving teacher effectiveness (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; SCIRP, 2017). School conditions which influence teacher stress levels include, but are not limited to, student behavior, workload, pay, and administrator support (Gray, Wilcox, & Nordstokke, 2017; Podolsky et al., 2016). Additionally, “heightened teacher stress may also influence school climate as it often leads to high levels of staff absenteeism, early retirement, and turnover in the profession” (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008, p. 203). Accordingly, I assert that the education system has created school climate and conditions which are ripe for teachers to suffer from compassion fatigue. Despite such toxic conditions, I believe it is possible to engage this very school system to improve the climate that leads to educator compassion fatigue (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this dissertation represents a school system model that combines two existing theories: Mintzberg’s Organizational Structure Theory (1979) and Compassion Fatigue as conceptualized by Stamm (2010) (see Figure 1). This pairing is inspired by my supposition that the school system does not see that urban teachers are leaving the school system in droves due to the unrecognized effects of teacher proximity to student trauma, and the toll secondary trauma has on teachers’ perceptions of their school working conditions and

climate. It also depicts the interconnectedness of the parts of the school system by showing the influence systems actors have on one another. Applying Mintzberg's (1979) organizational structure theory to schools from a macro-perspective, one can see that the bureaucratic nature of the school system is such that school leaders and those influencing and making the policy decisions such as politicians in the legislature (Kirtman & Fullan, 2016), are often far removed from the teacher experience due to a hierarchical nature of the system.

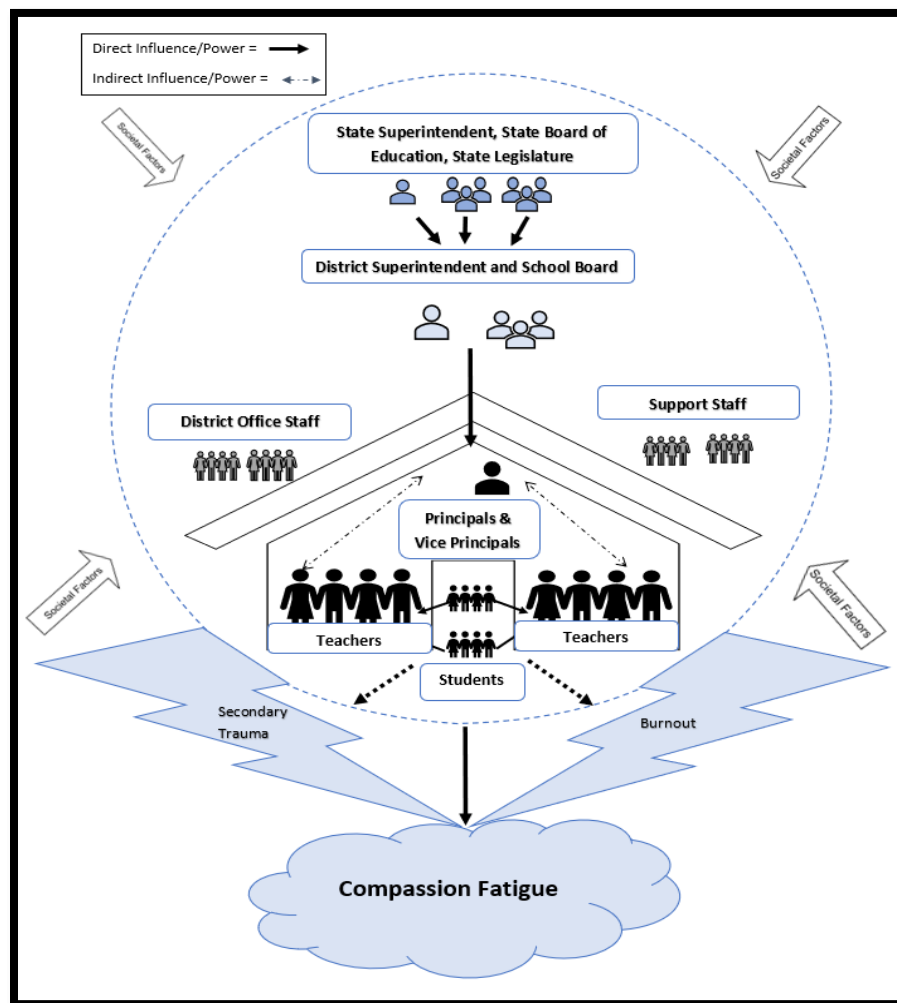


Figure 1. Conceptual framework: School system model

At the top of the hierarchy is the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Board of Education and State Legislature, who make decisions about the direction of education for the state, adopt rules and regulations, and pass bills, respectively, that influence the work of all school districts within the state of California. At the local level, the top decision-makers are the Superintendent and School Board comprised of elected officials (Meador, 2018), who make decisions about the overall vision, mission, and direction of the school district with the intent of ensuring that those within the system have what they need to do the work (Mintzberg, 1979). This direction is translated and operationalized by administrators (e.g., Principals and Vice-Principals) who encourage the teachers and school support staff to implement the organizational direction successfully. The teachers are professionals who work autonomously within their classrooms to instruct students, despite common connections such as curriculum standards and shared groups of students (1979). The hierarchical layers can disrupt communication flows, often preventing the needs of the teachers from reaching the superintendent (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977) and resulting in a lack of systemic coherence (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

Using a macro view of the schooling system allows us to witness its overall shape and the associated implications of its development and design. The design, frequently disjointed and sometimes shifting, reveals the underlying values and beliefs of those in power who created the system (Fowler, 2013). The combination of historical and societal factors such as school segregation laws; redlining in which neighborhoods were color-coded red if mostly people of color lived in them. The inhabitants of red neighborhoods were not given loans by financial institutions to purchase homes in suburban areas while their white counterparts did receive loans, which had the effect of keeping neighborhoods segregated; and large concentrations of disadvantage and poverty backed by public policy have shaped the conditions in which urban

educators are now working (APA Task Force, 2005; Florida, 2017; NPR 2017). For example, areas of concentrated poverty experience a disproportionate amount of community violence—whether victim or witness—especially amongst children. Exposure to disproportionate amounts of violence can lead urban children to experience mental and psychological health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Urban students are experiencing the hallmarks of trauma (APA Task Force, 2005).

“Many traumatized children adopt behavioral coping mechanisms that can frustrate educators and evoke exasperated reprisals” (Cole et al., 2005, p. 32), evidence that student trauma enters the school system and manifests as issues educators must juggle alongside their many other professional tasks (Abraham-Cook, 2012; Hill, 2010). This struggle is what Stamm (2010) calls compassion fatigue—or the negative aspects of one’s professional quality of life (p. 12). Compassion fatigue is a combination of burnout and secondary traumatic stress (STS). Burnout causes “feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively” (p.13) while STS is “about work-related, secondary exposure to people who have experienced extremely or traumatically stressful events” (p.13), both of which can have negative consequences for the helping professional and teachers.

I believe the system design both created and perpetuates the conditions of trauma for both urban students and their teachers. This conceptual framework in its current form is a novel idea. This is relevant to the study of educator attrition because it could help identify flaws in the school system structure that lead to misaligned policies that exacerbate school climate conditions and thereby contribute to attrition in the first place. A more detailed explanation of the key components of the conceptual framework is provided in Chapter 2.

## **Purpose of the Dissertation Study**

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to discover to what extent compassion fatigue impacts urban educators' ability to create, perceive their schools' climate and working conditions positively. I endeavored to address issues of compassion fatigue to raise educator awareness of its effect on their ability to create the school conditions and climate conducive to successful teaching and learning. I also aimed to shed light on actions and implementation practices that educators at all levels of the system can employ immediately to mitigate the later effects of compassion fatigue. Lastly, I set the stage for future systems-level school conditions and climate education policy changes that recognize the interdependent nature, from local to state, of all human elements of the education system (Flood, 2010), particularly as it relates to compassion fatigue.

## **Inquiry Questions**

Based on the overarching question: how might we best manifest a future in which the urban teacher shortage in California no longer exists? The following questions drove the inquiry:

1. To what extent do California urban schoolteachers experience compassion fatigue?
2. How does compassion fatigue impact teachers' perception of their schools working conditions and climate?
3. What organizational supports can be put in place to help urban educators suffering from compassion fatigue thrive?

## **The Significance of the Study**

Applying the concept of compassion fatigue to school conditions and climate offers an alternative lens with which to address high urban teacher attrition rates and the diminished or sub-par work capacity of some of the urban educators who choose to stay at urban schools. The ultimate goal of this study was to influence education policy agendas addressing the teacher

shortage by shedding light on the types of support services school districts, and policymakers can institute to combat compassion fatigue and improve urban educator retention with solutions based on school conditions and climate improvements. This inquiry has provided data that can be acted on promptly.

### **Research Site**

The California Department of Education (CDE) is a state organization whose mission and vision in 2017 was to, “provide a world-class education for all students, from early childhood to adulthood. The Department of Education serves our state by innovating and collaborating with educators, schools, parents, and community partners. Together, as a team, we prepare students to live, work, and thrive in a multicultural, multilingual, and highly connected world” (retrieved from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/mn/mv/> on December 12, 2017). The CDE’s charge is to oversee California’s public-school system. It operates under the direction of an elected official known as the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) who can serve a maximum of two four-year terms in office.

The SPI and the CDE work in conjunction with the State Board of Education (SBE), an eleven-member body appointed by the Governor of California to influence the trajectory of education policy during the SPI’s term. The SBE’s responsibilities include, but are not limited to, policy-making and adoption of rules and regulations under Title 5 in response to legislative actions (CDE, 2016). The CDE site was selected because of its broad ability to influence education policy as it serves California’s 6.2 million students and confronts a statewide teacher shortage.

### **Delimitations and Assumptions**

A practical action research inquiry approach with elements of a pragmatist paradigm (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) were used to conduct this study. This approach to research

acknowledged the fluid nature of work that was necessary to influence the policy agenda on urban educator attrition. The method is permissive in its allowance of mixed methods if necessary, incorporating the collection of both quantitative or qualitative data without diminishing the work. The unfolding methodology of practical action research can follow the direction of the researcher and co-researcher engaging in the work. This method was particularly appealing because it focuses on the most practical way to find meaning among participants.

First, teachers working in schools throughout California were asked to complete the ProQOL 5 to determine to what degree they are or are not experiencing compassion fatigue (Stamm, 2010). Follow-up interviews were then conducted with a subset of the teachers who took the ProQOL 5. The interviews were conducted to better understand compassion fatigue in teachers and its effect on perceptions of their school's climate, working conditions, and teacher attrition. The interviews were also a mechanism to understand what supports teachers need to combat compassion fatigue.

After analysis of the data collected from the interviews, the results of those interviews were shared via facilitated conversations with key policy and education leaders who have direct influence over educational policies affecting urban teachers. The discussions helped deepen understanding of how the system can implement effective supports to minimize urban educator attrition by addressing teacher compassion fatigue. There are seven chapters in this practical action dissertation. The seven Chapters are described in Table 1. A list of the terms with acronyms and their definitions utilized for this study are outlined in Table 2

Table 1 <i>Dissertation Chapter Descriptions</i>			
Chapter Number and Content	Focus	Method	Timeframe
1–Study Overview	N/A	N/A	N/A
2–Literature Review	Urban Student Dynamics, Educator Retention/Attrition, Burnout, Secondary Traumatic Stress, Compassion Fatigue, System Dynamics, School Conditions and Climate	Identify organizational variables that lead to attrition and support retention of educators	N/A
3–Methodology	Description of how the Exploration of Inquiry questions 1–3 will be conducted using three Cycles of Action Educators and Education Policy Leaders	Participatory Action Research Quantitative data collection (ProQOL 5) (Stamm, 2010) and Qualitative inquiry methods interviews and facilitated group discussions	November—December 2017
4–Cycle 1 Findings	Discussion of results from Cycle 1 -exploration of ProQOL 5 results and qualitative inquiry results Educators and Education Policy Leaders		January—April 2018
5–Cycle 2 Findings	Discussion of results from Cycle 2 - qualitative inquiry results Educators and Education Policy Leaders		May—August 2018
6–Cycle 3 Findings	Discussion of results from Cycle 3 – development of a policy brief Educators and Education Policy Leaders		September—November 2018
7–Conclusion	A dissertation summary that includes a call to action for the education profession and concrete suggestions for supportive measures and practices to be applied at an organizational level.	N/A	December 2018

Table 2 <i>Definition of Terms</i>		
Key Terms	Acronym	Definition
Burnout	BO	Burnout is one element of the negative effects of caring that is known as Compassion Fatigue. Most people have an intuitive idea of what burnout is. From the research perspective, burnout is associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively. These negative feelings usually have a gradual onset. They can reflect the feeling that your efforts make no difference, or they can be associated with a very high workload or an unsupportive work environment (Hamm, 2010, p. 13).
Compassion Fatigue	CF	The cost of caring that helping professionals experience when working with victims of trauma (Figley, 1995). Included in the cost is the likelihood of practitioners experiencing and reacting to the trauma expressed by their clients in a fashion similar to their clients (Knight 2013 and general physical and emotional exhaustion, coupled with significant decreases in the ability to feel compassion and empathy for others (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017, p. 172). Further characterized into two parts as burnout and secondary trauma (Stamm, 2010).
Compassion Satisfaction	CS	Compassion satisfaction is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well. For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work. You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society (Stamm, 2010, p. 12).
English Language Learners	ELL	Students whose primary language is something other than English and who lack the requisite skills in listening comprehension, speaking, and reading and writing needed to succeed in regular school classrooms (CDE, 2017).
Free and Reduced-price Lunch or Meal	FRPM	A proxy term for poverty (McFarland et al., 2017; Snyder & Musu-Gillette, 2015; Hoffman, 2012)). “The free/reduced price lunch data are frequently used by education researchers as a proxy for school poverty since this count is generally available at the school level, while the poverty rate is typically not available. Because the free/reduced price lunch eligibility is derived from the federal poverty level, and therefore highly related to it, the free/reduced price lunch percentage is useful to researchers from an analytic perspective” (Snyder & Musu-Gillette, 2015)

Table 2 (continued) <i>Definition of Terms</i>		
Key Terms	Acronym	Definition
Helping Professionals		Professionals such as mental health therapists, social workers, law enforcement, first responders and medical personnel who work with traumatized clients resulted. (Finzi-Dottan & Bercovith Kormosh, 2018; Butler, Carello, & Maguin, 2017; Cole et al., 2005; Nelson-Gardell & Harris, 2003; Cornille & Meyers, 1999; Figley, 1995). Teachers are not largely included in this term.
Policy	N/A	“Public policy is the dynamic and value-laden process through which a political system handles a public problem. It includes a government’s expressed intentions and official enactments, as well as its consistent patterns of activity and inactivity” (Fowler, 2013 p. 5).
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder	PTSD	The physical and mental symptoms developed after direct or indirect exposure to traumatic events such as violence (Figley (Ed.), 1997).
Professional Quality of Life Scale: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5	ProQOL 5	ProQOL 5 measures consist of 30 Likert Scale items on a 5-point scale where one is never and five is very often. The results are then separated into three scales – Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue as characterized by Secondary Trauma and Burnout. (Stamm, 2009)
School Conditions and Climate	N/A	“School Conditions and Climate” refers to the character and quality of school life. This includes the values, expectations, interpersonal relationships, materials, and resources, supports, physical environment, and practices that foster a welcoming, inclusive, and academically challenging environment. Positive school conditions and climate ensure people in the school community (students, staff, family, and community) feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe, supported, connected to the school, and engaged in learning and teaching (CCWG, p. 35)
Secondary Traumatic Stress	STS	The stress mental health workers experience as a result of working with traumatized patients that put the workers most at risk for impaired mental and physical health (Figley (Ed.), 1997). The negative effects of STS may include fear, sleep difficulties, intrusive images, or avoiding reminders of the person’s traumatic experiences. (Stamm, 2010, p.13).
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Status	SED	A school term used to describe students whose parents do not have a high school diploma or are eligible for free and reduced-price meals (CDE, 2017).

Table 2 (continued) <i>Definition of Terms</i>		
Key Terms	Acronym	Definition
Teacher Attrition	N/A	Teachers leaving the teaching profession. At high rates it is also the primary reason for the teacher shortage throughout the United States (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017, p.1).
Trauma	N/A	Trauma is “a direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one’s physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about an unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate (APA, 2000, p. 463).” (as cited in Jones & Cureton, 2017) The person has experienced an event outside the range of usual human experience that would be markedly distressing to almost anyone (As cited in Figley, 1995, p. xv).
Urban Schools	N/A	Institutions that are typically located in impoverished neighborhoods, with few resources available to educators and students, and with subpar school buildings (American Psychological Association, 2005).
Urban Students	N/A	Students who attend urban schools and have lower socioeconomic statuses, dysfunctional home lives, may speak English as a second language and have challenging behavior issues both in how they act and are treated. They are typically non-white students (e.g. African American, Hispanic, and immigrant students) (Jiang et al., 2014; American Psychological Association, 2005).

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

The purpose of this dissertation is to discover to what extent compassion fatigue impacts urban teachers' ability to create, experience, and perceive their schools' climate and working conditions positively and whether compassion fatigue plays a role in urban educator attrition. The focus of this Chapter is to explore the existing literature as it relates to compassion fatigue and urban education. I discuss system issues leading to current urban school conditions including a discussion of school working conditions and climate, as well as a discussion of compassion fatigue, burnout, and the overlap between the two concepts. I then discuss connections between systems thinking, compassion fatigue, burnout, and educating urban students, followed by discussion of the gaps in literature relating to compassion fatigue, school climate, and education. I then summarize the literature review followed by a preview of what is to come in Chapter 3.

### **Urban School Conditions**

Poverty and race are key characteristics of urban areas (APA Task Force, 2005; Bischoff & Reardon, 2013). An urban community is considered a low-income or an impoverished neighborhood if the average income for a family of four with two children is \$24,563 (Semega, Fontenot, & Kollar, 2017). Often, large concentrations of ethnic minorities exist within urban communities because they cannot afford to live in areas that are more expensive (APA Task Force, 2005; Florida, 2017; Judson, 2012). For example, while African Americans represent 13% of the United States (U.S.) population and Latino/a Americans represent 18% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016), approximately 22% of African Americans and 20% of Hispanic-Americans live below the poverty threshold (Semega et al., 2017). Furthermore, access to economic resources that provide public goods like healthy food, employment opportunities, and better-quality schools for some of the neediest populations in the U.S. are limited (APA Task

Force, 2005). The lack of better-quality schools leads to poor education, essentially trapping people, and in particular children, in cycles of generational disadvantage and poverty (APA Task Force, 2005; Reardon, 2013).

The concentration of impoverished groups in urban areas did not occur by happenstance (APA Task Force, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Reidy, 2000). Zoning laws allowed local governments to designate land use restrictions and permissions within their boundaries (Florida, 2017; Judson, 2012). Simultaneously, redlining or the practice of denying mortgage financing to some residential regions worked in tandem to keep poor people concentrated in urban areas (Florida, 2017; Judson, 2012). Together, these practices hindered people of color's ability to accumulate wealth or to create a solid infrastructure within their neighborhoods. (Farell et al. 2007; Florida, 2017; Judson, 2012).

Concentrated poverty also legitimizes crime as a way of improving financial circumstances (Farell et al., 2007). High-crime rates are characteristic of impoverished neighborhoods, and urban children are often victims of crime and intense experiences of violence (APA Task Force, 2005; Berman, 1996; Farrell et al. 2007). These experiences can include, witnessing violence first or secondhand, and the potential to become a crime victim (APA Task Force, 2005; Farrell et al. 2007). The effects of violence on the health of urban children vary. Children often experience "somatic symptoms" like "headaches and stomachaches, [or they] feel nauseous or sick" (Hart et al., 2013, p. 458). Sometimes the exposure to violence, whether witnessed or directly experienced, is traumatic enough that urban students develop PTSD (Thompson & Massat, 2005). Urban students with PTSD often exhibit poor behavior in school that can include rudeness, irritability, truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, classroom misbehavior, and academic difficulties (APA Task Force, 2005; Breslau, et al., 1999). Trauma exposure

severely dampens school performance academically and behaviorally, including performance in Mathematics, reading, and science (Richard et al., 2015).

There is also a heightened propensity towards under-resourced schools' due to diminished tax bases (APA Task Force, 2005). This is alarming because it means urban students have access to fewer resources, such as high-quality teachers and quality academic programs (APA Task Force, 2005; Hallett & Venegas, 2011; Hart, Hodgkinson, Belcher, Hyman, & Cooley-Strickland, 2013; Haycock, 2004; Statistics, 2015; Williams, 2011). Typically, students at high-poverty schools qualify for free and reduced-price meals (FRPM) if their family falls below or near the low-income poverty threshold (Snyder & Musu-Gillette, 2015). FRPM is considered to be a proxy for poverty (McFarland et al., 2017; Snyder & Musu-Gillette, 2015;).

In the 2014–15 school year, nationally, approximately half of all African-American and Hispanic students attended high-poverty schools (McFarland et al., 2017). These schools are typically hard to staff with quality teachers (Futernick, 2007). The effects of which often leave urban students short-changed, in that, many teachers with sub-par training and preparation teach students; (Podolsky, & Sutchter, 2016; Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). For example, institutional practices such as late-hiring, gifting veteran teachers with less challenging classes of students, assigning new teachers to classes with the neediest students both academically and behaviorally, and teacher union contracts that protect ineffective teachers contribute to teacher quality issues at high-poverty schools (Haycock, 2004).

Educators, both administrators, and teachers, ill-equipped to deal with urban student issues often leave urban schools at high rates as well as the teaching profession (CTA, 2016; Loeb et al., 2010; Podolsky et al., 2016;). Annually, about 500,000 public school teachers leave their school sites (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Transferring between school sites accounts for 60%

of the turnover, and 40% leave the teaching profession altogether (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Job dissatisfaction and leaving to obtain a better job, which may or may not be education related, is cited as a reason for leaving 40% of the time (Ingersoll, 2004). In high-poverty urban schools the teacher attrition rate averages 20% annually (Simon & Johnson, 2015). In addition to dealing with the trauma that living in concentrated poverty can bring, urban students also contend with the emotional effects of a revolving door of teachers (Podolsky et al., 2016).

Teacher attrition's adverse effect on the education of urban students is troublesome. Urban schools have higher teacher attrition rates than most public schools (Raue et al., 2015; Sutchter et al., 2016). In some cases, four times as many uncertified teachers teach in urban schools than non-urban schools (McFarland et al. 2017; Sutchter et al., 2016). "Unequal access to educational resources, such as qualified teachers, has long been considered a primary cause of the stratification of educational opportunity and, in turn, the achievement gap and, ultimately, unequal occupational outcomes for disadvantaged students" (Ingersoll & May 2011, pp. 2-3). Worse yet, "when there are not enough teachers to go around, the schools with the fewest resources and least desirable working conditions are the ones left with vacancies [urban schools]" (Sutchter et al., 2016, p. 5). Ultimately, urban students lose out on quality teachers in their school (Ingersoll & May, 2011).

The societal factors of institutionalized racist practices have led to a systemic bottleneck where children are clustered in high concentrations of segregated ethnic and demographic group neighborhoods (APA Task Force, 2005; Farell et al. 2007). To better understand this calamity, it is necessary to take a step back and understand the societal factors that led to the current circumstance urban school educators are now experiencing. The origins of public school as we know it are traceable back to the early and mid-1800s (CDE, 2007; FindLaw, 2013), established

in a time where slavery and segregation were the existing laws of the land. Segregation, the separation legally and illegally, of ethnic groups (CA League of Women Voters, 1969; Judson, 2012) occurred in schools and neighborhoods alike. Unfortunately, the system created a school system structure where urban students still today are likely to attend de facto segregated schools (Statistics, 2015).

In 2011, 86% of Caucasian students attended schools with 0 to 20% African American students compared to 1% of Caucasian students attending schools that have 60 to 100% African American students. Additionally, 53% of African Americans in the United States attend schools with 20% or higher populations of African American students compared with 13% of Caucasian students. The schools with a significant amount of African American students, in the 60 to 100 % range, are usually located in cities or urban areas (Statistics, 2015). This is problematic because not only is segregation unlawful (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954), research shows that these schools are typically hard to staff (Futernick, 2007), and student academic performance is on the decline as a result (Podolsky, & Sutchter 2016; Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). For example, in California, African-American and Hispanic students score on average 8 to 11 percentage points lower than the state average in Mathematics and English Language Arts; and, when compared directly with white students the difference is more akin to 17 to 20 percent lower (CAASPP, 2016).

In addition, in California, 65% of all teachers are white and female (CDE, 2016). In fact, urban schoolteachers are overwhelmingly female and White/Non-Hispanic (Raue, Gray, & O'rear, 2015; Simon & Johnson, 2013; Simon, Johnson & Reinhorn, 2015; US Dept. of Ed, 2016). Research shows that urban students benefit from an ethnically diverse teaching staff (Ingersoll & May 2011). In the absence of such diversity, urban schools lose the benefit of

demographic parity or teachers of color teachers to serve as role models for both minority and white students; and cultural synchronicity which presumes that teachers with similar ethnic backgrounds of their students can better relate and bond with their students (Ingersoll & May 2011). However, if teachers and students are from different ethnic backgrounds, teacher success with their students is possible when teachers are equipped or willing to be equipped with the temperament and beliefs necessary to meet the needs of their students (McGee et al., 2016).

The circumstances affecting urban students are concerning for the educators who teach and serve urban students. The first reason for concern is compassion fatigue. Anyone repeatedly exposed to details of traumatic events can potentially be traumatized themselves (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017), which suggests that trauma is transferrable (Figley, 1995). Over time, “the empathic strain and general exhaustion resulting” (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017, p. 172) from repeated interactions with distressed people is compassion fatigue (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017; Figley, 1995;). For example, consider the recent high-profile shootings of unarmed African-American men, such as Philando Castile on July 6, 2016 (Ellis & Kirkos, 2017). Philando Castile was an African-American man shot by a police officer in the front seat of his car while his girlfriend Diamond Reynolds sat in the passenger seat and his four-year-old daughter sat in the backseat on July 6, 2016 (Ellis & Kirkos, 2017). Diamond Reynolds broadcast the aftermath of the incident live on Facebook for the world to see, including other children and teachers (Ellis & Kirkos, 2017). These experiences are traumatizing for the family, but also for anyone bearing witness to it. Teachers bear witness to trauma (Hill, 2011).

The exposure to disproportionate amounts of violence experiences in urban communities can lead to urban students experiencing traumatic events and mental and psychological health challenges (APA Task Force, 2005; Hart et al. 2013). Urban children may experience the

violence directly or second hand such as watching the violence occur to friends or family (APA Task Force, 2005). Therefore, PTSD is often an urban student condition (Osofsky, Weivers, Hann, & Flick, 1993; Schwartz et al., 2005; Thompson Jr. & Massat, 2005). PTSD symptoms result in disruptive school classroom behavior (APA Task Force, 2005; Breslau et al., 1999; Thompson & Massat, 2005). Student behavioral problems, whether consciously intended or not, can lead to teacher burnout (Friedman, 1995). The fact that students also are traumatized is a condition that can lead to compassion fatigue in educators too (Schwartz et al., 2005; Thompson Jr. & Massat, 2005; Walrond et al., 2018).

The second reason for concern regarding the circumstances affecting the educators who teach and serve urban students is the potential effects compassion fatigue may have on a teacher's perception of their school's working conditions and climate. McCarthy, Lambert, Lineback, Fitchett, and Baddouh (2016) conducted a literature review on teachers' perceptions of classroom environmental factors in relation to stress, and in particular burnout. They discovered that how teachers perceive their environment in relation to the demands of the job versus their feelings about if they have the resources to cope with the demands of the job, directly impacts their perception of their classroom conditions and climate (2016). McCarthy et al. (2016) further argue that these perceptions contribute, in part, to stress levels, emotional exhaustion, burnout, and teacher turnover. The significance of McCarthy et al. (2016) findings, is that stress level and burnout can impact a teacher's perception of school climate. Given that compassion fatigue is a stress response to trauma, it is plausible that compassion fatigue can impact a teacher's ability to see their school's climate and working conditions positively, too (Stamm, 2010).

Poor working conditions are often cited as a reason for attrition (Podolsky et al., 2016; Raue et al., 2015; Satcher et al., 2016). In a longitudinal study of urban school teachers over the

course of ten years, Quartz, Olsen, and Duncan-Andrade (2003), found that working conditions and school climates that are life-affirming help sustain and retain teachers as they work in urban schools because “urban teachers often experience painful consequences of poverty and violence like their students” (p.17). One example shared in the study described an incident where a teacher spent an hour and a half conversing with and consoling her students as they discussed the violent murders of one of their classmate’s cousin and his friend that occurred the night before. The teacher shared this incident with her colleagues via e-mail that had the concluding statement, “feeling a bit weary today” (p.10). Over time the disposition that motivates and draws teachers to urban schools declines the longer they work in the profession (2003). Weariness at dealing with the traumatic issues of students is one reason for the descent (2003). After six years of the longitudinal study, a third of the teachers had left the profession (2003). “If we expect teachers to work with students who are regularly traumatized by poverty and violence, we have to support them in meaningful and powerful ways” (p.28).

It appears that compassion fatigue is also an occupational hazard for urban educators, just like other helping professions (Figley, 1995). In other helping professions that cater to trauma victims, there is an awareness that one does not escape that working relationship without some residual, yet potentially volatile, trauma-related mental health stress or compassion fatigue (Figley 1995; Stamm, 1995). Urban schools’ circumstances have created a perfect storm in which urban students suffer from trauma, and the urban educators who serve them are leaving urban schools or the teaching profession altogether. The system has some ideas regarding why teachers leave high-poverty urban schools. Ideas include various aspects of job dissatisfaction such as “a lack of resources, support and recognition from the school administration; a lack of teacher influence over school and classroom decision-making; too many intrusions on classroom

teaching time; inadequate time to prepare; poor salaries; and student discipline problems” (Ingersoll, 2004, p. 11). However, the existence of literature suggesting that there may be a relationship between compassion fatigue and educators is noteworthy. Compassion fatigue may also be a reason why teachers are leaving urban schools in droves.

### **Conceptual Framework Discussion: The Organizational Structure of Schools**

**The function of systems.** Flood (2010) contends that systems thinking is based on the premise of reductionism, which breaks phenomena or a whole into the sum of its parts to study these parts in terms of cause, effect, emergence, and interrelatedness. The parts of the systems influence one another and are thus related (2010). For example, Flood (2010) discusses Ludwig von Bertalanffy’s “open systems theory” (p. 270), which describes how the parts of the system are also related to the environment in which they are situated via the reception of continuous information and energy through feedback loops (2010). The feedback loops are either negative (balancing loops) or positive (amplifying loops) (Flood, 2010). Together the balancing and amplifying loops seek to normalize the system as the environment alters it in either a positive or negative direction (Flood, 2010). Understanding these parts can lead to a better understanding of the entire system (Flood, 2010).

An underlying assumption of this perspective is that systems models, regardless of the presence of life, can represent all phenomena as real. Social research in organizations can be conducted using system modeling as a tool to understand the complexity of the organization’s system foundation. (Flood, 2010). Organizations are comprised of interrelated parts that are influenced by its environment; the parts are people, and management should be concerned about the needs of its people. Yet, more often, management seeks to act to stabilize the system as it responds to social and environmental stimuli (Flood, 2010). However, system-oriented leadership that accounts for its individuals need for motivation, involvement, autonomy, and

satisfaction is critical to ensure system productivity and functionality, though this is not often apparent (Flood, 2010).

Unfortunately, Flood (2010) argues that the reliance on reductionism and the vision of a system as the sum of its parts, marginalizes the dynamic context people bring to the system. In Flood's (2010) discussion of the socio-ecological perspective of systems, he notes that inter- and intrarelations between a system and its environment have texture (p. 274). Flood further notes that a turbulent texture arises when decisions made by system leaders such as management or politicians set-off chain reactions in which the decision-makers try to respond to each other's decisions; which are of course made in each decision maker's own best interest. Specifically, he states:

A situation (system and environment) can become particularly volatile when unintended consequences of individual actions build up, become linked in unexpected ways, and change the character of the environment itself. This is likely to occur in politicised, pluralistic, and fragmented circumstances (p. 274).

Flood's (2010) argument aligns with Mintzberg's (1979), Salancik and Pfeiffer's (1977), and Fullan and Quinn's (2016) theories, in that decision-makers or leaders within in a system may not be aware of the needs of those within in the system and thus act to preserve the system, and their power, despite the needs of the individual people. Actions taken are made in total oblivion to this context and have moral consequences some decision-makers in power have yet to acknowledge. Examples of such moral and ethical negligence include "poverty, and economic and political [in] stability" (p. 274).

In action research, systems thinking is useful because of its objectivity, but so is systemic thinking because of its subjectivity. Systemic thinking seeks to understand organizational context as a construction of social reality or "people's interpretation of their experiences" (Flood, 2010, p. 276). Of importance to this dissertation is the notion that systemic thinking, allows for

both the studying of the cultural aspects of the context in addition to “the interpretations and perceptions that people form within the cultural context” (p. 277). Put another way, a person’s perception, and interpretation of the organization in which they are a part is influenced by the organizational climate. In the school system, working conditions and leadership are strong predictors of teacher attrition if their perceptions are negative and vice versa (Ladd, 2009).

**The professional bureaucracy.** Mintzberg’s (1979; 1980) organizational structure theory provides a unique way in which to view the structure of the schooling system (see Figure 1). His theory conceptually describes organizations with five parts that consist of a strategic apex, middle line, support staff, technostructure, and the operating core (1979). The operating core performs the core service work of the organization; it is the heart of the organization. The Strategic Apex carries the overall responsibility for the direction, vision, and mission of the organization, and ensuring that the needs of those with direct power over the organization are also met. The Strategic Apex is also comprised of these workers support staff.

The Middle Line connects the Strategic Apex to the Operating Core by providing direct supervision to the Operating Core. There is typically a hierarchical chain of command within the Middle Line. The Middle Line is also charged with developing a strategy that mobilizes and encourages the Operating Core to implement the overall strategy of the organization. The Technostructure is comprised of staff whose job it is to “make the work of others more effective” (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 30). Two critical components of the Technostructure include training staff and ensuring standardization of work practices such as scheduling. The Support Staff are the backbone of the organization; existing to provide support for organizational work at all levels and outside of the services of the organization. Members of the support staff may include groundskeepers, clerical staff, and security.

Applying Mintzberg's (1979) theory to the structure of the schooling system creates interesting parallels. The Operating Core can be likened to teachers. The Strategic Apex is the Superintendent. The Middle Line is Administrators such as Principals and Vice Principals. The Technostructure is akin to consultants who provide professional development or district office staff whose job it is to ensure access to common curriculum, textbooks, and funding. Likewise, the Support Staff are those staff who support the day-to-day operations such as custodians, assistants, cooks, and clerical staff (See Figure 1). The structural configuration of the school system is bureaucratic (Mintzberg, 1979). It is operating with a professionalized core of teachers who provide direct services to clients better known as students.

In a system with a bureaucratic structure, the operating core is autonomous and enjoys great power within the organization. They are a highly skilled group that receives their initial training to help specialize in a skill outside of the organization such as college and credentialing programs. Within the school, the teachers (operating core) are responsible for ensuring students learn the subject areas they are skilled in teaching. The expertise of the teacher gives them power in the school system, in and out of the classroom, because without them there is no educating of students. The professional bureaucracy is a "bottom-up" (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 360) professional hierarchy in that the operating core typically has great control, but not necessarily directly over the decisions and directives made by the Superintendent and politicians.

Simultaneously Mintzberg (1979) argues that there is a parallel non-professional hierarchy made up of support staff who perform the services needed to ensure that the teachers can teach within the school. They are comprised of employees such as custodial staff, clerical staff, and security. This group typically does not enjoy the autonomy the teachers have, and their power over the organization is limited even though the group is vital.

The professional administrator in a professional bureaucratic hierarchy does not directly control the operating core, but their role does afford “considerable indirect power in the structure” (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 361). The power limitation means that they must often settle disputes through negotiation including operating core unions. Professional Administrators are expected to act as buffers from “external pressures” (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 362) to protect the autonomy of the operating core while simultaneously attempting to maintain the support of the outside organizations like governmental agencies, school boards, and even parents. However, if an administrator can do all of this effectively, they will enjoy the support of the operating core of teachers and can gain more influence within the organization (Mintzberg, 1979; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977). The teachers need their administrators to be efficient so that they can be freed to focus on teaching their students.

If any part of the structure of the professional bureaucracy is ineffective, then services to students are diminished. Any strategy to improve the school system must both focus on the needs of the operating core and be championed by administrators who can persuasively argue for initiatives and strategies that both meet the needs of the operating core and still improve the organization overall (Mintzberg, 1979). The power dynamics in a professional bureaucracy make it such that the shift of external influences in society can shift the focus within the organization. Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) argue that those in power often attempt to influence “organizational decisions in their favor” (p. 428) out of perceived necessity for survival. Furthermore, “current holders of power can structure the organization in ways that institutionalize themselves” (p. 430) which means “the establishment of relatively permanent structures and policies that favor a particular subunit” (p. 430). Specifically, “a dominant

coalition has the ability to institute constitutions, rules, procedures, and information systems that limit the potential power of others while continuing their own” (p. 430).

Both internal and external power groups such as labor unions, who are all a part of the system, “pursue policies that guarantee their continued domination” (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977, p. 428), putting them at odds. A disconnect that assures “the organization will never be completely in phase with its environment or its needs” (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977, p. 429). The misalignment of the school system with the needs of those contained within the environment is a key barrier to the coherence that is crucial to the success of schools (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). That is, how can one address a problem within the system if the players who are influencing the system and are a part of the system, internally and externally, cannot agree on the problems to solve? Fullan & Quinn’s (2016) insistence on coherence as a strategy for improving the school system for all children is key. “It is human nature to rise to a larger call if the problems are serious enough and if there is a way forward where they can play a role with others” (page xi). Teacher attrition as caused by compassion fatigue is one such problem.

**Role of compassion fatigue in organizational school structure.** Compassion fatigue is typically associated with helping professionals such as social workers and first responders (Figley, 1995; Wolpow, Johnson, Hertel, and Kincaid, 2009). It is a term that describes the “the overall experience of emotional and physical fatigue ...due to the chronic use of empathy when treating patients who are suffering in some way” (Newell & MacNeil, 2010, p. 61). The experience is stressful ) and the common everyday stresses of work compound compassion fatigue (Adams, Boscarino, & Figley, 2006; Bride et al., 2007; Figley, 1995; Stamm, 1999 & 2010). As such, compassion fatigue is “best defined as a syndrome consisting of a combination of the symptoms of secondary traumatic stress and professional burnout” (Newell & MacNeil,

2010, p. 61; Stamm, 2010) (See Figure 2). While burnout and secondary trauma are equally important, it is the combination of the two, namely compassion fatigue that is the primary focus within this conceptual framework.

Experiencing compassion fatigue at the individual level can result in adverse behaviors that affect the service provider's desire and ability to offer adequate services to their client (Adams et al., 2006; Stamm 1999 & 2010). These behaviors may look like mental and physical exhaustion, excessive blaming, receiving lots of complaints, voicing complaints about administrative work, apathy, chronic illness, and denial that anything is wrong (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017; Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project ©, 2017). In contrast, experiencing compassion fatigue at the organizational level behaves differently. When compassion fatigue hits critical mass in the workplace, the organization itself suffers. Chronic absenteeism, spiraling worker's comp costs, high turnover rates, friction between employees, and friction between staff and management are among organizational symptoms that surface, creating additional stress on workers (Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project ©, 2017).

Additional organizational symptoms of note include the "inability for teams to work well together, strong reluctance toward change, [and an] inability of staff to believe improvement is possible" (Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project ©, 2017). Newell and MacNeil (2010) note that the "organizational setting and bureaucratic constraints, inadequate supervision, lack of availability of client resources, and lack of support from professional colleagues" are also organizational symptoms (p. 61). Understanding compassion fatigue's parallels to the school system in this way supports the notion that urban schoolteachers, and thus the school system itself, need relief. Awareness of compassion fatigue throughout all levels of the school system,

classroom to the legislature, is necessary for actual change and healing to occur (Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project ©, 2017).

### Understanding Compassion Fatigue

*“There is a cost to caring” (Figley, 1995, p. 1)*

Two seminal researchers are cited heavily in the research in the area of burnout and compassion fatigue; these researchers are Cristina Maslach and Charles Figley, respectively. Their work is also very present in this literature review. The exciting thing about compassion fatigue, as illustrated in Figure 2, is that the constructs that comprise burnout and compassion fatigue overlap (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017). As I review the literature about compassion fatigue and burnout the overlapping characteristics will be addressed (see Figure 3).

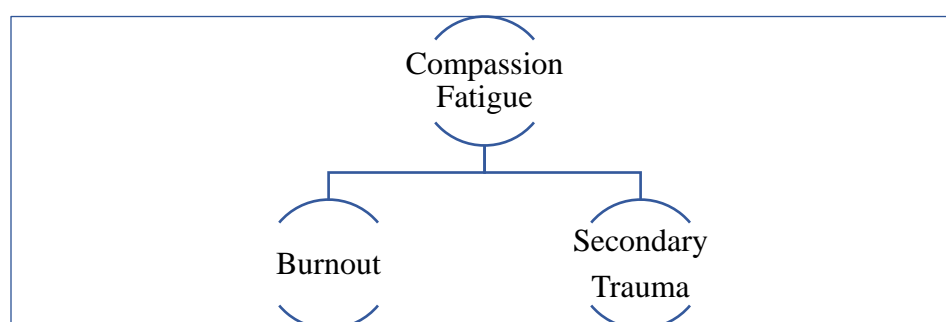


Figure 2. Compassion fatigue as conceptualized by Stamm (2010)

### What Is Known About Compassion Fatigue?

While treating clients who suffer from trauma, it is possible for the healthcare professional to absorb their client's trauma as if it is their own and suffer too (Figley 1995). Figley (1995) began writing about these phenomena in the mid-1980s and spurred a movement to re-conceptualize trauma and those who suffer from it. Compassion Fatigue refers to the detrimental effects one experiences on mental health as a result of helping others who suffer

from trauma (Lerias & Byrne, 2003). It is argued that compassion fatigue is “identical to secondary traumatic stress disorder (STSD) and is the equivalent of PTSD” (Figley, 1995, p. xiv; Lerias & Byrne, 2003). Understanding compassion fatigue requires an understanding of trauma and in particular post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.) defines trauma as occurring when:

The person has experienced an event outside the range of usual human experience that would be markedly distressing to almost anyone: a serious threat to his or her life or physical integrity; serious threat or harm to his children, spouse, or other close relatives or friends; sudden destruction of his home or community; or seeing another person seriously injured or killed in an accident or by physical violence (As cited in Figley, 1995, p. xv).

PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who experience or witness trauma (APA, 2013). Of note here is the reference to seeing another person’s trauma (Figley, 1995; Lerias & Byrne, 2003). A person’s perception of the experienced or witnessed trauma affects the severity of their PTSD response (Lerias & Byrne, 2003). When one attempts to help a trauma victim, be it from a client-patient relationship or some other significant relationship it can be stressful, so much so that the experience is called secondary traumatic stress (Figley, 1993a (as cited in Figley, 1995).

STSD is “a syndrome of symptoms nearly identical to PTSD, except that exposure to knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other is associated with the set of STSD symptoms, and PTSD symptoms are directly connected to the sufferer, the person experiencing primary traumatic stress” (Figley, 1995, p. 6). Compassion fatigue is the cost one pays when caring too much about a trauma victim. The cost is so impactful that one’s mental health can suffer as a result.

**Compassion fatigue symptoms.** The symptoms of compassion fatigue closely mirror PTSD symptoms (Bride et al., 2007; Figley, 1995). It is important to remember that these symptoms occur in response to witnessing the trauma of others because the whole premise of Compassion Fatigue is predicated on the second-hand transmission of traumatic experiences (Figley, 1995). There are four main categories of symptoms for PTSD and STSD. The categories are (a) re-experiencing the event, (b) persistent avoidance, (c) increased anxiety and arousal, and (d) impairment (APA DSM-IV 4<sup>th</sup> Ed, as cited in Figley 1995; Bride et al., 2007; Lerias & Byrne, 2003). Within each of the categories is a slew of harmful effects that can occur (Figley 1995; Lerias & Byrne, 2003; Yassen, 1995). For example, re-experiencing a traumatic event can include disturbing daydreams and nightmares, and ill-timed recollections or reminders of the event (Lerias & Byrne, 2003).

Persistent avoidance refers to deliberate but possibly unconscious attempts to avoid thinking, remembering details, concentrating, talking, or feelings about the trauma (Lerias & Byrne, 2003). Social withdrawal from life events including from significant others is also avoidance behavior. Increased anxiety and arousal refer to hypervigilance or a heightened sense of awareness of one's environment to avoid danger and remain safe (Colman, 2006; Lerias & Byrne, 2003). Defining characteristics include attempts to stay awake or insomnia, anxiety, startled easily or jumpy, irritability and moodiness, prone to angry outbursts (Lerias & Byrne, 2003). Impairment is the total effect of the categories discussed above that impair one's ability to function normally at work, home, and in social situations (Bride et al. 2007; Figley 1995; Lerias & Byrne, 2003; Wagaman et al., 2015; Yassen, 1995).

Additional symptoms of note include the potential for self-harm, withdrawal of intimacy, hopelessness due to lack of control of over the suffering of others, intolerance, physical illnesses

such as sweating and rapid heartbeat, confusion, depression, and emotional numbness (Wagaman et al. 2015; Yassen 1995). Helping professionals who experience symptoms such as these are much less capable of serving those who are traumatized because of the trauma they are suffering themselves (Figley, 1995; Stamm, 1995; Wagaman et al., 2015).

**Compassion fatigue and empathy.** Helping professionals use empathy to connect with their client to better understand their issues (Figley, 1995; Valent, 1995; Wagaman et al., 2015). Doing this, however, puts the professional at risk of suffering from the same issues their clients are experiencing – the essence of compassion fatigue. Helping professionals who are unable to be empathic will likely not suffer from compassion fatigue, but they also will not be good at their jobs (Figley, 2002). “Empathy is the ability to understand what other people are feeling and thinking and is an essential skill in facilitating social agreement and successfully navigating personal relationships (de Waal, 2010; Toussaint & Webb, 2005)” (as cited in Wagaman et al., 2015, p. 203). It is a critical component of effective client-helping professional relationships (Wagaman et al., 2015). Helping professionals who consistently feel and express empathy to help others in distress will likely suffer from emotional and physical fatigue, or compassion fatigue (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017; Figley 1995).

For educators, knowing and understanding the culture and backgrounds of students is key to effective teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2002). That is, “the academic achievement of ethnically diverse students [urban] will improve when they are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters” (Gay, 2002, p.106). In addition, empathy also makes a teacher better too, but at a cost (Adams & Figley, 2006; Cooper, 2004; Figley 2002). That is, teachers’ effectiveness with students is increased when empathy is used, but overuse can

have a detrimental effect on the teacher's belief in their ability to meet the academic and cultural needs of their students over time (Adams & Figley, 2006; Cooper, 2004).

**Characteristics of helping professionals prone to compassion fatigue.** In a literature review of 32 studies to determine the factors associated with compassion fatigue in mental health professionals, Turgoose, and Maddox (2017) found ten factors that influence susceptibility to compassion fatigue, though some more than others.

The main factors included the professionals' own trauma history, mindfulness, empathy, and caseload, as well as other ProQOL variables: burnout and compassion satisfaction. Other variables that were investigated report very mixed results and as such do not appear to consistently influence compassion fatigue, such as age, sex, religion, and work experience (p. 180).

A few of the characteristics require further explanation. If someone has experienced trauma or has unresolved trauma, they are susceptible to compassion fatigue (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017; Figley, 1995). Mindfulness as a protective factor can stave off compassion fatigue, but in its absence, the opposite is true (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017). Helping professionals with large caseloads of traumatized patients were likely to suffer from compassion fatigue, too (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017).

Experience and age showed mixed results in that that the longer a mental health professional worked with child victims of trauma, the more likely they were to suffer from compassion fatigue, which also means that the worker tended to be older. Results were mixed though in that more experience also led to decreased levels of compassion fatigue. Turgoose and Maddox (2017) hypothesized that more experienced professionals were given harder caseloads which could account for the variance. Unfortunately, the opposite is often true in education as the teacher shortage means that less experienced teachers are working with students who need more support (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Lastly, religion and gender also showed mixed results (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017).

The ability to predict compassion fatigue varied greatly with some studies saying females are more susceptible than males and vice versa. Of note was that no religion tended to result in higher rates of compassion fatigue, though two studies found the opposite especially when used as a coping strategy (Turgoose and Maddox, 2017). While Turgoose and Maddox's (2017) review focused on mental health care professionals, the results are consistent with other studies of compassion fatigue in helping professions (Figley 1995; Figley 2002). What makes a person no longer able to bear the suffering of others or to be compassionate is key in understanding the features that can predict the onset of compassion fatigue (Figley, 2002; Turgoose & Maddox, 2017), not only in helping professionals but the teaching profession as well.

### **What Is Known About Burnout?**

Burnout is a universal term that describes the chronic emotional response that can occur in humans, including helping professionals like educators, who deal with others human beings who have extensive problems or troubles (Figley et al. 1995; Maslach, 2003; Newell & MacNeil, 2010). It is a syndrome comprised of three parts including "emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur [over time] among individuals who do "people-work" of some kind" (Maslach, 2003, p. 2). It is unique in that burnout is a response to the social interactions between people within work environments or other social situations (Figley et al. 1995; Maslach, 2003). Burnout is complex (Maslach, 2003; Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach, & Jackson, 1981; Newell & MacNeil, 2010) and there exist a myriad of risk factors that accompany burnout.

**Foundational symptoms of burnout.** Burnout is characterized by both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Maslach, 2003; Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach, & Jackson, 1981; Newell & MacNeil, 2010). Emotional exhaustion occurs when one allows themselves to become too emotionally invested in another human being to their detriment. The investment

drains one of the energy reserves needed to deal with the emotions of others daily (Figley et al. 1995; Maslach, 2003). Depersonalization occurs when one begins to detach themselves from interacting too closely with others or those they serve. It is a defense mechanism employed to harden oneself in an attempt to put distance between oneself and other people – a protection mechanism (Figley et al. 1995; Maslach, 2003).

Unfortunately, depersonalization often results in diminished care and meaningful interaction with those whom the helping professional serves (Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The exhaustion and depersonalization result in “reduced personal accomplishment” (Maslach, 2003, p. 2) or self-efficacy which could manifest as a feeling of incompetence, inadequacy, and an inability to connect with others that allow for successful work – they feel like failures (Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Other symptoms of burnout include cynicism, negativity, stress, anxiety, and blaming both of the self and those the helper is supposed to serve (Maslach, 2003). All these systems result in what Maslach (2003) calls a “pluralistic ignorance” (p. 17) meaning that people pretend they are doing fine and not experiencing burnout when they are. Pluralistic ignorance worsens helping professionals’ feelings of isolation, leading them to feel as if they are the only person experiencing burnout so that they are unable to get the help they need (Maslach, 2003).

**The relationship between burnout, educators, and helping professionals.** As the study of burnout has increased since its discovery in the mid-1970s by Christina Maslach and others the complexity of the syndrome has also grown. Research now shows that “Burnout arises from chronic mismatches between people and their work setting in terms of some or all of these six areas: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values.” (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 441). The mismatch model shows burnout is likely if there exists

an excessive workload, feelings of lack of control over resources or situations, few positive social connections, perceptions of unfairness, lack of mutual respect and trust, or a severe mismatch of values or beliefs that the work is unethical within the workplace in any combination thereof (Maslach et al. , 2001). Moreover, these areas serve as a conceptual framework to help underscore the need to understand the cause of burnout as relative to the work context or setting (Maslach 2003; Maslach et al., 2001). It is a job-related condition that can shift with a job change or changing the nature of the work.

These areas are also significant risk factors for the development of burnout in educators (Friedman, 1995). Burnout is also high among teachers in urban schools (; Farber, 1982; Millicent & Joanne, 1999). Mutual respect is vital in schools since this may be disrupted when poor student behavior is of concern (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Friedman, 1995; Millicent & Joanne, 1999). Though often stated differently than Maslach et al. (2001), risk factors for teacher burnout are the same and are summarized with language such as poor working conditions and poor staff relationship categories both of which encompass resources, workload, relationships, and respect to name a few (Millicent & Joanne, 1999).

**Supports and interventions that help combat burnout.** Although people may want to isolate themselves if they are experiencing burnout, more social interaction is called for especially with peers to improve burnout (Maslach, 2003). Peers provide insight, validation, barometers of delusion, humor, emotional support, and companionship that one cannot get alone (Maslach, 2003). In addition, finding the right job match also helps. A good match includes a “sustainable workload, feelings of choice and control, appropriate recognition and reward, a supportive work community, fairness and justice, and meaningful and valued work” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 417). Maslach et al. (2001) also advocate for focusing on the mismatches of value

and reward as one way to combat burnout given that these areas make the other mismatches more palatable. Educators in urban schools are often mismatched with the work setting. For example, teachers with the least amount of experience and preparation to work in urban schools are tapped to teach students who need the most support (Podolsky & Sutchter, 2016).

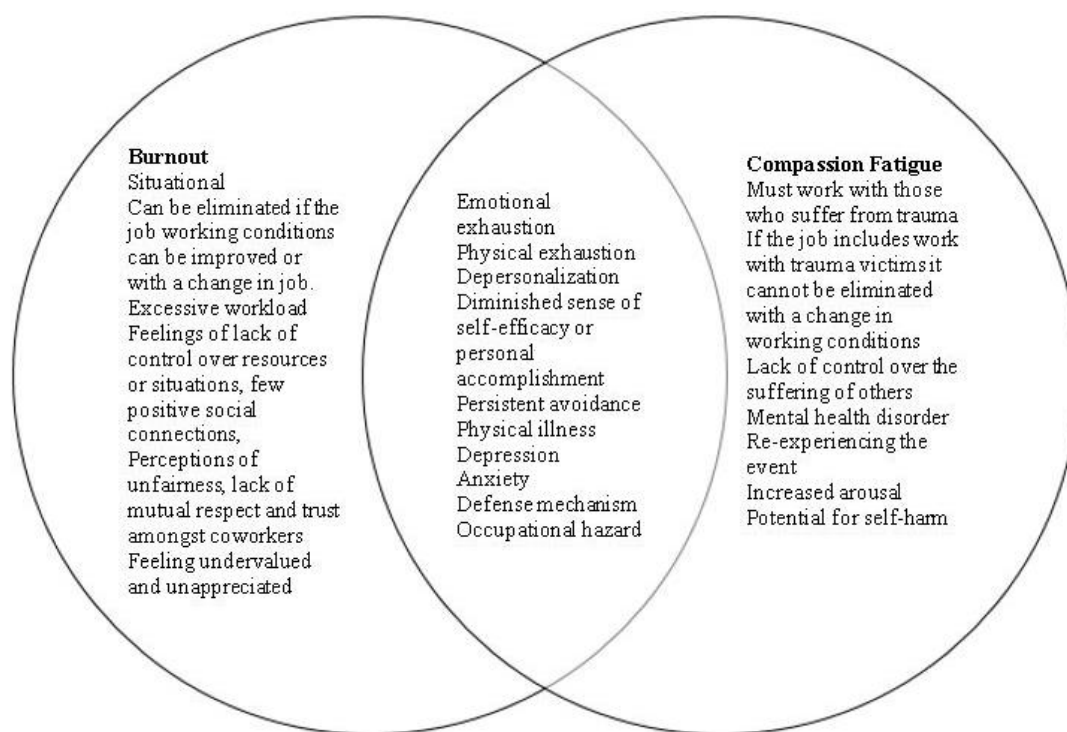
Urban teachers are also most likely to be female, and of a different ethnicity than those they teach, which can hinder the sense of connection and relationship felt with students (Haberman, 2005). Moreover, the lack of staff diversity can diminish the potential for powerful collegial connections, which is another factor in urban teacher burnout (Simon et al., 2015). Research shows that race matters when it comes to job satisfaction (Fairchild, Tobias, Corcoran, Djukic, Kovner, & Noguera, 2012). When a teacher's students are not from the same ethnic group as the teacher, the teacher is often less satisfied with their job (Fairchild et al., 2012). This notion is concerning given that the majority of teachers are white and urban school students are majority non-white (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Lastly, as burnout is one part of the equation representing compassion fatigue, it is important to note that burnout is situational (Adams et al., 2006; Bride et al. 2017; Figley, 1995; Maslach, 2003). If job conditions are improved then burnout is reduced and can likely be eliminated (Maslach 2003; Maslach et al., 2001). That is, “such a focus allows for the possibility that the nature of the job may precipitate burnout and not just the nature of the person performing that job” (Maslach, 2003, p. 14). This last sentiment expressed by Maslach (2003) underscores hope for the working professional suffering from burnout in that burnout is not his or her fault; it is the working conditions that cause the suffering.

### **The Parallels Between Compassion Fatigue and Burnout**

Understanding the difference between burnout and compassion fatigue can be perplexing given that they share many common overlapping characteristics. Figure 3 illustrates the critical

differences in the characteristics of compassion fatigue and burnout discussed in this literature review. The list of features is not exhaustive.



*Figure 3.* Burnout vs. compassion fatigue

**Occupational hazards.** To understand the nature of secondary trauma helping professionals who work with traumatized clients will require training and awareness (Figley, 1995; Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). Compassion fatigue is an occupational hazard (Adams et al., 2006; Figley, 1995; Jacobson, 2006; Newell & MacNeil, 2010). Burnout is also an occupational hazard (Maslach, 2003; Newell & MacNeil, 2010). “It is imperative that trauma workers’ powers-that-be head the plea to acknowledge, the emotional consequences that may inhibit the vital work...preventative measures can be established to ensure that trauma workers

will be able to meet their emotional needs (at work and home) to integrate job-induced STS” (Harris, 1995, p. 111).

The best prevention for both compassion fatigue and burnout is early prevention in the form of awareness (National Child Traumatic Stress Network Schools Committee, 2008). Early awareness can occur by incorporating information about burnout and compassion fatigue into helping profession training programs like what has occurred for social workers and therapists (Adams et al., 2006; Figley, 1995; Jacobson, 2006; Maslach, 2003; Newell & MacNeil, 2010). Practices such as support groups, professional development, stress management, and relaxation techniques also help to reduce the effects of compassion fatigue and burnout (Figley, 1995; 2002; Maslach, 2003; Newell & MacNeil, 2010; Stamm, 2010). With regards to schools, these practices would have to be implemented systemically within the structure of the school system and most likely from the strategic apex or superintendent level as they would require an infusion of new policy direction within the system (Mintzberg, 1979).

**Compassion satisfaction.** Helping those who are traumatized is also incredibly rewarding and satisfying (Stamm, 2010). This reward is known as compassion satisfaction or “the fulfillment from helping others and positive collegial relationships” (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006, p. 1072). Sufficed to say, those who care for others as a career do so because they want to and compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction are inversely correlated (Alkema, Linton, & Davies, 2008; Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006; Stamm, 2010). That is, when one receives positive reinforcement from their work, they are more likely “to experience happy thoughts, feel successful, are happy with the work they do, want to continue to do it, and believe they can make a difference,” thus experiencing satisfaction (Stamm, 2010, p. 21). In the absence of this positivity, there is the possibility of compassion fatigue (Stamm, 2010). School

system leaders and those that influence the system externally can play a significant role in ensuring that the conditions that create compassion fatigue shift, so that compassion satisfaction is more of the norm within urban schools (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Mintzberg, 1979; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977).

**The parallels between school conditions and climate and compassion satisfaction and fatigue.** A school's working conditions and climate is also associated with teachers' attitude, belief, or feelings towards their job (Collie et al., 2012). For example, Quartz et al. (2003) assert that 64% of teachers working in high-poverty urban schools do so because they want to help kids in urban communities. This type of desire or attitudinal belief is research supported. That is there exists a relationship between teacher job satisfaction and work-related attitudes (Fairchild et al., 2012). Positive feelings toward supervisor support, procedural justice, autonomy, job stress, and teacher-student relationships are linked with teacher job satisfaction (Fairchild et al., 2012; p. 174).

Understanding a school's climate in terms of feelings is also research supported. For example, Freiburg (1999) describes school climate as a quality that "helps each individual feel personal worth, dignity, and importance, while simultaneously helping create a sense of belonging to something beyond ourselves. He further reasons that "the climate of a school can foster resilience or become a risk factor in the lives of people who work and learn in a place called school" (p. 12). School climate is often described as the character and quality of a school (Collie et al., 2012; National School Climate Council, 2007). Given that compassion fatigue, sufferers often try to avoid feelings (Lerias & Byrne, 2003), it is plausible that teachers with compassion fatigue would be unable to feel anything about their school's climate and working

conditions. Indeed, if they did it would be through a lens of empathic exhaustion and therefore unlikely to be positive (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017; Figley, 1995).

### **Improving The School System With Policy Action**

Fullan (2006) argues that educational reform is “grounded in creating new context” (p.114), which requires action-oriented leaders who are “systems thinkers in action” p.114). Fullan also argues that systemic thinking in education is rooted in the notion of sustainability, but not in the traditional denotation. “Sustainability does not simply mean whether something will last. It addresses how particular initiatives can be developed without compromising the development of others in the surrounding environment now and in the future” (p. 114). Education leaders must be able to simultaneously engage in work that improves their organization with a focus on how this continuous improvement links to the bigger picture that is the school system (Fullan, 2006). In other words, educators who are systems thinkers understand how the problems schools face in education today are in part due to the actions they themselves have taken (Fullan, 2006; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1994). In effect, problems are seen globally with an eye towards the connections to the actions one takes within the environment (Fullan, 2006; Senge et al., 1994).

Actions school leaders take are in part due to education policies that must be legally implemented (Fowler, 2013). According to Fowler (2013), “public policy is the dynamic and value-laden process through which a political system handles a public problem. It includes government expressed intentions and official enactments, as well as its consistent patterns of activity and inactivity” (p. 5). Furthermore, educators (administrators and teachers) are all considered part of the government since it includes in part, public agencies at the state and local level such as a public school (2013). The soundness of the policy will determine how well it is implemented or even if it is implemented at all (Fowler, 2013). Some transformation to policy

occurs in the implementation stage given that people are implementing it (Fowler, 2013). The transformation might be even more profound in education if school administrators and teachers were not involved in the crafting of the policy, as is possible given the nature of bureaucratic organizational structures like the school system (Fowler 2013; Mintzberg, 1979).

Understanding how education policy is created is an essential function for school leaders (Fowler, 2013). Doing so helps them to understand the context in which they are working, both inside and outside the school environment (Fowler, 2013; Fullan, 2006; Senge et al. 1994). Understanding the culture of the work context will not only help school leaders support the people they are charged with serving (teachers and students) but can also help them change the system for the better (Fullan, 2006; Senge et al., 1994). Understanding an urban teacher's perception of their school's climate and working conditions in relation to compassion fatigue is one example of how a school leader can be a systemic thinker as Fullan (2006) suggests because it links the local context to the bigger picture. A basic understanding of the policy process can help educators at all levels exercise their power to influence it (Fowler, 2013).

**Policy process overview.** “The policy process is the sequence of events that occurs when a political system considers different approaches to public problems, adopts one of them, tries it out, and evaluates it” (p.14). Fowler's (2013) stage model of the policy process depicts the steps involved in developing policy. The steps are issue definition, agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, implementation, and evaluation (p.16). A description of each step addressed in Fowler's stage model follows (see Figure 4).

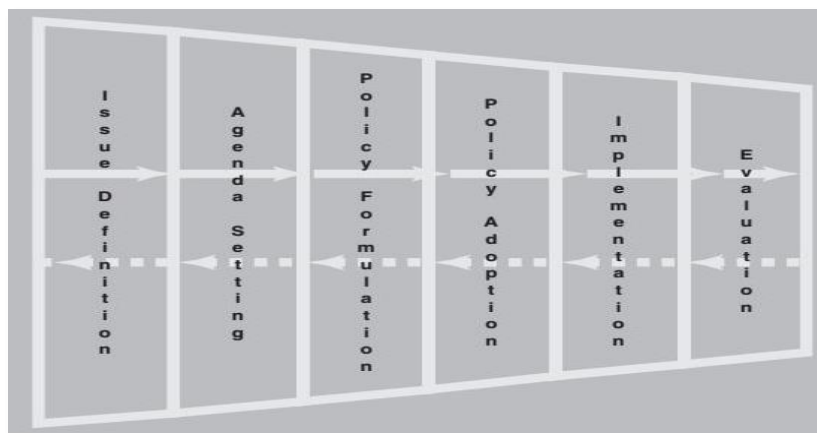


Figure 4. Fowler's (2013) diagram of the policy process (p.16)

“Issue definition is a political process that involves transforming a problem into an issue that the government can address” (p.149). For an issue to reach the level of government action, it has to be taken seriously. Education issues with serious prospects of government action rise in importance and recognition via discussion at forums like education conferences, professional journals, media, key stakeholder meetings, and the general public at large. These three venues comprise the “systemic policy agenda” (Fowler, 2013, p. 161). However, only when an issue reaches the “governmental agenda” (p. 162), will it be slated for possible governmental action via bills, court cases, or regulatory action.

Policy formulation involves writing the issue as a policy. The policy is usually written as a bill. Bills must be sponsored by a legislative member who will introduce it to the appropriate arena, such as the assembly or senate in California. The bill is then referred to a committee for review, debate, discussion, and revision. It is then sent to the “Rules Committee” for debate and vote on the applicable floor (Fowler, 2013, p. 178). Ideally, the companion bill should make its way through the other house so that it can be passed to the governor for signature after a passing vote. However, this does not usually occur. In this case, the language causing issue is resolved

until both houses approve the bill. The governor then approves or vetoes the bill. Approval of the bill by the Governor means the bill becomes law.

Policy adoption involves writing the rules and regulations that accompany the new laws. These rules and regulations help to paint a clear understanding of the law to be implemented by addressing vague language, defining key terms, and developing rules to guide their process for writing and adopting regulations. Implementation of policy addresses the total of activities organizations' carry out to implement the law. Sometimes it is necessary for "intermediaries" to assist local educational agencies (LEAs) in implementing the law (Fowler, 2013, p. 242). Intermediaries include local school boards and LEA administration. Implementation can be difficult if implementers are unwilling, or "lack the capacity or inability to do what the policy requires" (Fowler, 2013, p. 242). Local support of the law is vital in successful implementation.

Lastly, evaluation is a research process in which the new policy is studied to determine its success/failures in reaching its intended purpose (Fowler, 2013). The evaluation includes stakeholder or vested parties' participation and feedback. Fowler (2013) argues that "issue definition and agenda setting are arguably the most important steps in the entire policy process, irreversibly influencing what happens next" (p.149). These two steps are the focus of the cycles of action within this dissertation.

**Urban education, compassion fatigue, school conditions, and climate, and the school system.** Given the complexities of the structure of the school system and the nature of poverty in urban students, one can reason that teachers at urban schools are direct service providers to traumatized children (Abraham-Cook, 2012; Hoffman, Palladino, & Barnett, 2007). A few studies discuss the impact of secondary trauma on teachers in Urban schools (Abraham-Cook, 2012). In contrast, there exists a plethora of research on compassion fatigue in other helping

professions such as social workers and research on trauma in urban students. As Maslach (2003) contends a helping profession is one in which one provides care to another person (Maslach, 2003) which should apply to teachers since teachers care for their students.

Also, the same reasons leading to compassion fatigue in a helping professional should, therefore, apply to teachers. Research suggests that the following people are most at risk for developing compassion fatigue: women, those with previous trauma history or mental health issues, African Americans, Hispanics, and those who experience extreme life and work stress (Adams, Figley, & Boscarino, 2008; Beaton, & Murphy, 1995). These characteristics are consistent with descriptions of urban school settings (Podolsky et al., 2016; Satcher et al., 2016; Raue et al., 2015; Simon et al., 2015). There exists only a small amount of studies addressing compassion fatigue in urban schools. More research is needed in this area to understand the complexities occurring at urban schools wholly.

There is also a plethora of research on school climate and working conditions and teacher retention, for example, Gray, Wilcox, and Nordstokke (2017) conducted an extensive literature review to ascertain, in part, how a teachers' stress-level influences school climate. What they found is that while school climate issues such as poor student behavior, work overload, and low wages, compound teacher stress levels the opposite is also true. Teachers' stress-levels impact school climate and is evidenced by higher teacher absenteeism, early retirement, and teacher turnover (2017, p. 203).

However, I have not found research that explicitly links compassion fatigue, school climate, and teacher attrition. I argue that the nature of the schooling system is partly to blame for this oversight. The disconnectedness of educators within the school system (Mintzberg 1979; 1980), or the lack of coherence around the nature of teacher attrition in urban schools, makes

seeing compassion fatigue as one reason for attrition, difficult (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Despite the structure of the school system's role in the current circumstances of urban teachers, the interconnectedness of the school system components combined with external forces is also the key to determining how to improve the performance of the school system (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Reflect & Learn, n.d.).

Knowing if compassion fatigue plays a role in an urban school teacher's perception of their school's climate and working conditions is an untapped resource of knowledge that could affect the school system and teacher retention rates, positively. Urban students are flailing because their teachers are flailing (Simon et al., 2015; Ingersoll & May 2011). When urban teachers flourish, urban students achieve academically (Simon et al., 2015; Ingersoll & May 2011). "Education is a powerful force for advancing opportunity, prosperity, and growth" (Schanzenbach, Boddy, Mumford, & Nantz, 2016, p. i). Students who benefit from a quality education are more likely to have increased income earning potential, job opportunities, and to exit poverty (Schanzenbach et al., 2016).

The operating structure of the school system is complicated (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Mintzberg, 1979). On the surface, a school is a building that houses classrooms, bathrooms, a multi-purpose room, or a cafeteria and gym, a maintenance space for the custodian, and a front office. Then there are the people who work in the classrooms. None of this would exist without the droves of students who inhabit the halls, and classrooms of the school and give the people and the building a reason for existing. Schools and their staff including administrators, teachers classified staff such as clerical, para-educators, and custodial, and students' success are interdependent.

Parents, neighborhoods, rules and regulations, law, and poverty also heavily influence this interdependence, both inside and outside, of the school because they help shape the school system environment (Flood, 2010). When the interaction of these groups is based on policies that are coordinated and focused in one positive direction, the results for the students within the system can be amazing (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). One example of coordinated policy success is the turnaround of the Brockton High School and urban school in Brockton Massachusetts (Dillon, 2010). Beginning in 2000, Brockton High School leaders and teachers worked together to implement a literacy program that transformed the failing school into one of the most successful high schools in the state that regularly outperforms over 90% of other Massachusetts schools (Dillon, 2010). Brockton High School's success shows that urban school success is possible for both educators and students.

In contrast, uncoordinated policies result in multiple directions within the school system that cause “overload and confusion” (Kirtman & Fullan, 2016, p. 123) around the mission, vision, and direction of the school. Podolsky et al. (2016) captured the essence of the effect of uncoordination when they highlighted a 25-year veteran teacher's decision for leaving the profession (as referenced in Strauss 2014):

I have watched as my job requirements swung away from a focus on the children, their individual learning styles, emotional needs, and their individual families, interests, and strengths to a focus on testing, assessing, and scoring young children, thereby ramping up the academic demands and pressures on them . . . I have changed my practice over the years to allow the necessary time and focus for all the demands coming down from above. Each year there are more. Each year I have had less and less time to teach the children I love in the way I know best—and in the way child development experts recommend. I reached the place last year where I began to feel I was part of a broken system that was causing damage to those very children I was there to serve (p. 44).

In 2016, 75% of California school districts reported that they are experiencing teacher shortages (Podolsky & Sutchter, 2016). Of the districts serving the largest amounts of high-poverty students, English Learners, and students of color 83% percent reported experiencing

shortages (Podolsky & Sutchter, 2016); and, 71% of these districts often fill vacant teaching positions with teachers who have substandard credentials (Podolsky & Sutchter, 2016). The teacher shortage in California is a problem that is “serious enough” (Fullan& Quinn, 2016, p. xi) to be addressed using a systems perspective. Systemness, the coordination of policies within the school system (Fullan& Quinn, 2016) is now needed in California because addressing compassion fatigue as a possible cause for attrition is education policy worth exploring (Abraham-Cook, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

I started this Chapter arguing that the conditions within urban schools are ripe for teachers to suffer from compassion fatigue. I then reviewed the literature about the organizational structure of the school system, including a discussion of the societal factors leading to clusters of poverty and the consequent trauma that urban student’s and teacher’s experience, and a discussion of the conceptual framework guiding this study. I then discussed burnout and compassion fatigue including defining characteristics and symptoms. I closed with a discussion on the connections between systems thinking, compassion fatigue, school climate and conditions, and urban education. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology used to answer the research questions that motivated this research study based on the literature reviewed.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

The central issue explored in this dissertation is that urban schoolteachers experience secondary trauma because of the trauma urban students suffer. My primary purpose was to discover to what extent compassion fatigue impacts urban educators' ability to create, experience, and perceive their school's climate and working conditions positively and to find out if compassion fatigue plays a role in urban educator attrition. The following questions drove the overarching inquiry "how might we best manifest a future in which the urban teacher shortage in California no longer exists?":

1. To what extent do California urban schoolteachers experience compassion fatigue?
2. How does compassion fatigue impact a teacher's perception of their schools working conditions and climate?
3. What organizational supports can be put in place to help urban educators suffering from compassion fatigue thrive?

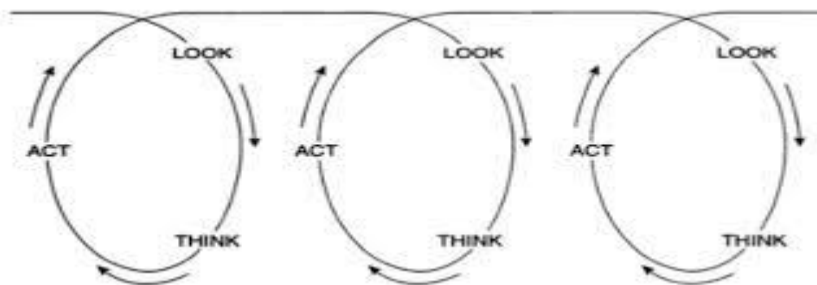
This chapter explains the inquiry approach I used to complete this dissertation. It includes a description of the methodology, study participants, methods, and tools for collecting data, data analysis, trustworthiness, quality, validity and reliability, and a chapter summary.

#### **Inquiry Approach**

*"[action research] not only seeks to understand how participants make meaning or interpret a particular phenomenon or problem in their workplace, community, or practice, but it also usually seeks to engage participants at some level in the process in order to solve a practical problem." (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 49).*

The research approach for this dissertation is practical action research with elements of narrative inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Action research is a reflective and cyclical action-oriented process (see Figure 5) that practitioners within an organization or community employ to address problems within the organization (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Action research uses

collaboration with the participants of the organization to solve problems (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).



*Figure 5.* Stringer's (2007) action research interacting spiral (Creswell, 2007, p. 584)

Stringer's (2007) model of action research is based on a three-phase cycle of inquiry: look, act, and think (Creswell, 2007). A summary of each phase, as interpreted by Creswell (2007) follows. The look phase or "building the picture" is comprised of processes that help stakeholder groups understand their experience through data collecting methods such as interviews or observation (pp. 584–585). The data is then analyzed, and the results of the analysis are shared with the stakeholder groups (p. 585). The think phase or "interpreting and analyzing" consists of analysis that goes in depth to develop methods for action (p. 584). Processes included in this phase include, but are not limited to, coding, collaborative report writing, presentations, and analyzing key experiences (p. 584). The last phase act or "resolving problems" involves the development, implementation, and evaluation of a plan to solve the problem at hand practically (pp. 584–585).

Action research is fluid (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It allows for the usage of a combination of methods necessary to complete the work of the dissertation without diminishing the methodological approach. Action research's cyclical nature also signals the non-linear nature

of the inquiry approach, allowing for repetition and revision as needed until a suitable problem solution is found (Creswell, 2007). The collection of both quantitative and qualitative data was used to conduct this study. In this dissertation, rather than solely focusing the cycles of action on the problematic school climate and working conditions at urban schools that lead to teacher attrition, I also sought to understand what is known about the school climates and working conditions at urban schools that encourage retention of teachers. Recommendations for action were then intentionally generated to broaden the current tenor of policy discussions on ending California's teacher shortage to include teachers compassion fatigue.

Quantitative data was collected using an adapted version of the ProQOL 5 (see Appendix B) to determine if urban teachers suffer from compassion fatigue as characterized by secondary trauma and burnout (Stamm, 2010). I originally intended to administer the ProQOL 5 only to teachers working at urban schools, but I had to shift course due to low survey response. *Section Cycle 1: Establishing the Baseline* provides further detail about the shift in course. Qualitative data was gathered via interviews with a subset of the teachers who took the ProQOL 5. The interviews helped to explore further compassion fatigue conceptualized as burnout and secondary trauma within the education profession.

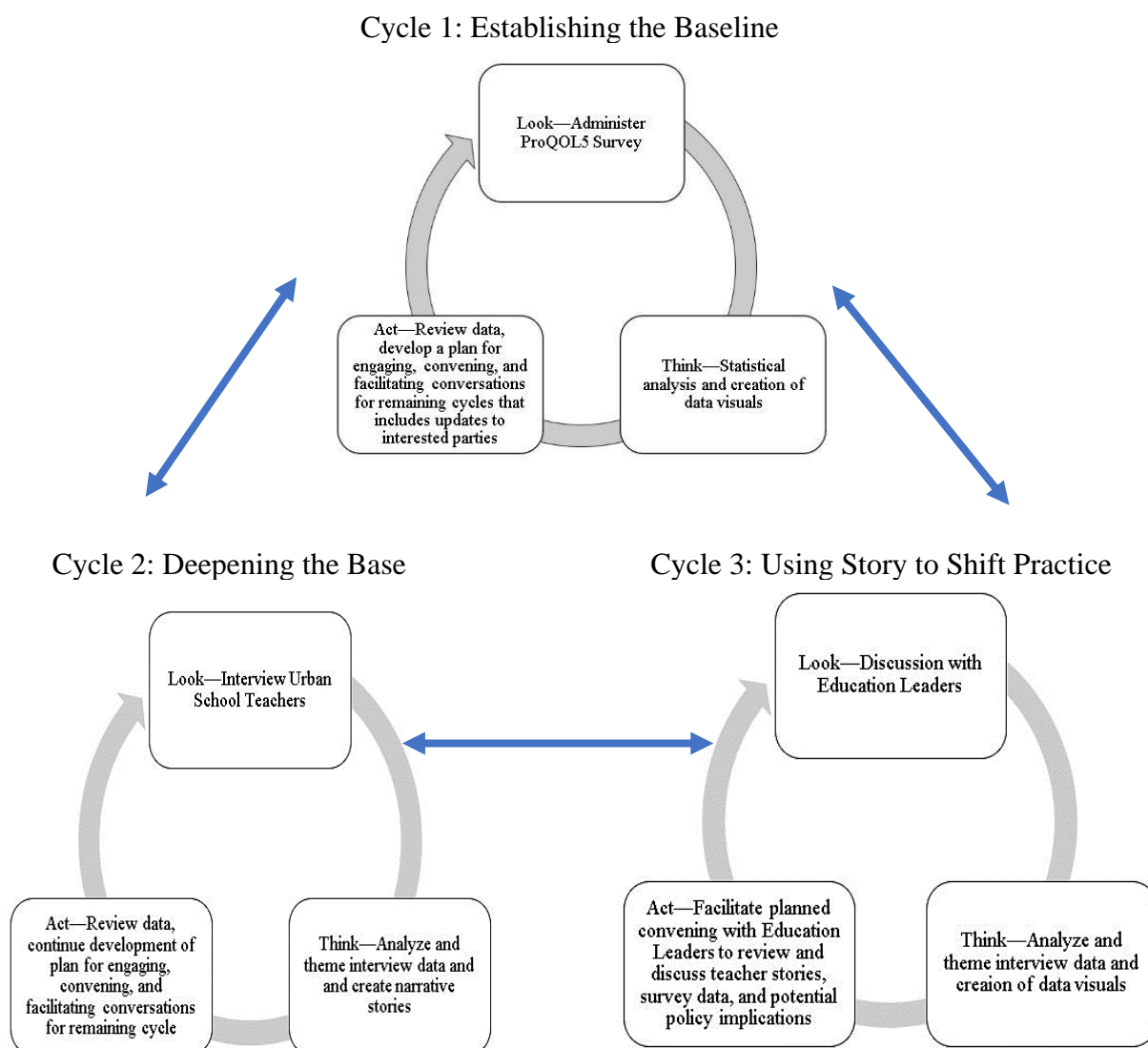
Applying the notion of compassion fatigue to the education profession offered an alternative lens with which to address high urban teacher attrition rates and the at times subpar work capacity of some of the teachers who choose to work in urban schools. The application also helped to shed light on the types of support services school districts and policymakers can institute to stave off urban education attrition. This research study is appropriate and timely given the massive teacher shortage currently occurring in California (California Teacher Shortage Fact Sheet, CTA, 2016). This inquiry provides data that can be acted on promptly.

## Action Cycle Descriptions

*“When we measure the world, we change it” (Senge et al., 1994, p. 27)*

The search for reasons as to why schoolteachers quit the profession is a process that one can argue is affecting the school system itself (Senge et al., 1994). Talking excessively about why someone leaves only pushes one further to want to leave (Watkins & Mohr, 2001). However, stopping to understand the daily school climate and working conditions in which teachers are working and experiencing can help policymakers better understand how the consequences of decisive actions implemented in the school system are affecting the operating core of the school system—the teachers. The three action cycles of this dissertation are rooted in understanding how the policies enacted in the school system have created the conditions teachers are now experiencing at urban schools. As the action cycles repeated (see Figure 6), this understanding deepened.

I sought not only to illuminate the urban teacher experience and perception of urban school climates and working conditions but also to shift the mindset of education leaders so that they would take action that respects this newfound understanding of the urban school context within the school system (Fullan, 2006). The ultimate goal of the action is to translate compassion fatigue in urban educators in relation to the teacher shortage into a policy issue that is seen as important enough to address with governmental action (Fowler, 2013).

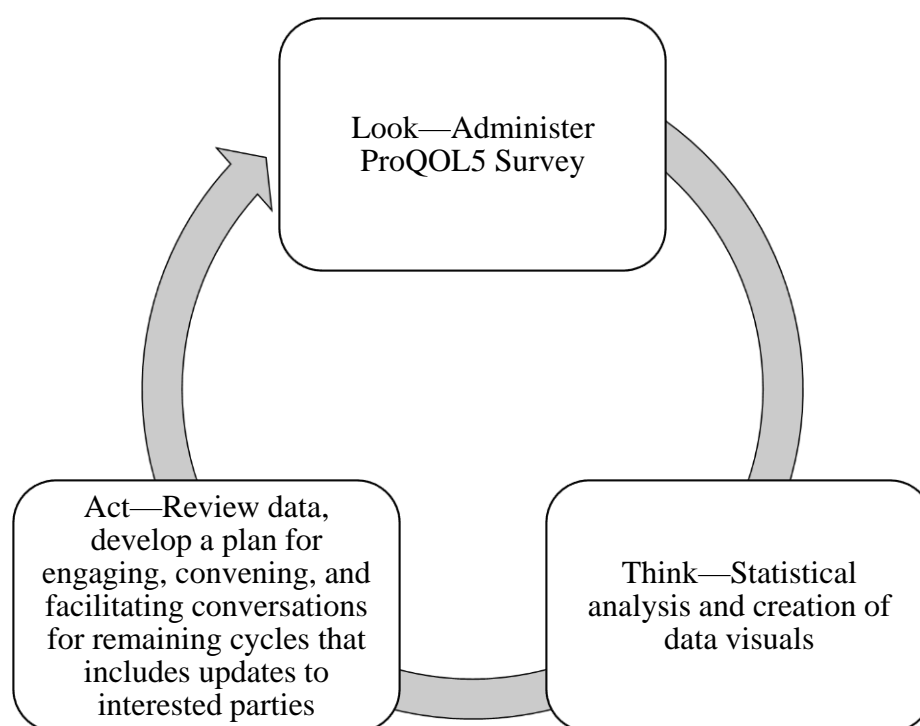


*Figure 6.* Dissertation interacting cycles of action

Each cycle's design was based on an emerging design that shifted at times during the process of engaging in the research. The emerging nature of the design was inherent given the fluid nature of action research (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Each cycle was planned to meet the quality and validity criteria of action research as articulated by Herr and Anderson (2015). See Table 3 for more details. I used both reflective and reflexive journal writing to document insights, feelings, thoughts, and any refocusing and reorienting necessary that arose throughout

each cycle (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007, p. 153). The journal served as another source of data for analysis (Sagor, 2000). Action cycle 1 addressed inquiry question 1. Action cycle 2 addressed inquiry questions 2 and 3. A detailed description of each cycle follows.

### **Cycle 1: Establishing the Baseline**



*Figure 7. Action cycle 1: Establishing the baseline*

### **Look Cycle 1**

**Methodology.** The aim of Cycle 1 was to gather quantitative data on compassion fatigue in urban schoolteachers in order to establish a statistical baseline of evidence-based data that would drive the work completed in the remaining Cycles of Action (Corrigan, Grove, & Vincent, 2011). The ProQOL 5 (Stamm, 2010) was disseminated to teachers who work at urban school sites throughout California via education associations such as, but not limited to, the California

Federation of Teachers (CFT), and select education community members. These associations provided the pool of participants to be interviewed after completion of the ProQOL 5. Access to urban educators came about as a result of partnering with Price. Through this connection, Price and I brainstormed education personnel we thought would be willing to participate in this research study and contacted them. After the list of personnel was generated, any access issues were identified and resolved.

An email or text message was sent to teachers with only a link to the ProQOL 5. The email included a description of the study, the transformative purpose of the study, and a request for participation qualitatively via a follow-up interview after the survey is complete (See Appendix A). Participants had approximately two months to complete the ProQOL 5. Follow-up reminders were sent after a month if they had not returned the survey and another e-mail after 3-weeks. All participants were asked if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview to help further inform the study if they have not already indicated as such from the initial point of contact. The names of participants who indicated a willingness to do a follow-up interview were saved for contacting in Action Cycle 2. See the description of participants for more detail regarding access issues.

The methodological approach for this study was two-pronged. The first prong was explanatory non-experimental research that involved cross-sectional data collection. A correlational research design was used to measure the relationship between urban teachers and compassion fatigue as characterized by burnout and secondary trauma (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). This research method was appropriate given that the independent variables cannot be manipulated (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Examples of the independent variables (which are further discussed in the data analysis section) include gender, years in the profession, and race.

Statistically significant correlations were found between urban school demographics and compassion fatigue. Utilizing correlational research helped set the foundation for determining the types of support services and protocols that would help diminish urban education attrition.

**Description of participants.** The target participants for this study were teachers who work with urban students in urban schools. In this dissertation, urban educators are defined as those who work at school sites that have large populations of African-American and Hispanic students, with 70 % or higher of the student population receiving free and reduced lunch. The first effort to contact teacher participants from the list that Price and I generated proved to be inadequate because the response yielded only 22 participants. Consequently, the pool was expanded to all schoolteachers, k-12, statewide. Additional outreach occurred via social media posts, appeals to both small and large groups of fellow educators and students, and contacts with former teacher and administrator colleagues. As a result, the sample population was comprised of a mix of teachers from high and low poverty schools in select regions of Northern and Southern California such as Sacramento County, San Joaquin County, Los Angeles County, and the Bay Area region.

Since this dissertation used survey research, a population size of 200 participants was used as recommended (Creswell, 2015). Two hundred was selected based on the representative numbers present in comparable compassion fatigue studies with mental health care workers. The large number of participants was also chosen to reduce sampling error (Creswell, 2017). I anticipated a 50% response rate due to the busy nature of educators. Creswell (2017) estimates that a population of 200 with a 50% response rate will result in a sample population of 100 people (p. 271). The population sample ultimately contained 114 respondents. Of the 114

responses, 14 had to be removed given that those participants had either retired or lived in states other than California. The final sample size of teachers was 100.

**Methods and tools for collecting data—ProQOL 5 description.** Stamm (2010) describes the ProQOL as the “most commonly used measure of the positive and negative effects of working with people who have experienced extremely stressful events. . . the measure was originally called the Compassion Fatigue Self-Test and developed by Charles Figley in the late 1980s” (p. 12). More specifically, “Professional quality of life incorporates two aspects, the positive (Compassion Satisfaction) and the negative (Compassion Fatigue). Compassion fatigue breaks into two parts (See Figure 9). The first part concerns things such as exhaustion, frustration, anger, and depression typical of burnout. Secondary Traumatic Stress is a negative feeling driven by fear and work-related trauma. Some trauma at work can be direct (primary) trauma” (Stamm, 2010, p.8).

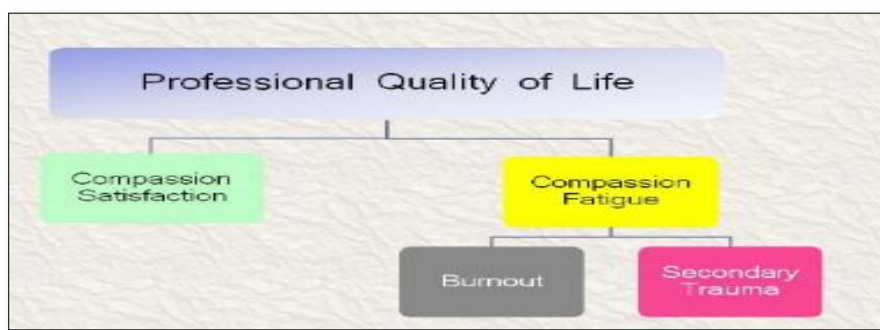


Figure 8. ProQOL 5 measures. Retrieved from <https://proqol.org/>

Stamm permits the use of the ProQOL with the following stipulations: the author must be credited, no changes can be made except for substituting the appropriate target group to match the research purpose, and it cannot be sold (Stamm, 2010). For these reasons, the adoption of the

ProQOL for this study included changing the target group to teachers. The ProQOL 5 measure consists of 30 Likert Scale items with a 5-point scale where one is never, and five is very often. The results of the survey are then separated into three scales – compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue as characterized by secondary trauma and burnout.

Stamm (2010) explains that calculation of the scores for the ProQOL 5 involves three steps and the conversion of raw scores into t-scores. The first step requires the summation of items 3, 6, 12, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 27, and 30 to yield the Compassion Satisfaction scale. A score of 43 or higher indicates professional satisfaction and the converse is true. The second step involves reverse scoring items 1, 4, 15, 17, and 29 and then summing those totals with the scores for items 8, 10, 19, 21, and 26 to yield the Burnout scale. A score of 56 or higher indicates the potential for burnout. The last step is to sum items 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 23, 25, and 28 to yield the Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) scale. A score of 56 or higher generally indicates the potential for STS. Stamm (2010) notes that this tool is not diagnostic, but high scores on the Burnout and STS scale does suggest the possibility that an issue exists in which one may wish to seek further assistance in dealing with appropriately.

The ProQOL 5 has good construct validity and “the inter-scale correlations show 2% shared variance ( $r = -.23$ ;  $\text{co-}\sigma = 5\%$ ;  $n = 1187$ ) with Secondary Traumatic Stress and 5% shared variance ( $r = -.14$ ;  $\text{co-}\sigma = 2\%$ ;  $n = 1187$ ) with Burnout. While there is shared variance between Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress the two scales measure different constructs with the shared variance likely reflecting the distress that is common to both conditions. The shared variance between these two scales is 34% ( $r = .58$ ;  $\text{co-}\sigma = 34\%$ ;  $n = 1187$ )” (Stamm, 2010, pg.14). I also created a questionnaire that contains the demographic variables in Appendix C to accompany the ProQOL 5. The demographic information collected helped create a more robust

understanding of the teacher participant, the school they taught in, and it supported data analysis. The questionnaire was consistent with the categories suggested by Stamm (2010). In addition, the Federal Statute ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(D) regulates a delineation of supports for the neediest of students at all grade levels – elementary, middle, and high (ESSA State Plan, 2017). Understanding the landscape of teaching shortages at each level of the system is consistent with ESEA and was employed throughout this dissertation as PROQOL 5 data were analyzed. Where applicable, data were presented as in mean format plus or minus ( $\pm$ ) standard deviation (Laerd, 2018).

### **Think Cycle 1**

**Data analysis.** The independent variables for this dissertation included the following demographic variables:

- Teacher Characteristics
  - Categorical: Gender- male, Gender-female, non-binary (NB), and Prefer not to say (NR)
  - Categorical: Elementary School Teacher (TE), Middle School Teacher (TM), High School Teacher (TH)
  - Categorical: Race/ Ethnicity – African American, White, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, Prefer not to say, and Two or more races
  - Age (fill in the blank)
  - Years at the School Site ((fill in the blank)
  - Years Working in the Profession (fill in the blank)

The following variables were collected after teacher participants provided the variables mentioned above and only if the teacher provided a school site zip code. Appendix F contains more information about the variables used in the data analysis.

- Work Setting:
  - Categorical: School Site (Elementary coded as 1, Middle, coded as 2, High school coded as 3)
  - Numeric: Percentage of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Priced Lunch
  - Numeric: Percentage of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students
  - Numeric: Percentage of Students with Disabilities
  - Numeric: Percentage of English Learners
  - Numeric: Percentage of African American Students
  - Numeric: Percentage of White students
  - Numeric: Percentage of Asian/Filipino/Pacific Islander Students
  - Numeric: Percentage of Hispanic Students
- The dependent variables are:
  - Compassion Satisfaction (CS)
  - Compassion Fatigue (CF) (separated into two components Secondary Trauma (ST) and Burnout (BO))

Descriptive statistics were calculated to help determine the characteristics of the sample population of teachers present in this study. Statistical tests conducted in this study included ANOVA, calculation of correlation statistics using Pearson's  $r$ , and linear regression analysis including multiple regression (Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

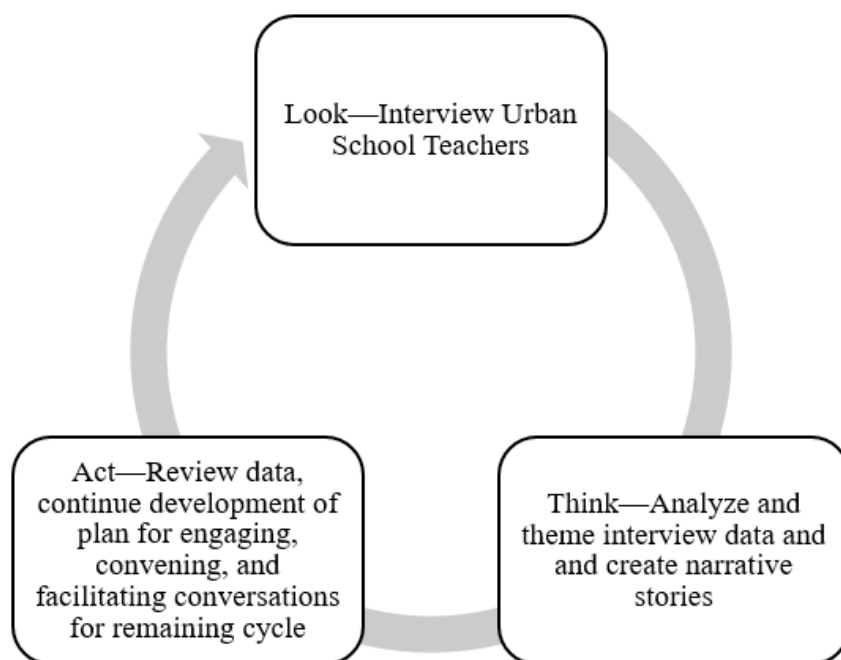
ANOVA testing helped to determine if there were statistically significant differences in compassion satisfaction and fatigue tcores for the different grouping of teachers by level, gender, ethnicity, and years in the profession and school site. By using correlation and linear regression analysis, I was able to ascertain the relationship between the characteristic demographics of schools and compassion satisfaction and fatigue. Once all preliminary statistical tests were calculated, the data was captured in visualizations and shared with CDE

planning partner Price and select education stakeholders. The initial feedback helped to inform the direction the analysis took with the offering of critical feedback on the results, and questions as to why the results were taking such surprising turns. Chapter 4 contains the complete write-up of the Cycle 1 results.

### **Act Cycle 1**

Preliminary action planning for Cycle 2 occurred with CDE Chief Deputy, Glen Price. The action planning consisted of the sharing of the data visualizations with Price and other suggested education leaders, and a conversation to inform the development of the interview protocol for Cycle 2. Qualitative data was collected via interviews from teachers who completed the ProQOL 5 to explore compassion fatigue with a lens of burnout and secondary trauma within the education profession.

### **Cycle 2: Deepening the Base**



*Figure 9. Action cycle 2: deepening the base*

## Look Cycle 2

**Methodology.** The second cycle involved the use of semi-structured narrative inquiry qualitative interviews. The narrative was both a phenomenon and method, in that the phenomenon was the story and the inquiry was the narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In this dissertation, the teacher stories were written as vignettes and used to make the experience of teaching at urban schools real by helping the researcher to understand how compassion fatigue affected the daily school and classroom occurrences of schoolteachers (Hill, 2011). Moreover, the vignettes illuminated whether compassion fatigue played a role in shaping the teachers' perceptions, both positively and negatively, of their school's climate and working conditions. Watkins and Mohr (2001) argue that continued dialogue that focuses on the lack of something, in this case resources and support, for both urban and non-urban schoolteachers, may be contributing to the construction of a future that perpetuates California's teacher shortage. It was therefore imperative that the vignettes derived from the interviews be compelling enough to induce a practice shifting experience in the audience who may read this research.

A preliminary review of the research suggested that the provision of proper support services for teachers suffering from compassion fatigue is minimal. In light of this understanding, areas of focus and exploration for the interviews included: a) research-based symptoms of compassion satisfaction and fatigue; b) questions prompting the interviewees to describe compassion fatigue's effect on their perceptions of their school's climate and working conditions; and c) areas in which the school climate and working conditions contributed to and detracted from successful teaching experiences.

**Description of participants.** The target participants for this portion of the study were teachers who had already participated in Cycle 1, indicated interest in a follow-up interview, and who ideally worked with urban students in urban schools. Potential interview participants were

contacted via text message thanking them for completing the ProQOL 5 survey. The text message reminded them that they had indicated that they might be willing to participate in a follow-up interview and then asked if I could contact them for an interview. If they sent a text message response that indicated that they were willing to participate in an interview, an interview appointment was scheduled.

The teacher interviewees selected had ProQOL 5 scores ranging from combinations of high compassion satisfaction scores and low compassion fatigue scores to those that were the opposite combination. The intent of selecting these ranges was to set-up variability in interview responses. A total of six teachers agreed to be interviewed—one elementary school teacher, three middle school teachers, and two high school teachers. See the Description of Participants section of Cycle 1 for additional details on the participants and ProQOL 5 cut points that indicate high and low compassion satisfaction and fatigue scores.

**Methods and tools for collecting data.** Once the quantitative results were received and analyzed, the qualitative interviewees were selected from the teacher stratum identified earlier. The number of interviewees depended on the responses to the willingness to participate in a follow-up interview question asked during the quantitative phase. The goal was to conduct up to a maximum of ten open-ended interviews with urban schoolteachers, stopping only when the point of response saturation was reached. Though only six interviews were conducted there was a consistent tenor of feedback from all participants and I felt I had reached saturation. The interviews lasted a minimum of 30 minutes with a maximum of 120 minutes and were conducted via Google Hangouts (a telephonic conferencing software). The interviews were video, and audio recorded using video conferencing software to ensure that the conversations were captured fully. All audio and video recordings were kept private so that only the researcher, the

researcher's dissertation chair, and a transcription service could view them. Member checking via follow-up conversations was attempted with all interviewees. However, only three interviewed teachers responded to the request. For those three teachers, the content of the vignettes and data appeared to be accurate. The exact questions that were asked during the interviews were in part derived based on feedback from CDE Chief Deputy, Price. The interview protocol is included in Appendix C.

### **Trustworthiness/Quality/Validity**

Indicators of quality determine the quality and validity of action research. I used the five validity criteria (dialogic, outcome, catalytic, democratic, and process) established by Anderson and Herr (2015) to show indicator quality and to align with the goals of action research.

More specifically, as described in Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (2007) to what extent:

- a. Are the researcher's findings derived in a process that best fits the data? (dialogic and process validity)
- b. Is the research process in depth enough to allow for new understanding to appear? (catalytic validity)
- c. Do the actions undertaken lead to additional data gathering and problem-solving as appropriate? (outcome validity)
- d. Are the stakeholders' views incorporated into the research? (democratic validity)

The extent to which this dissertation does not accomplish the criteria goals is a definite threat to validity. However, all goals were accomplished. See Table 3 for a summary of the criteria and a description of how each criterion was met.

Table 3 <i>Anderson and Herr's (2015) Goals of Action Research Validity Criteria (p. 67)</i>		
Quality/validity criteria	Goals of action research	Meeting the criteria
1. Dialogic and process validity	Generation of new knowledge	The selection of Price as an action research partner ensured that the researcher had a critical friend with which to discuss these data and to ensure that the analysis and resulting brief were relevant to the education field.
2. Outcome validity	Achievement of action-oriented outcomes	The ultimate goal of this dissertation was to translate teachers' compassion fatigue in relation to the teacher shortage into a policy issue that can be addressed with governmental action. This was done by defining the issue and then raising awareness of the issue. The entirety of this dissertation defines compassion fatigue as an issue, and the policy brief in Appendix H was disseminated to ensure it was being talked about publicly in arenas that would be noticed by state level, county level, and district and school level system actors.
3. Catalytic validity	Education of both researcher and participants	Three interacting cycles of action, spanning the course of three to four months each offered sufficient time to look at the data, share the results of data analysis with key stakeholders, reflect on the results of that sharing, and then to determine next steps for action based on the results of the look and think portions of each cycle. During each cycle, I had to make adjustments on more than one occasion to ensure that the new insights offered from the discussions of the data with Price, stakeholders, and key education leaders were reflected in the dissertation itself.
4. Democratic validity	Results that are relevant to the local setting	Interviewed teachers' comments show how relevant, timely, and necessary understanding Compassion Fatigue and improving the climate and working conditions of schools are. Education leaders' thoughts offered during Cycle 3 also ensured that the data and resulting recommendations reflect sound practice that would likely improve teacher retention.
5. Process validity	Comprehensive and appropriate research methodology	The three cycles of action generated three distinct reflective cycle opportunities to examine data, establish relationships with participants, and to triangulate data via survey analysis, interview data analysis, and repeated discussions and member checking ensuring the accuracy of the data presented in the study.

The extent to which the research findings are trustworthy and generalizable is a concern of note. Action research in schools is school site-specific, meaning that these same actions in another school site may not generate the same results (Herr & Anderson, 2015). However, given the system-level nature of this action research dissertation, the objective is to cause a shift in thinking through an experience that leads to a change in practice. This sentiment is expressed best in the words of John Dewey as cited in Anderson and Herr (2015), “one may change practice when new experience causes a re-examination of problems: Intuitively we start thinking of alternative solutions (p. 75). It is in this spirit that this dissertation was conducted to generate knowledge that contributes to the solving of California’s teacher shortage in a real and valuable manner (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Specifically, triangulation through multiple sources of data collection, careful and methodical coding and theming processes, reflexive journaling, and member checking were built into the cyclic design to ensure the accuracy of the findings and trustworthiness of the data (Anderson et al., 2007).

## **Think Cycle 2**

**Data analysis.** The interviews were transcribed, and then portions of each interview were turned into a collection of stories, written as vignettes, illustrating the experience of each teacher interviewed. The stories were derived after the identification of major themes within each interviewee’s transcript. I listened to the recording initially to correct any errors in the interview transcripts. Then using an “open coding method” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 62) to examine the transcribed data, I read and coded the interview transcripts using literature-based codes relative to compassion satisfaction and fatigue. Codes included compassion satisfaction, burnout, secondary trauma, anxiety, and evidence of compassion fatigue symptoms such as avoidance or impairment (see Figure 3: Burnout vs. Compassion Fatigue). I conducted a second read to find emergent themes and to make preliminary comments for each part of the transcript.

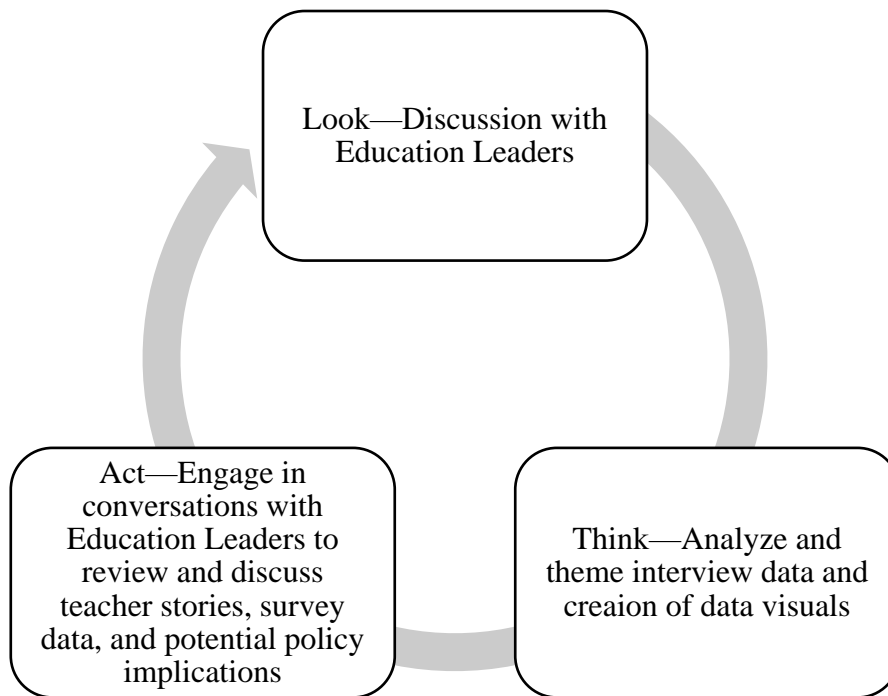
Next, each code was translated into a conceptual category that allowed for the grouping of similar phenomena under one conceptual label (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each of the labels was grouped into the following categories that describe the phenomena present in each of the concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990): compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue for both the individual and organizational level, school climate, and other notables related to working conditions.

Finally, I conducted a more careful read of the transcript to look for information that aligned with the conceptual codes and categories while marking the transcript as each code was noticed in order to establish a frequency rate for occurrences. This process was repeated for each interview until all themes emerged. Cutting and sorting occurred to group data into connected themes (Powell & Renner, 2003). Quotes were selected that exemplified each theme. Finally, a series of vignettes were written based on the themes that emerged from the data analysis and with some influence from Cycle 1 data analysis.

## **Act Cycle 2**

Secondary action planning occurred with the CDE Chief Deputy, Glen Price. The action planning consisted of the sharing of the stories and a conversation to develop and plan how best to hold discussions with Education Leaders in Cycle 3. We decided that the goal of the conversations with Education Leaders was to develop an interest and desire to translate compassion fatigue in educators in relation to the teacher shortage into a policy issue that is seen as important enough to address with governmental action (Fowler, 2013).

### Cycle 3: Using Story to Shift Practice



*Figure 10.* Action cycle 3: Using story to shift practice

### Look Cycle 3

**Methodology.** The objective of the Cycle 3 was to conduct semi-structured open-ended discussions with groups of educators, education leaders, and select CDE leadership members to review the results of the ProQOL 5 with the accompanying data visualizations and narrative stories based on data gathered in Cycles 1 and 2. The discussions focused on the implications of the data results on California’s policy for addressing the teacher shortage based on some elements of appreciative inquiry (see Figure 6). The discussion also helped set-up feedback loops and possible alliances amongst school system “parts and participants to ensure that they remain

closely aligned and focused on achieving the goal of the system” (Corrigan et al., 2011, p. 65), which is ending the teacher shortage.

**Description of participants.** The target participants for Cycle 3 were education leaders within and outside of the CDE such as CTA leaders, members of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, education researchers, and education philanthropy. All participants had to have an interest in solving California’s teacher shortage. Just as in Cycle 1, access to the participants came about as a result of the partnership with Price. Through this connection, Price and I brainstormed education personnel we thought would be willing to participate in this research study and sent an invitation to discuss this research.

**Methods and tools for collecting data.** Once the quantitative and qualitative results from Cycles 1 and 2 were analyzed, conversations were scheduled and conducted with the education leaders described above. The conversations lasted a maximum of 60 minutes and were conducted in person, by phone, or via email by the researcher. Exact questions that were asked during the discussion were semi-structured and were adjusted based on the direction the conversations took. Collaboration in this manner supported the research study because it generated awareness of teachers’ compassion fatigue and the diminished work capacity of teachers as a result and underscored the stake in the results the education leaders have in the teacher’s shortage (Anderson & Herr, 2015). The facilitated discussions with nine education leaders led to different insights and suggestions for policies and support services that school districts and policymakers can institute to help address teacher compassion fatigue. A sample discussion protocol is included in Appendix D.

### **Think Cycle 3**

**Data analysis.** Discussion data gathered during the conversation via researcher notes was interpreted, and analyzed (Creswell, 2007). The insights garnered were used to generate a

policy brief on the role compassion fatigue plays in the teacher shortage in urban schools.

Included in the policy brief are recommendations for action policy makers can take now to stave off teacher attrition (Sagor, 2000). Consultation and member checking with many of the same education thought leaders and experts who shared their insights occurred to ensure the recommendations were viable.

### **Act Cycle 3**

Once the policy brief in Think Cycle 3 was generated, the third discussion with Price occurred to discuss the results critically and to plan future steps and direction for the dissemination of the policy brief to the California education community at large. The full text of this brief is included in Appendix H.

### **Researcher Role and Positionality**

As an urban educator who no longer works in a school setting as an administrator or teacher, the most appropriate fit of positionality is an outsider in collaboration with an insider (Herr & Anderson, 2005). I am an outsider-within. Within, in that, I have been a teacher at both urban and non-urban schools. I have been an administrator at both the district and school-site level. Currently, I work as an administrator at the state level. However, I am no longer working as a teacher or administrator at a school district or school site level which makes me an outsider now. I am also an African-American in a position that is dominated by white males further solidifying my outsider role. The research conducted for this dissertation with teachers and organizations, was as someone coming in from the outside making it (Herr & Anderson, 2005) an appropriate position to assume.

The degree of investigator involvement with the participants who agree to be interviewed was co-participatory (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). It was essential to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of urban educators to comprehend the magnitude of their experience entirely.

No involvement occurred with the teachers of urban students when they completed the questionnaire. However, a minimal amount of contact was kept ensuring questionnaire dissemination, completion, and collection. Investigator portrayal of involvement for this research study was overt during the interview process with a full explanation as to the purpose of the inquiry. An explicit approach was appropriate because informed consent from all participants who agree to be interviewed for this research study was necessary.

### **Threats to Validity (Quantitative)**

Given the nonexperimental cross-sectional nature of this design, it is not possible to determine a causal relationship between teaching in urban schools and compassion fatigue just by establishing a correlation. It would be necessary to attend to the additional indicators of causation including temporal antecedence and the lack of alternatives to explain the relationship (Creswell, 2013). In the absence of this, internal validity would be a concern because the third variable or extraneous variables could pose a threat to any statistically significant relationships found (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). In light of this, statistical controls were executed to control for the extraneous variables. Lastly, accurate reporting of data and statistical findings must occur to ensure validity (Creswell, 2015). Quantitative data were analyzed using the software IBM SPSS Statistics version 25. The findings presented in this dissertation were only included after double checking for numeric and written accuracy with statistics and SPSS experts.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of participants. Compassion fatigue as it relates to secondary traumatic stress is potentially a sensitive subject. Informed consent, with full disclosure regarding the nature of the ProQOL 5 and follow-up interviews, was gained from each survey and interview participant (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Thinking about one's

work in light of the compassion fatigue perspective may cause anxiety to the participants. It was incumbent on me to be sensitive to this notion so as not to cause any harm. To this end, interview participants were told up front that the conversation may cover sensitive material and could be upsetting. They were encouraged to take care of themselves during the interview, including telling the researcher if they started to feel uncomfortable in any way that would prohibit them from continuing. I also encouraged them to seek professional help if they realized that more assistance is needed after the interview. A list of suggested avenues for assistance such as employee assistance programs was compiled and shared if the interviewee requested it (See Appendix E).

### **Limitations of the Project**

The results of this dissertation can inform the practices of education organizations. However, the results of this dissertation reflect the experiences of a sample population of all the schoolteachers in California. In addition, these teachers are not all urban schoolteachers. Further research is needed, with a larger population sample of teachers to argue definitively that the results would be generalizable to all teachers throughout California and the United States; this same research could be expanded and completed solely with urban schoolteachers to ensure generalizability to urban schoolteachers. Given that urban school principals and vice-principals work with the same population of students that urban schoolteachers do, research to explore the existence of compassion fatigue with urban school administrators is also warranted. However, that research is beyond the scope of this dissertation project. Lastly, the researcher acknowledges a limited understanding of the field of traumatology as it relates to compassion fatigue. Future research should be conducted in collaboration with traumatology workers to derive the distinct emotional, mental, and physical implications for urban schoolteachers.

### **Action Research Partner Description**

The primary partner for collaboration is the Chief Deputy of the California Department of Education (CDE), Glen Price. The CDE is a state organization whose mission and vision is to, “provide a world-class education for all students, from early childhood to adulthood. The Department of Education serves our state by innovating and collaborating with educators, schools, parents, and community partners. Together, as a team, we prepare students to live, work, and thrive in a multicultural, multilingual, and highly connected world” (retrieved from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/> on February 19, 2016).

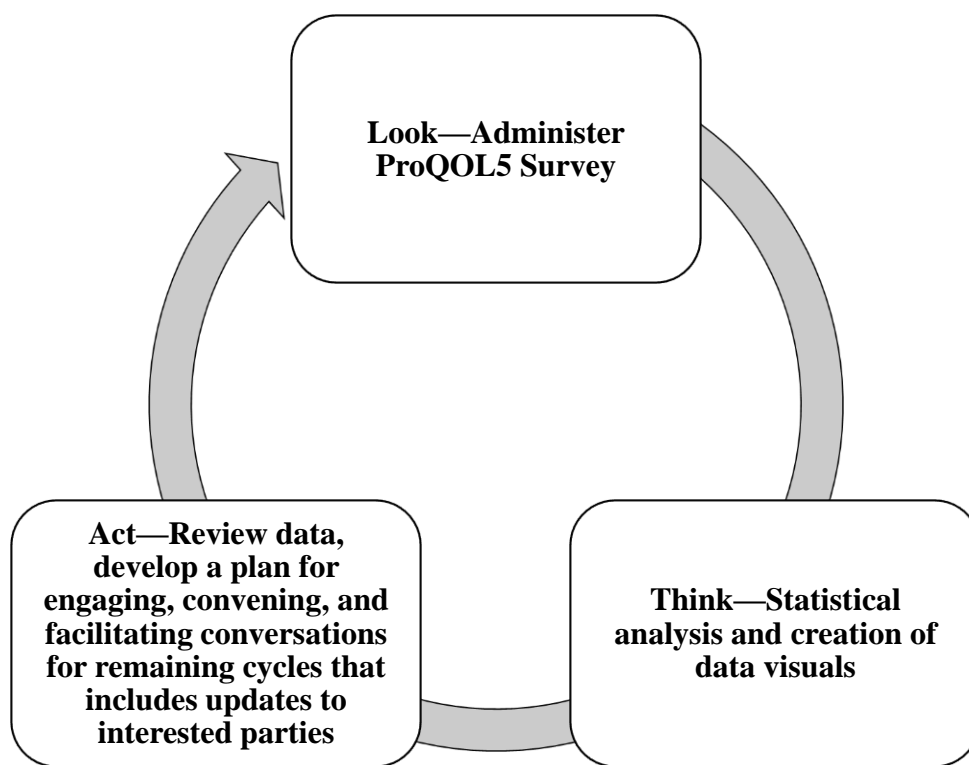
Price was selected as a partner because he exemplifies the system thinker in action that Fullan (2006) describes. In his tenure at the CDE, Price has ushered in culture shifts that reflect both the internal needs of the employees and the changing needs of the school system in California. For example, Price has engaged the CDE in cycles of inquiry with an eye towards continuous improvement in order to ensure that the CDE becomes a learning community that serves as a model for other LEAs and agencies in California (Torlakson and Price, 2016). His ability to do this work has afforded him a modicum of respect the researcher has seldom seen at the CDE or education in general. It is this respect, and Price’s focus on sustainability in leadership to “increase the amount of purposeful interaction between and among individuals” (Fullan, 2006, p. 116) throughout the school system in California that makes him the perfect partner to engage.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this Chapter, I presented the methodology and inquiry approach employed in this dissertation. The inquiry approach is practical action research with three cycles of action. In Action Cycle 1 I used quantitative methods, in Action Cycle 2 I used qualitative methods, and in Action Cycle 3 I used the data derived in Cycles 1 and 2 as fodder for a discussion of the data

results and its' implications for California's policy addressing the teacher shortage. In Chapter 4, the results of the data collected in Action Cycle 1 are presented.

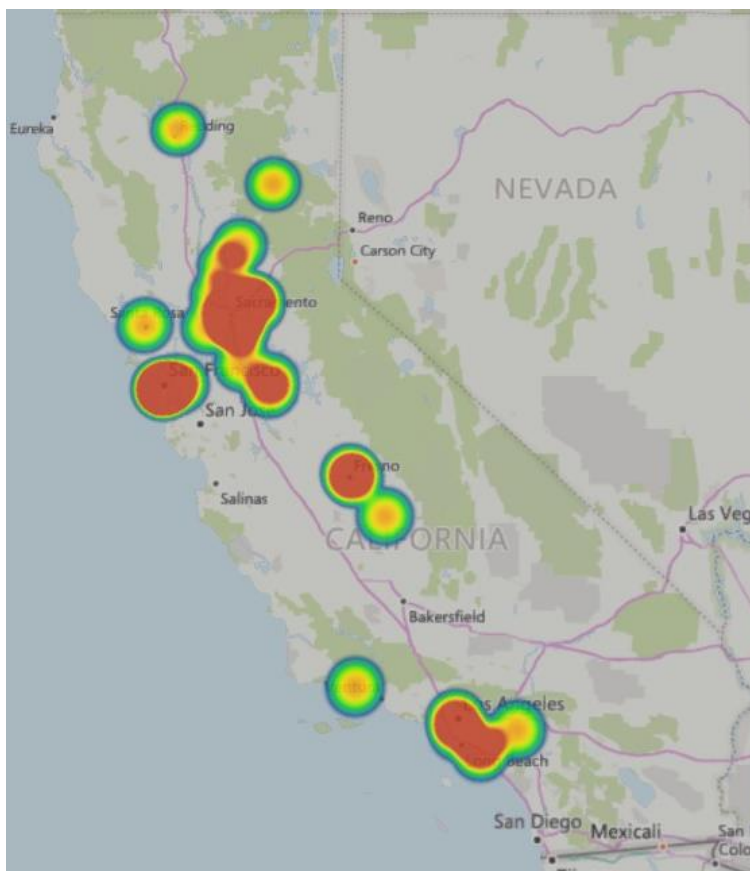
## Chapter 4: Cycle 1 Establishing the Baseline Results



*Figure 7.* Action cycle 1: Establishing the baseline

The important overarching question driving this dissertation is: how might we best manifest a future in which the urban teacher shortage in California no longer exists? The following question drove the inquiry for Cycle 1: to what extent do California urban schoolteachers experience compassion fatigue? The aim of Cycle 1 was to gather quantitative data on compassion fatigue in urban schoolteachers in order to establish a statistical baseline of evidence-based data that would drive the work completed in the remaining Cycles of Action (Corrigan et al., 2011). The ProQOL 5 was disseminated via email in a snowball format to educators who work at urban and non-urban school sites throughout California via the education association California Federation of Teachers (CFT) and select education community members,

including but not limited to school administrators and teachers. Figure 11 shows the geographic spread of the teachers who participated in the study.



*Figure 11.* Geographic spread of participating teachers

In order to work towards an answer to the overarching question and inquiry question 1 for this dissertation, it was necessary to gather quantitative data on compassion fatigue in urban school teachers and to run statistical tests to understand what effect urban school characteristics have on teachers' compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue scores. Beginning February 14, 2018, the ProQOL 5 survey and an accompanying demographic survey was disseminated to schoolteachers for completion. The survey window remained open until April 4, 2018; there were 114 responses to the survey. Of the 114 responses, 14 had to be removed given that those

participants had either retired or lived in states other than California. The final sample size of teachers was 100.

The sample population of teachers consisted of 35 elementary school teachers, 24 middle school teachers, 37 high school teacher and 4 teachers who taught two or more levels. Seventy percent of the teachers were over the age of 35, and 78% percent were female. Eighty-two percent of the teachers have been teaching for more than 5 years. Fifty-three percent of teachers had been at their school site for more than five years. The majority of the participants completed the demographic sample which allowed for the collection of demographic characteristics of each school site. Table 4 contains the school site demographics information for the sample population (Klem, & Connell, 2004).

Table 4 <i>Sample Characteristics of Teacher School Sites</i>
<b>Social Economically Disadvantaged (SED) Status of schools</b> – 58.3% of schools have SED over 70% – 41.7% of schools have SED under 70% – Average SED of all schools in the sample — 71.10%
<b>Percentage of English Learners (EL) at Schools</b> – 60.4% of schools had an EL population over 20% – 39.6% at schools had an EL population under 20%
<b>Average Enrollment by Ethnicity/Student Groups</b> – African American (AA) — 10.98% – Asian Pacific Islander and Filipino (APIF) —19.30% – Hispanic/Latino (HL) — 45.88% – White —18.43% – Students with Disabilities (SWD) — 12.12% – English Learners (EL) — 23.59%

Prior to performing statistical analysis, the ProQOL 5 surveys had to be scored. Figure 13 shows the mean tcores for the sample population. Survey results are scored in three parts—

compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue as characterized by secondary traumatic stress and burnout (Stamm, 2010). The scores are first calculated as raw scores and then converted into t-scores. The conversion allows different versions of the ProQOL 5 to be compared with other versions of the ProQOL. The exact scoring procedures are detailed in Chapter 3. A compassion satisfaction score of 43 or higher indicates professional satisfaction; a burnout score of 56 or higher indicates the potential for burnout; a secondary traumatic stress score of 56 or higher generally indicates the potential for secondary traumatic stress, and for all scores the converse is true. The software IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 was used to calculate scores and analyze all results.

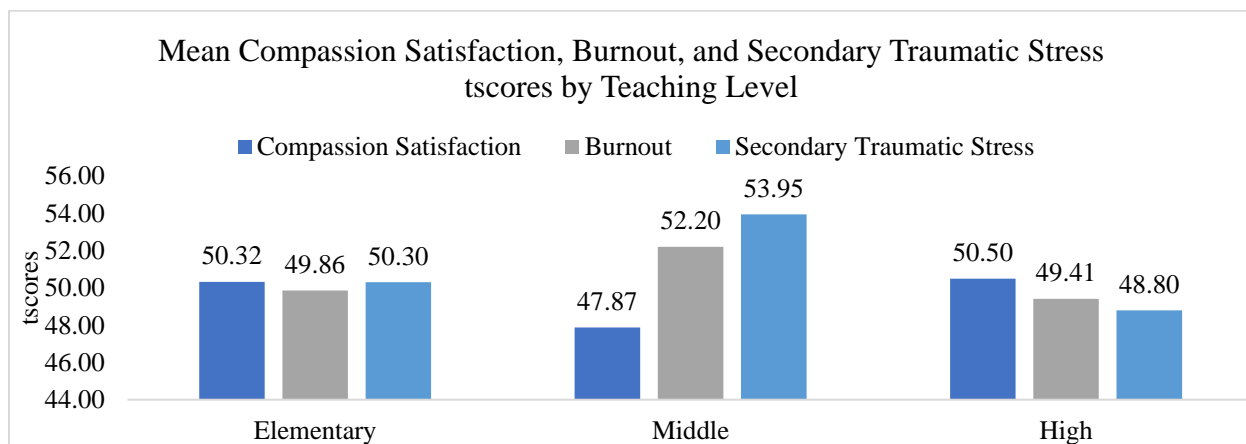


Figure 12. Mean compassion satisfaction and fatigue t-scores of the participants

For this study, the inter-scale correlations for secondary trauma and burnout show shared variance of “34% ( $r=.58$ ;  $\text{co-}\sigma = 34\%$ ;  $n=1187$ ). The scales both measure negative affect but are clearly different; the BO scale does not address fear while the STS scale does” (Stamm, 2010, pp. 13-14). Due to the t-score conversion, the mean score for each scale is 50, and the standard deviation is 10 with some variation due to sample size (Stamm, 2010). On average female teachers scored approximately 5% higher on compassion satisfaction t-scores, 2% lower

on burnout tcores, and 5% higher on secondary traumatic stress tcores than male teachers. In other words, female teachers experienced higher rates of compassion satisfaction, lower rates of burnout, and higher rates of secondary trauma than male teachers. A one-way ANOVA test was run to see if the differences in compassion satisfaction and fatigue tcore were statistically significant based on the teachers' gender; n\_gndr was the independent variable or factor. The results showed that the differences were not statistically significant for compassion satisfaction,  $F(2, 97) = .920, p = .402$ ; burnout,  $F(2, 97) = .985, p = .377$ ; or secondary traumatic stress,  $F(2, 97) = 1.321, p = .272$ . However, given that 73.8% of California's teaching population consists of female teachers, the results of this analysis should be mentioned regardless of statistical significance (CDE, 2018). Figure 13 illustrates the difference in tcores by gender.

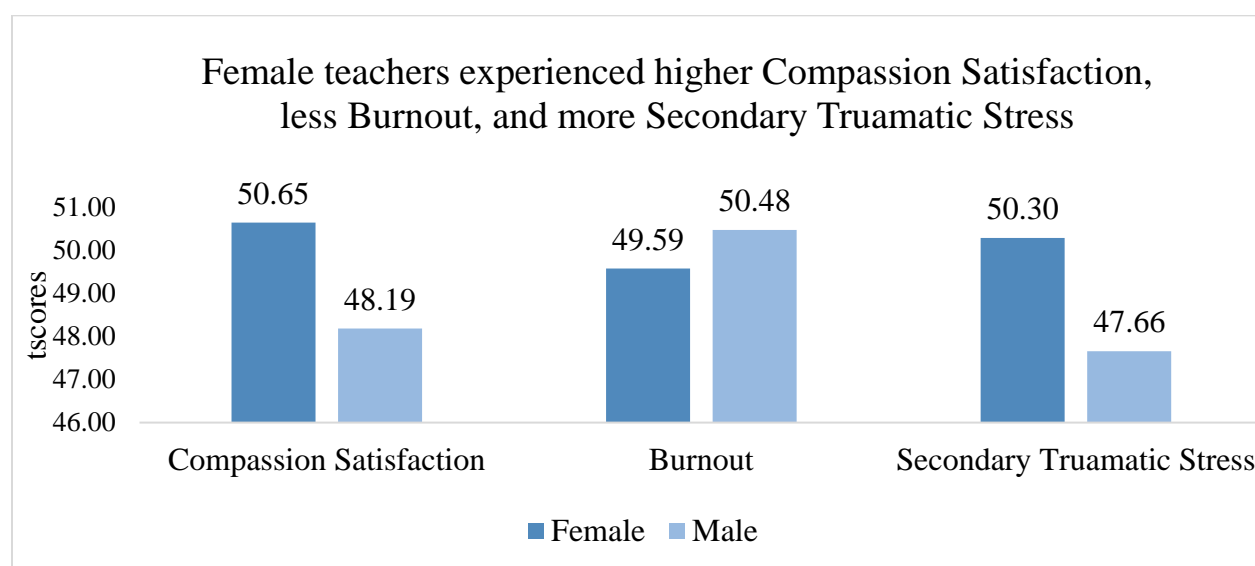
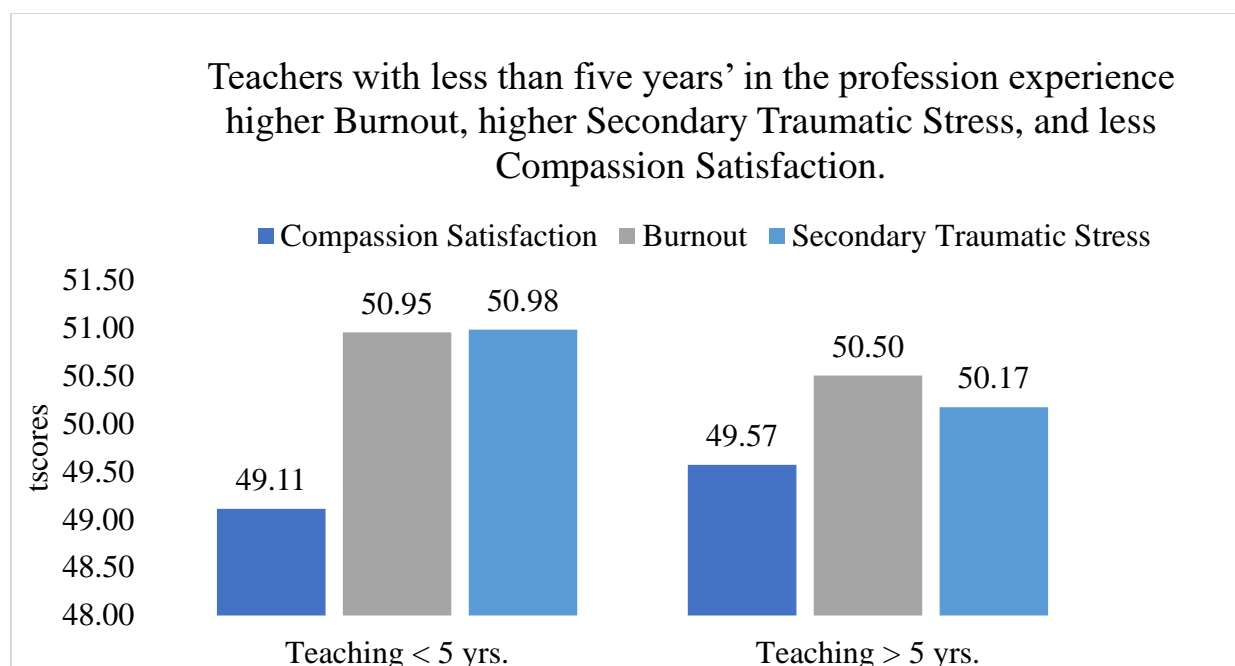


Figure 13. Comparison of compassion satisfaction and fatigue tcores by gender

Similarly of note is the mean difference in tcores for teachers who have taught for less than five years compared to those who taught for more than five years. Teachers with less than

five years' in the profession experience 3% higher Burnout, 1% higher Secondary Traumatic Stress, and 5% percent less Compassion Satisfaction than teachers with more than five years' experience. A one-way ANOVA test was run to see if the differences in compassion satisfaction and fatigue tscore were statistically significant based on the number of years in the profession. I used `n_YrsPrfsn` as the independent variable or factor. The results showed that the differences were not statistically significant for compassion satisfaction,  $F(1, 98) = .172, p = .680$ ; burnout,  $F(1, 98) = .197, p = .685$ ; or secondary traumatic stress,  $F(1, 98) = .209, p = .649$ . And although the difference between the groups is not statistically significant, this is worth noting for research purposes given that year 5 is usually regarded as the year many teachers depart the profession (Gray & Taie, 2015). Figure 14 illustrates this comparison. Please see Appendix G for the remainder of the descriptive statistics of the results of the ProQOL 5 tcores. After completing the conversion to tcores, visual examination of the data did not appear to be normally distributed. However, scores will be referred to as tcores and used in this manner as outlined by the ProQOL 5 instrument instructions (Stamm, 2010). To answer Inquiry Question 1, the statistical tests independent t-tests, ANOVA, Pearson's correlation, Linear and Multiple Regression were ran using the accompanying demographic and school information collected. See Appendix F for a list of all variables used to conduct the statistical tests.

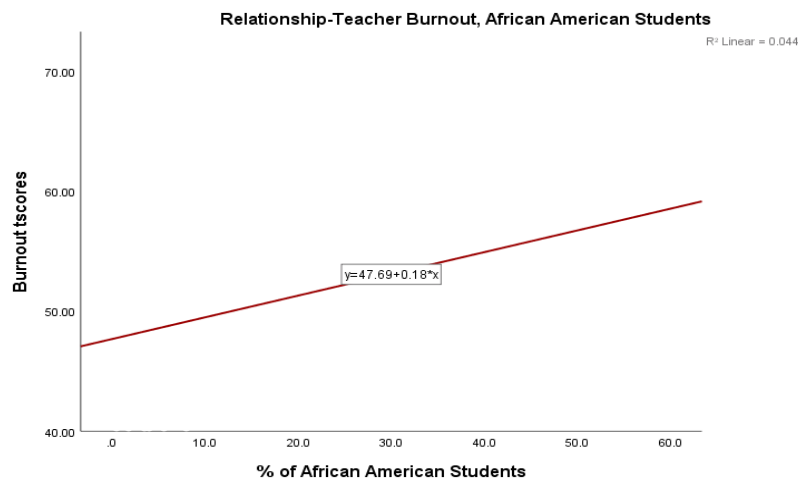


*Figure 14.* Comparison of compassion satisfaction and fatigue t-scores by teaching experience

### Statistical Results by Entire Sample Population

Recall that understanding the landscape of teaching shortages at each level of the system is consistent with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA State Plan) and is employed throughout this dissertation as PROQOL 5 data are analyzed. However, prior to running statistical tests for each teaching level, correlation and regression models were run for the entire sample population of 100 teachers, though four were removed due to missing school site data, to gain an overall understanding of the data. All school site demographic variables, including the socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED) status, the percentage of English learners, number of students with disabilities, and the average enrollment of each student ethnic group detailed in Table 4 were assessed. There was one statistically significant positive correlation between the SED status of the school and burnout scores,  $r=.208$ ,  $p<.05$  which is a weak but still statistically significant correlation. In other words, 4% of the variability in burnout t-scores, calculated by squaring  $r$ , can be explained by the SED status of the school site.

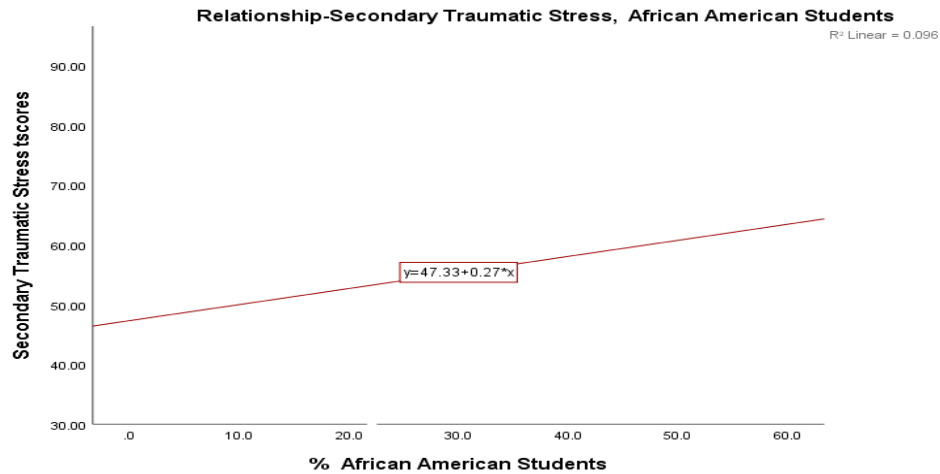
Linear regression models showed that the percentage of African American (AA) students (entered as a scale variable in SPSS) in the school is a statistically significant predictor of compassion fatigue (burnout and secondary traumatic stress scores). The percent of African American (AA) students in the sample population of schools  $F(1,95) = 4.33$ ,  $p < .05$  accounted for 4.4% of the variance in burnout tcores with an adjusted R square of 3.4%. The prediction model is  $\text{Burnout} = 47.69 + .181 * (\% \text{ of AA Students})$ . For every percentage increase in African American students, burnout tcores increase by .181 or two-tenths of a point, 95% CI [.008, .355] (Laerd Statistics (2015); .181 is a small, but still statistically significant correlation. Figure 15 illustrates this linear relationship.



*Figure 15.* Linear relationship between teacher burnout and African American students

The percent of African American (AA) students in the sample population of schools  $F(1,95) = 9.96$ ,  $p < .05$  accounted for 9.6% of the variance in secondary traumatic stress tcores with an adjusted R square of 8.6%. The prediction model is  $\text{Secondary Traumatic Stress} = 47.33 + .269 * (\% \text{ of AA Students})$ . For every percentage increase in African American students, secondary traumatic stress tcores increase by approximately .269 of a point, 95% CI [.100, .439]

(Laerd Statistics, 2015); .269 is a moderate statistically significant correlation. Figure 16 illustrates this relationship.



*Figure 16.* Linear relationship between teacher secondary traumatic stress and African American students

For both the burnout and secondary traumatic stress regression models other school site demographic variables were introduced, however they did not add statistical significance to the models, which suggests that there are factors other than student racial groups influencing teacher compassion fatigue scores.

### Statistical Results by Teaching Level

**ANOVA.** Before running ANOVA tests, dummy variables were created to turn nominal variables into categorical variables with numeric values such as teacher gender (i.e. Female=0 and Male=1), teacher ethnicity, and teaching level. In addition, all of the scale variables, such as years in the profession, years at the school site, student group populations by race, English Learners, SED status, and so on, were also turned into categorical variables with numeric values. Each variable contained exactly two categories based on research-based ranges. For example,

SED became [n] n\_SED (0 = lowest thru 69.9%, 1 = 70% or higher) because schools with 70% or higher SED students are typically thought of as high-poverty and/or urban schools. See Appendix F for a list of all variables used to conduct the statistical tests. The following hypothesis was used as the basis for the ANOVA tests.

- $H_0$ =There is no difference between mean compassion satisfaction and fatigue scores for teachers based on each sample case.
- $H_1$ =there is a difference between mean compassion satisfaction and fatigue scores for teachers based on each sample case.

Assumption testing occurred to ensure that ANOVA was an appropriate test for the collected data. Visual inspection of p plots confirmed normality and the presence of two outliers; one outlier was a compassion satisfaction tscore of 34 and the other was a secondary traumatic stress tscore of 73 for each participant. These outliers show that two teachers truly had distressing scores, and thus the decision was made to move forward with an analysis that included the outliers. The statistically significant ANOVA tests results are presented in Table 5 with two notable exceptions as these scores were very close to being statistically significant and thus were reported.

Given that the means for compassion satisfaction and fatigue scores are statistically significantly different, we can reject the null hypothesis for the relevant variables in Table 4. The first result in the table is read as, there is a statistically significant difference in burnout tscores for teachers of different ethnicities,  $F(3, 20) = 4.18, p = .019, \eta^2 = .53$  (large effect size) at the middle school level. Tukey post hoc tests revealed a statistically significant increase in burnout tscores from Asian Pacific Islander Teachers ( $n=13$ ) to African American ( $n=3$ ) teachers (16.73, 95% [2.81, 30.66])

Table 5 <i>ANOVA Results for Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue t scores at the Middle School Level</i>					
Middle School	Dependent Variable	df	F	p	( $\eta$ )* effect size
Teacher Ethnicity**	Burnout	(3, 20)	4.18	.019	.53
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Status	Compassion Satisfaction	(1, 21)	9.32	.006	.52
	Burnout	(1, 21)	20.47	.000	.68
	Secondary Traumatic Stress	(1, 21)	7.35	.013	.47
% English Learners	Compassion Satisfaction	(1, 21)	5.41	.030	.40
	Burnout	(1, 21)	5.09	.035	.39
	Secondary Traumatic Stress	(1, 21)	3.92	.061	.34
No. of Years Teaching at the School Site	Compassion Satisfaction	(1,22)	5.97	.023	.41
	Burnout	(1,22)	5.62	.027	.40
Minority school	Burnout	(1,21)	4.92	.038	.38
% White Students	Compassion Satisfaction	(1, 21)	8.71	.008	.35
	Burnout	(1, 21)	9.54	.006	.36
	Secondary Traumatic Stress	(1, 21)	15.23	.001	.62
% African American Students	Compassion Satisfaction	(1, 21)	3.69	.069	.32
	Burnout	(1, 21)	4.29	.051	.35
	Secondary Traumatic Stress	(1, 21)	15.23	.001	.36
% Asian Pacific Islander, Filipino Students	Secondary Traumatic Stress	(1, 21)	7.35	.013	.47
% Students with Disabilities	Compassion Satisfaction	(1, 21)	3.67	.069	.32
	Burnout	(1, 21)	7.06	.015	.46
* $\eta$ = .10 (small effect), $\eta$ =.30 (medium effect), $\eta$ =.50 (large effect)					
**Tukey post hoc tests revealed a statistically significant increase in burnout scores from Asian Pacific Islander Teachers to African American Teachers (16.73, 95% [2.81, 30.66]).					

**Pearson's *r*.** Further exploration via correlation analysis using the coded variables in Appendix F yielded statistically significant relationships for the teacher and school site demographic variables (Higgins, 2005). Before calculating Pearson's *r* for teacher ethnicity, dummy variables were created for each teacher ethnicity indicated in the sample. Completing

this calculation ensured that all of the variables are dichotomous with two distinct categories represented by 0 and 1 (Field, 2014). See Appendix F for a list of the variables used. The results show that there are statistically significant large correlations between the schools' SED status and compassion satisfaction ( $r = -.554$ ,  $p < .01$ ), burnout ( $r = .703$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and secondary traumatic stress ( $r = .509$ ,  $p < .05$ ) at the middle school level. The SED status of middle school teachers represents 49% of the variance (calculated by squaring  $r$ ) in burnout tcores. White students represent 31% of the variance in burnout tcores where  $r = -.559$ , and  $p = .006$ .

Correlation testing was also run with the percentage of Hispanic/Latino students as the independent variable, but no statistically significant correlations were found. Table 6 contains the correlations described. It contains mostly only the significant correlations but correlations that are noteworthy, or close to being statistically significant, are also included.

Table 6 <i>Correlations by School Level</i>			
Variables	Compassion Satisfaction	Burnout	Secondary Traumatic Stress
<b>Elementary</b>			
Non-binary Teachers			.399*
Teacher Ethnicity: two or more races		-.394*	
Teacher Ethnicity: prefer not to say	-.403*		0.322 ( $p = .059$ )
<b>Middle School</b>			
Socioeconomically disadvantaged status	-.554**	.703**	.509*
% English Learners	-.453*	.442*	.397 ( $p = .061$ )
% Students with disabilities		.502*	
No. of Years Teaching at the School Site	-.462*	.451*	
Minority School		.436*	
% White Students	.542**	-.559**	-.648**
% African American Students	-.386 ( $p = .069$ )	.412 ( $p = .051$ )	.414*
% Asian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino Students			.509*

Table 6 (continued) <i>Correlations by School Level</i>			
Variables	Compassion Satisfaction	Burnout	Secondary Traumatic Stress
<b>Middle School</b>			
Teacher Ethnicity: African American		.412*	
Teacher Ethnicity: Asian/Pacific Islander		-.523**	
<b>High School</b>			
Teacher Ethnicity: Asian/Pacific Islander			.325*
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). r= .10 (small effect), r=.30 (medium effect), r=.50 (large effect)			

In running correlation tests, the statistically significant linear relationship between demographic variables such as student racial groups and compassion satisfaction and fatigue scores warranted further exploration. Partial correlations were utilized in this exploration.

**Partial correlations.** To get a truer measure of the unique relationship between the races of students and burnout, the variance due to poverty was removed or controlled for (Field, 2014). Running partial correlation tests allowed for the measuring of compassion satisfaction and fatigue and all demographic variables relationships while controlling for poverty. After controlling for poverty, there still exists a statistically significant negative relationship between white students and secondary traumatic stress tcores of teachers,  $r = -.468$ ,  $p = .028$  at the middle school level. This new correlation accounts for 22% of the variance in secondary traumatic stress tcores in middle school teachers. There is also now a statistically significant relationship between burnout tcores and African American students for high school teachers,  $r = .389$ ,  $p = .033$  at the high school level. This accounts for 15% of the variance in burnout tcores for high school teachers.

The partial correlations for male and female teachers are also noteworthy when controlling for poverty. At the middle school level, the correlation statistic for burnout is exactly the same for both genders but occurs in opposite directions. For female teachers  $r = -.465$ ,  $p = .029$  and for male teachers  $r = .465$ ,  $p = .029$ . The gender of the teacher (male or female) represents 22% of the variance in burnout tcores for middle school teachers. These correlations also show that burnout tcores at the middle school level have a positive linear relationship with male teachers. That is, as the number of male teachers increases there is also an increase in the burnout tscore. At the high school level, burnout tcores have a positive linear relationship with female teachers with  $r = .398$ ,  $p = .029$  for female teachers and  $r = -.393$ ,  $p = .031$  for male teachers. The female gender represents approximately 16% of the variance in burnout tcores at the high school level; male gender represents approximately 15% of the variance in burnout tcores. Table 7 provides a summary of all the statistically significant correlations that remained after controlling for poverty.

Table 7 <i>Partial Correlations (controlled for poverty)</i>		
Variables	Burnout	Secondary Traumatic Stress
<b>Elementary</b>		
Non-binary Teachers		.423*
Teacher Ethnicity: two or more races	-.401*	
Teacher Ethnicity: prefer not to say	-.419*	
Female Teachers		-.329 (p=.062)
<b>Middle School</b>		
Teacher Ethnicity: White	.423*	
Teacher Ethnicity: prefer not to say	-.420 (p=.052)	
Female Teachers	-.465*	
Male Teachers	.465*	
% White Students		-.468*
<b>High School</b>		
Teacher Ethnicity: African American		-.376*
Female Teachers		.398*
Male Teachers		-.393*
% African American Students	.389*	
% English Learners	-.359 (p=.052)	
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). r= .10 (small effect), r=.30 (medium effect), r=.50 (large effect)		

Feedback provided during the think portion of Cycle 1, suggested that perhaps teacher ethnicity influenced the statistically significant correlations for compassion fatigue and student racial groups. Given that this comment came up in all of the conversations, I felt it was necessary to check for this using statistical analysis. To determine if the race of the teacher played any role in the statistically significant relationships between compassion fatigue and student racial groups, partial correlations were run with the variance due to teacher ethnicity removed or controlled for (Field, 2014). The dummy variable T\_W (White Teachers) where 1= W and 0 = every other race, was used to perform the calculation because 57% of the teachers in the sample identified as white. After controlling for teacher ethnicity, there still exists a

statistically significant relationship between student racial groups and compassion satisfaction and fatigue. In some instances, the strength of the relationship grew stronger once the race of the teacher was no longer factored into the calculation such as with African American students, White students, English Learners, and the SED status of the school. In other words, no matter the race of the teacher, the key characteristics of urban schools (student racial groups, English learners, poverty level, students with disabilities) factor greatly in the compassion satisfaction and fatigue (burnout and secondary traumatic stress) tcores of teachers at the middle school level. For example, the percentage of African American students accounts for 20% of the variance in compassion satisfaction tcores, 41% of the variance in burnout tcores, and 44% of the variance in secondary traumatic stress tcores. Table 8 shows the results.

Table 8 <i>Partial Correlations (controlled for teacher ethnicity)</i>			
Variables	Compassion Satisfaction	Burnout	Secondary Traumatic Stress
<b>Middle School</b>			
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Status	-.559**	.745**	.510**
% English Learners	-.452**	.453**	.397**
No. of Years Teaching at the School Site	-.482	.420 (p=.051)	
% White Students	.564**	-.644**	-.660**
% African American Students	-.448**	.590**	.452**
% Asian Pacific Islander, Filipino Students	-.381 (p=.080)	.458**	.557**
% Students with Disabilities	-.384 (p=.077)	.509**	
<b>High School</b>			
% African American Students		.384**	
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) **Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed) r= .10 (small effect), r=.30 (medium effect), r=.50 (large effect)			

Figure 17 visually illustrates the meaning of the correlations for compassion fatigue and African American and White students. A negative correlation between white students and Burnout tcores suggests that the relationship shared is an inverse one. That is, as the percentage of white students increases, burnout decreases and so on. Figure 17 is presented here to demonstrate just how stark the differences in teacher burnout and secondary traumatic stress are in relation to the race of the student.

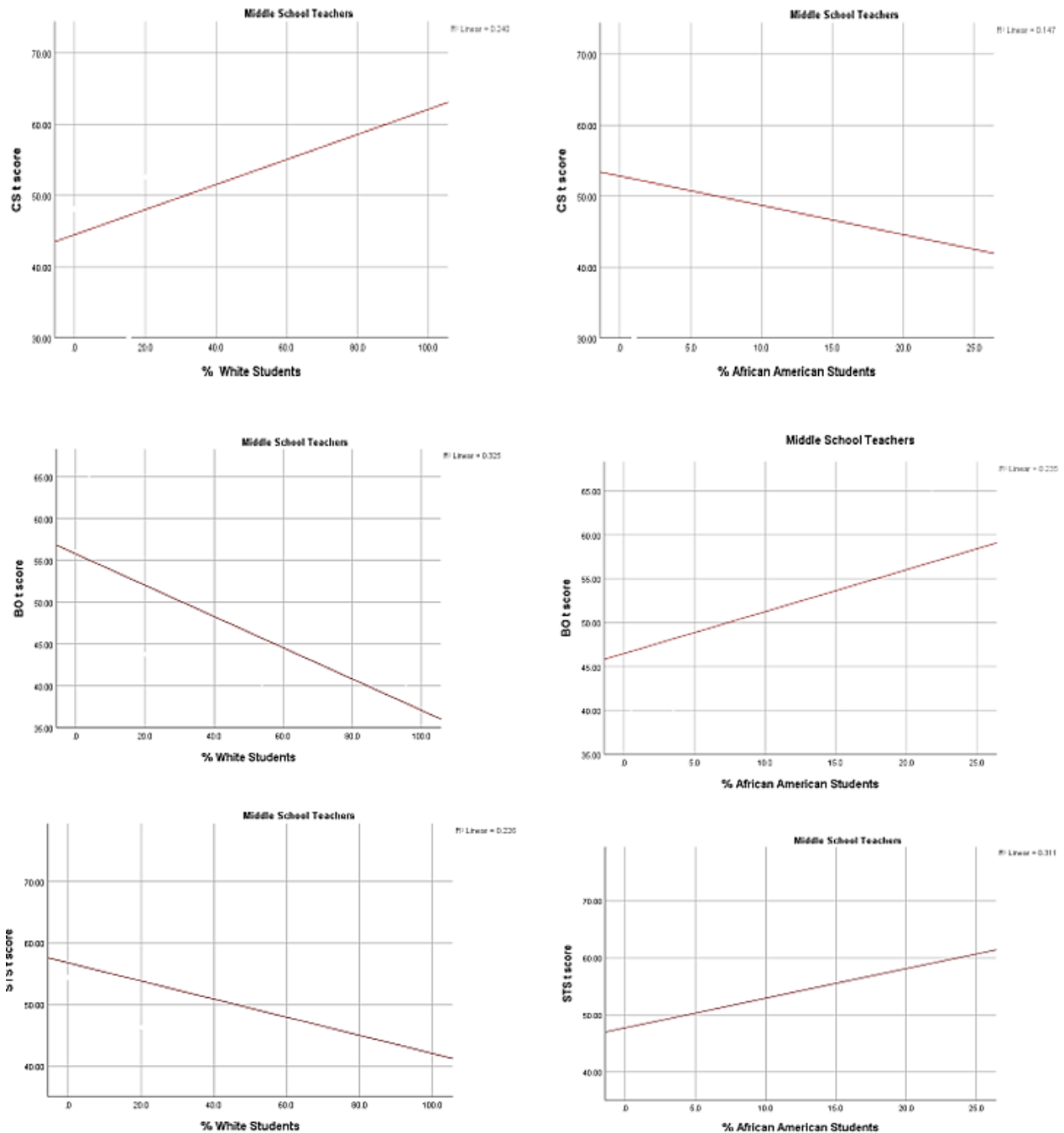


Figure 17. Compassion satisfaction and fatigue tscores for White and African American students

**Number of years in the profession.** Additional correlations tests were run to further explore the relationship between compassion satisfaction and fatigue scores and the number of years in the profession. Since research shows that teachers typically leave the profession within

the first five years (Gray & Taie, 2015) these correlation tests were run with the data split by years in the profession between all sample demographic variables and compassion satisfaction and fatigue tcores. The socioeconomic status of the school site has a statistically significant large negative correlation with compassion satisfaction tcores and statistically significant large positive correlations with compassion fatigue scores for teachings working in the profession less than five years. There are also statistically significant large negative correlations for compassion fatigue scores with the number of white students and statistically significant large positive correlations with the number of African American students for teachings working in the profession less than five years. Table 9 shows the correlation results and only the significant results are shown.

Table 9 <i>Correlations for Number of Years in The Teaching Profession</i>			
<b>Teaching &lt; 5 yrs.</b>			
	Compassion Satisfaction	Burnout	Secondary Traumatic Stress
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Status	-.522*	.693**	.539*
No. of Years Teaching at the School Site	-.684**		
Minority School	-.425 (p=.089)	.510*	.518*
% White Students		-.532*	-.491*
% African American Students		.568*	.765**
<b>Teaching &gt; 5 yrs.</b>			
Non-binary Teachers			.267*
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). r= .10 (small correlation), r=.30 (medium correlation), r=.50 (large correlation)			

When controlled for poverty, some of the correlations between compassion satisfaction and fatigue scores and the number of years in the profession did change, except in the case of the number of years at the school site and African American students. The correlation between compassion satisfaction and years at the school site was weaker. The correlation between Burnout and African American Students was stronger, while the secondary traumatic stress correlation was weaker. All other variables showed no statistically significant correlations. See Table 10 for the results.

Table 10 <i>Partial Correlations for Number of Years in The Teaching Profession (controlled for poverty)</i>			
<b>Teaching &lt; 5 yrs.</b>			
	Compassion Satisfaction	Burnout	Secondary Traumatic Stress
No. of years working at a school site	-.660**		
% African American Students		.601*	.731**
<b>Teaching &gt; 5 yrs.</b>			
Non-binary Teachers			.268*
*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).			
** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).			
r= .10 (small correlation), r=.30 (medium correlation), r=.50 (large correlation)			

### Regression Models at The Middle School Level

Given the significant relationships between the participants' compassion satisfaction and fatigue tcores and the sample demographic variables, simple linear regression analysis was run to further understand the relationships of the variables. Linear regression was also utilized to determine the predictability of SED status, the percentage of African American, White, Asian Pacific Islander and Filipino, English Learners, students with disabilities, and years in the profession on the compassion satisfaction and fatigue tcores of the teachers within the sample.

The simple linear regression results showed that the demographic variables of SED status, the percentage of white students, and the percentage of African American students were in some cases good predictors for compassion satisfaction and burnout tcores with statistically significant regression models at the middle school level. The results of the linear regressions for the middle school level are presented below.

### **Linear Regression and Poverty**

**Compassion satisfaction and socioeconomically disadvantaged status.** At the middle school level, simple linear regression established that the SED status of the school could predict compassion satisfaction and fatigue tcores with statistical significance;  $F(1, 21) = 9.320, p < .01$ . The SED status of the school accounted for 30.7% of the variation in compassion satisfaction tcores with an adjusted  $R^2 = 27.4\%$ , and  $R = .554$  a medium effect size according to Cohen (Laerd, 2015). The prediction regression model was: compassion satisfaction tcore =  $53.33 - (9.66 \times \text{SED status of the school})$ . Or, when written with shorthand, CS tcore =  $53.33 - (9.66 \times \text{SED status of school})$  (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

**Burnout and socioeconomically disadvantaged status.** In addition, the SED status of the school could predict burnout tcores with statistical significance;  $F(1, 21) = 20.47, p < .01$ . The SED status of the school accounted for 49.4% of the variation in burnout tcores with an adjusted  $R^2 = 46.9\%$ , and  $R = .703$  a medium effect size according to Cohen (Laerd, 2015). The prediction regression model was: burnout tcore =  $45.88 + (11.18 \times \text{SED status of the school})$ . Or, when written with shorthand, BO tcore =  $45.88 + (11.18 \times \text{SED status of school})$  (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

**Secondary traumatic stress and socioeconomically disadvantaged status.** Lastly, the SED status of the school could predict secondary traumatic stress (STS) tcores with statistical significance;  $F(1, 21) = 7.35, p < .01$ . The SED status of the school accounted for 25.9% of the

variation in STS tcores with an adjusted  $R^2 = 22.4\%$ , and  $R=.509$  a medium effect size according to Cohen (Laerd, 2015). The prediction regression model was: STS tscore =  $49.62 + (7.66 \times \text{SED status of the school})$ . Or, when written with shorthand, STS tscore =  $49.62 + (7.66 \times \text{SED status of school})$  (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

### **Linear Regression and White and African American Student Racial Groups**

**Compassion satisfaction and white students.** At the middle school level, simple linear regression established that the percentage of white students (% white students) in the school could predict compassion satisfaction and fatigue tcores with statistical significance. That is, the percentage of white students could predict compassion satisfaction (CS) tcores with statistical significance;  $F(1, 21) = 8.713$ ,  $p < .01$ . The percentage of white students (% white students) accounted for 29.3% of the variation in compassion satisfaction (CS) tcores with an adjusted  $R^2 = 26\%$ , and  $R=.542$ , a medium effect size according to Cohen (Laerd, 2015). The prediction regression model was: CS tscore =  $44.78 + (10.16 \times \% \text{ white students})$  (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

**Burnout and white students.** In addition, the percentage of white students (% white students) in the school could predict burnout (BO) tcores with statistical significance;  $F(1, 21) = 9.55$ ,  $p < .01$ . The percentage of white students (% white students) in the school accounted for 31.3% of the variation in burnout (BO) tcores with an adjusted  $R^2 = 28\%$ , and  $R=.559$ , a medium effect size according to Cohen (Laerd, 2015). The prediction regression model was: BO tscore =  $55.12 - (9.59 \times \% \text{ white students})$  (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

**Secondary traumatic stress and white students.** Lastly, the percentage of white students (% white students) in the school could predict STS tcores with statistical significance;  $F(1, 21) = 15.23$ ,  $p < .01$ . The percentage of white students (% white students) in the school accounted for 42% of the variation in STS tcores with an adjusted  $R^2 = 39.3\%$ , and  $R = .648$ , a

medium effect size according to Cohen (Laerd, 2015). The prediction regression model was:  
 $STS\ tscore = 57.14 - (10.5 \times \% \text{ white students})$  (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

**Secondary traumatic stress and African American students.** Linear regression also established that the percentage of African American students (% AA students) in the school could predict STS tcores with statistical significance;  $F(1, 21) = 4.34, p = .05$ . The percentage of African American students (% AA students) in the school accounted for 17.1% of the variation in STS tcores with an adjusted  $R^2 = 13.2\%$ , and  $R = .414$ , a small effect size according to Cohen (Laerd, 2015). The prediction regression model was:  $STS\ tscore = 50.43 + (6.22 \times \% \text{ AA students})$  (Laerd Statistics, 2015). Also, the significance level for the burnout tscore regression model with African American students as the predictor variable is .051. It is reported here because of how close the model is to being statistically significant.

**Burnout and African American students.** The percentage of African American students (% AA students) in the school is extremely close to predicting burnout (BO) tcores with statistical significance;  $F(1, 21) = 4.29, p = .051$ . The percentage of African American students (% AA students) in the school accounted for 17% of the variation in burnout (BO) tcores with an adjusted  $R^2 = 13\%$ , and  $R = .412$ , a small effect size according to Cohen (Laerd, 2015). The prediction regression model was:  $BO\ tscore = 48.49 + (6.56 \times \% \text{ AA students})$  (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

Because this is simple regression, the absolute values of the R values for each model presented above are equivalent to the correlations presented in Table 6 (Field, 2014; Laerd, 2015). Though this number is not typically reported, I mention it here to reaffirm the strength of the linear association between the poverty level of the school, white and African American

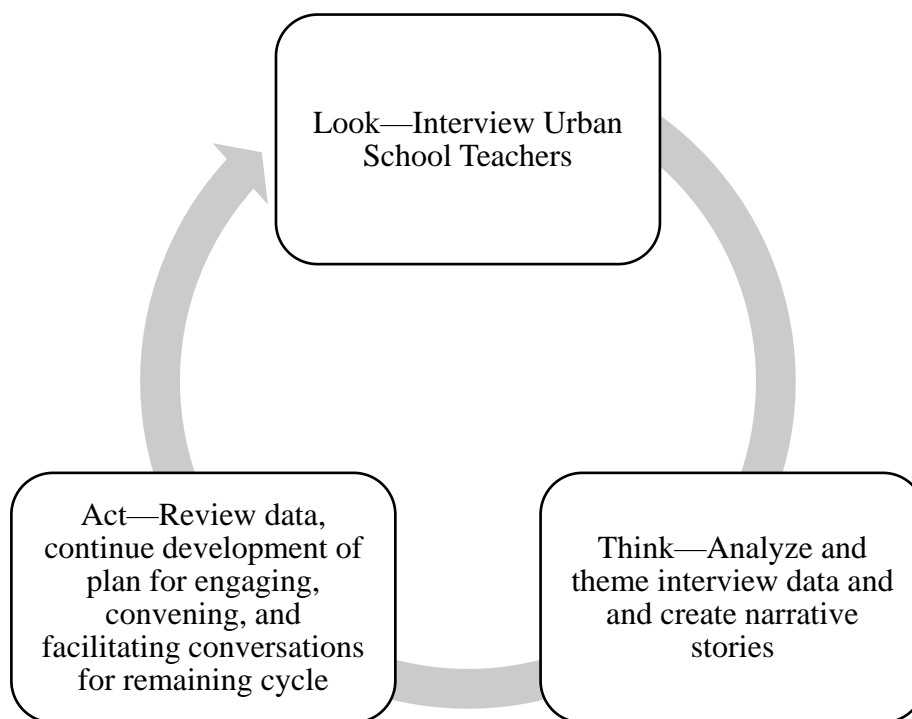
student racial groups in the school, and compassion satisfaction and fatigue tcores. That is, the regression findings are consistent with the correlation analysis as well as ANOVA testing.

Multiple regression tests were also run using the SED status, percentage of African American, White, Asian Pacific Islander and Filipino, English Learners, Students with Disabilities, and years in the profession to determine the predictability of these independent variables on the compassion satisfaction and fatigue tcores of the teachers within the sample. However, the addition of multiple variables did not at statistical significance to the model.

Data analysis showed that teachers are very likely experiencing compassion fatigue. The poverty level of a school, the demographic breakdown of the student population by student race factor significantly in the experience and the relationship between teacher compassion satisfaction and fatigue tcores and school demographics. The percentage of African American and White students seem to play a key role in relation to teacher compassion Fatigue tcores, especially for teachers who have taught less than five years. In Chapter 5, there is an exploration of how compassion fatigue impacts a teacher's perception of their schools working conditions and climate via qualitative interview.

## Chapter 5: Cycle 2 Deepening the Base Results

*“Teachers stories are part of teacher’s lives, and the study of their stories helps us understand the relationship between their lived experiences and their craft knowledge.” (Anderson et al., 2007, p.179).*



*Figure 9. Action cycle 2 deepening the base*

Cycle 2 focuses on making real the experience of teaching at urban schools with illuminating stories written as vignettes (Hill, 2011). The vignettes help to understand how compassion fatigue affects the school and classroom occurrences of urban schoolteachers. Moreover, the vignettes illuminate how compassion fatigue plays a role in shaping the teachers’ perceptions, both positively and negatively, of their school’s climate and working conditions.

The vignettes were constructed to induce a practice shifting experience in the participant and the audience who read this research. With the ultimate goal being to answer the overarching question: how might we best manifest a future in which the urban teacher shortage in California no longer exists? More specifically, 1) how does compassion fatigue impact a teacher's perception of their schools working conditions and climate? and 2) What organizational supports can be put in place to help urban educators suffering from compassion fatigue thrive? It is hoped that as the stories are read, that members of the school system will learn from what is shared to both diagnose and correct issues in the school system that are contributing to the massive teacher shortage in California.




School climate is often described as the character and quality of a school (Collie et al., 2012; National School Climate Council, 2007). It is also a quality that “helps each individual feel personal worth, dignity, and importance, while simultaneously helping create a sense of belonging to something beyond [them] ourselves,” and “the climate of a school can foster resilience or become a risk factor in the lives of people who work and learn in a place called school” (Freiburg, 1999, p.12). When conducting the interviews, this definition for school climate was shared with interviewees.

### **The Process**

Six interviews were conducted with survey respondents who agreed to participate in follow-up interviews. Three of the teachers were middle school teachers (Adam, Alex, and Abby), two were high school teachers (Alan and Amy), and one was an elementary school teacher (Alice). The interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes. Portions of the interviews were then turned into a collection of illustrative stories, written as vignettes. The vignettes were derived after the identification of major themes. They both illustrate the experience of each teacher interviewed and highlight derived themes. Adam retired at the end of

the school year. Alan and Abby each left their school for a different one. Alex and Alice remained at their school site, and Amy remained at her school site but is looking forward to retiring as soon as she can.

Vignettes were created to capture a snapshot in time of these teachers' experiences. They illuminate a day in the life of teachers and exemplify one of the themes or subthemes. The vignettes are presented in figures and included in the thematic analysis section of this Chapter. The images below represent the teaching level of each teacher featured in the vignette.

-  Elementary School Teacher
-  Middle School Teacher
-  Highschool Teacher

Themes were identified using coding methods that were open. They emerged from the literature-based codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) relative to Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue conceptualized as Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress such as compassion satisfaction, burnout, secondary trauma, anxiety, and evidence of compassion fatigue symptoms (such as avoidance or impairment). Themes also emerged from reviewing the data in the absence of these literature based-codes. What follows is a presentation of the themes, trauma experiences, reactions to the trauma the teachers shared, illustrative vignettes that exemplify the themes, and finally suggestions the teachers offered that they believe would help them to thrive in the teaching profession.

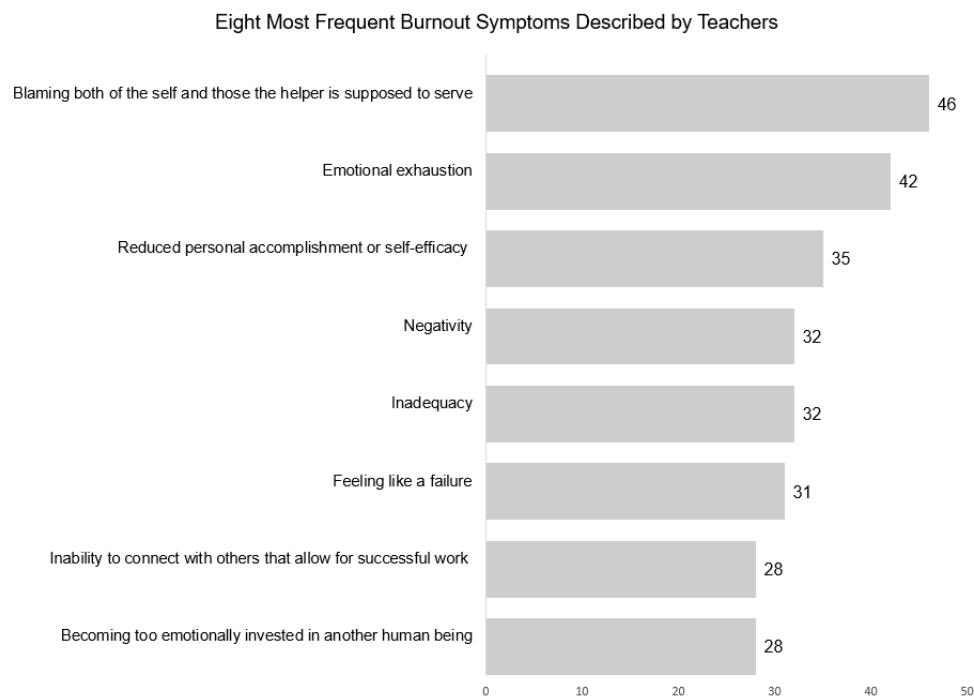
**Compassion satisfaction.** Relative to compassion satisfaction, teachers derived the most satisfaction from their relationship with coworkers. It is these relationships that many of the interviewees described as a lifeline of support. Alice shared that her teacher colleagues were the only reason she did not leave teaching after a particularly harrowing professional experience.

She said, “I have a group of teachers that they're like my family. And they did support me. And they got me through it.” While others shared that talking with coworkers helped them to process difficult situations, and comforted them when they were worried about, stressed, or upset by their student’s behavior or life circumstances.

**Burnout.** Respective to burnout, teachers described a number of distressing characteristics that left them feeling irritable and moody with their students, colleagues, and family members. They also laid blame on their students’ parents, administrators, students, and even themselves for many of the distressing relationships they were experiencing. Some expressed cynicism about whether things would ever improve if something was not done about students’ poor behavior. They also shared that students lacked the social capital to be successful in school, but that was mostly due to the parents. They felt that having to constantly make up for this lack of social capital was physically and mentally exhausting. Alex illustrated this by relaying a time when he could not get a hold of one of his student’s parents:

I tried to call the parent, called the parent, called the parent, called the parent, and then I just left it to the administrators because the parent was not responding to any of my messages. The child is not engaged, does not want to be engaged, and then comes and [is] a distraction.

Given the nature of burnout, in which emotional exhaustion and cynicism “are often accompanied by a deterioration in physical and psychological well-being. Relationships with other people suffer, both on and off the job,” the stories shared by teachers are quite distressing (Maslach, 2003, p.213). The stories are also wrought with much negativity about the students, their parents, and administration, coupled with a profound loss of self-efficacy. Figure 18 shows the eight most frequent burnout characteristics described by participants. They illuminate the distressing effects of burnout Maslach describes (Maslach, 2003).



*Figure 18.* Most frequent burnout symptoms

**Secondary trauma.** Relative to secondary trauma, teachers shared that they were often depressed or saddened by the trauma that students were experiencing. They were also sad about many of the interactions they had with students. The hopelessness they felt was also very profound. Some even described the inability to hold back tears, or to get students' distressing situations off of their minds when they went home. Adam described an incident in which he was disheartened by his inability to help a student who had been molested. The student's molestation also triggered memories of his own childhood trauma which resulted in Adam suffering a mental breakdown in the middle of the school year. To cope he taught himself to detach personally from the student and not to care as much. Adam describes how he came to this realization in this way:

I remember [what I] learned around that event...I remember talking to the other science teacher at the school about that girl. I think I even broke down crying talking to her and

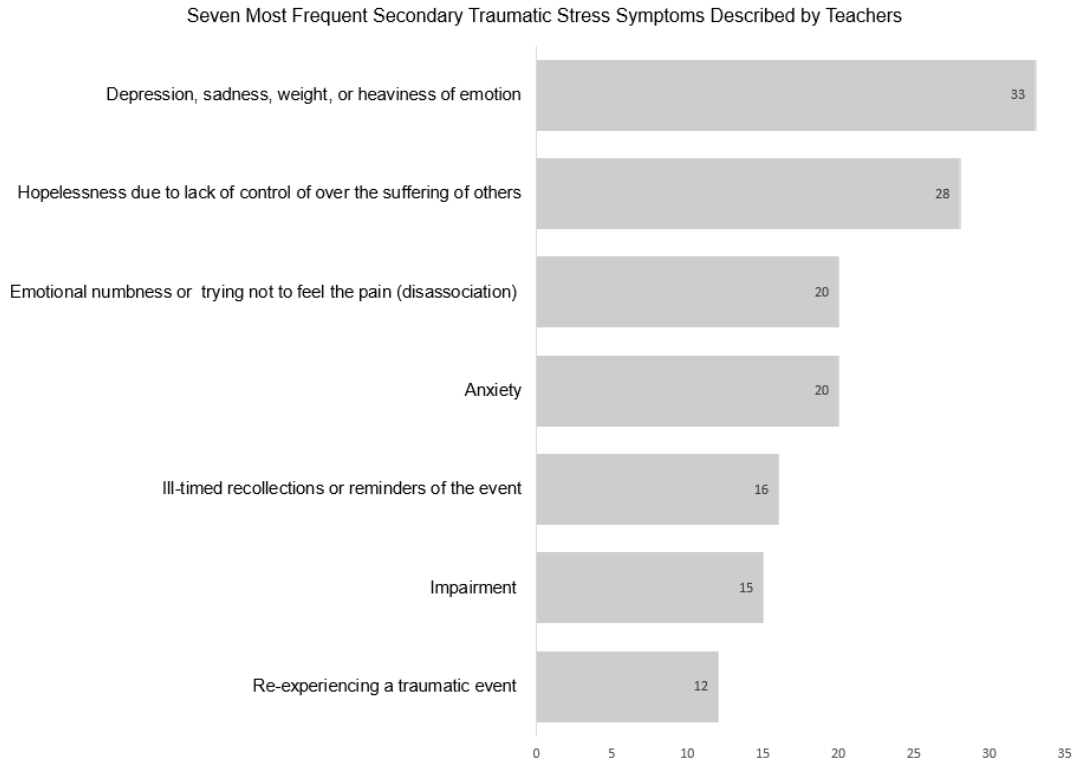
she just said you can't save every one of them. You're going to have to learn that. And, I mean that was a real valuable thing for her to tell me—that I just can't. You know as a teacher, as someone who suffered from the same kind of things that they [students] do, I want to but...the funny thing is, the realization I had is to think about myself!

Unfortunately, a common trauma that all teachers described experiencing (with the exception of Alice, the elementary school teacher) is suicide. Abby's experiences with suicide were quite profound. Her first experience with suicide occurred in her second year of teaching:

I think my second year there, there was a student I'd had for seventh and eighth grade and he did go home and commit suicide one day and that really affected me. So, whenever it [suicide] comes up it's like a really dark part for me to think back to that, because at the time there was no teacher care. There was no, "hey how are you feeling? you want to talk about this?" It was just like, give someone else a seat because everyone needs to sit down. And we just moved on and I was new in the profession.

Abby then went on to describe three more experiences with students or the siblings of students committing suicide. She described that the suicides were very hard on her, because she was not trained in suicide prevention and therefore unequipped to handle the after effects. She described herself as being in a "strange emotional position" that did not get better until she went through a mental health first aid certification training that discussed secondary traumatic stress and educator self-care. She shared that the trainers helped her talk through her experience, "they gave me a name they gave me a name for it. So, I felt less crazed."

Figley (1995) argues that secondary traumatic stress "in itself cannot be prevented since it is a normal and universal response to abnormal (violence induced) or unusual events (disasters). The enduring or negative effects of this response, however, can be prevented from developing into a disorder" (p.176). This is good to note given the magnitude of secondary traumatic stress responses teachers described experiencing. Figure 20 shows the seven most frequent secondary trauma responses described by participants. There were many more, but these seemed to be the most pervasive and distressing for the participants.



*Figure 19.* Most Frequent Secondary Traumatic Stress Symptoms

**School conditions and climate.** In regard to school conditions and climate, the character and quality of the school and the values, expectations, interpersonal relationships, critical resources, supports, and practices that foster or inhibit a welcoming, inclusive, and academically challenging environment were the most frequent topics of discussion. Teachers expressed concerns about how actions taken by school environment actors including parents, students, other teachers, and administrators affected their ability to create safe and academically challenging environments. Teachers shared that their morale was often affected by how students were being treated or how students were treating them. For example, Abby shared “I remember just wanting a pencil for my students. Just needing paper for them that I wasn’t supplying. Just having bathrooms that they could actually use, that weren’t locked or out of order or something.”

Teachers also talked about the lack of appreciation, which affected how supported they felt.

Amy shared:

I don't feel like I'm appreciated at my school [and] that kind of makes me [feel] burned out...we feel more appreciated when we know we're doing a good job. Tell people that they're doing a good job.[Teachers] want to know that you like what they're doing ...don't always just call people in [to the office] when it's a bad thing, okay.

Alex described teaching at his school as a battle. The battle includes overcoming the life circumstances that students are dealing with to help them focus and learn, while keeping up his own energy level so that he could live up to the expectations he has for himself as a teacher. The constant battle is tiring for him. He shared:

They [students] are coming from a community that maybe doesn't, a community that that is already struggling. So, you don't want to send that student back into that community thinking that it's okay like not to learn, to grow, and to develop themselves into an adult with skills and knowledge... Like why I would want to do that. You look at that and say, wow, am I making the impact that I expect myself to make. [I'm] tired of the battle...at some point, you know, it has to not be a battle. And, I don't think I felt that it has not been a battle yet.

Alex's characterization of his school's climate or working environment as a battle illuminates just how important values, expectations, interpersonal relationships, critical resources, supports, and practices that foster or inhibit a welcoming, inclusive, and academically challenging environment are for easing the battle that is teaching.

### **Traumatic Events That Negatively Impacted The Teachers**

The interviews revealed quite a few other traumatic experiences that afflicted the students first-hand, and thus the teachers second-hand, throughout their career. Some of the trauma described is student-based trauma or secondary trauma that occurred explicitly because of the trauma students experienced. Some trauma is parent-based trauma or trauma that occurred as a result of parent interaction. And finally, some trauma is working conditions based or trauma that

occurs as a result of school climate and conditions that are specific to the work site and school administration. Table 11 is a summary of the three kinds of traumas discussed.

Table 11 <i>Teacher Descriptions of Trauma Experiences</i>	
Student-based trauma	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Neglect</li> <li>– Child abuse</li> <li>– Students’ parents going through a divorce</li> <li>– Having to call child protective services (CPS) and watch students be pulled out of their home - which is especially difficult since they are 3 and 4-year old’s</li> <li>– Child molestation</li> <li>– Hard home life – no quality study spaces, extreme poverty, 10 to 15 people in one home</li> <li>– Students cussing teachers out in the classroom in front of other students</li> <li>– Multiple student suicides and attempted suicide</li> <li>– Siblings of a student committing suicide or attempting to commit suicide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sexual assault</li> <li>– Both parents of a student dying in a car crash</li> <li>– Students’ houses being shot up in drive-by shootings</li> <li>– A 14-year-old student who was married, abused, pregnant and then miscarried, whose sister tried to kill herself.</li> <li>– Playing therapists for students who have connected with them and only asked for them even though they were not equipped to deal with the trauma the student was experiencing</li> </ul>
Parent-based trauma	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Threatened by parents on the phone</li> <li>– Attacked verbally and professionally by parents in front of the administration</li> <li>– Harassment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Mishandling of a parent complaint that led to teaching being unlawfully punished, disrespected, and demeaned. The teacher described it as the most humiliating experience they have ever experienced. The teacher wanted to quit, but the love she had for her students pulled her back.</li> </ul>

Table 11 (continued) <i>Teacher Descriptions of Trauma Experiences</i>	
Working conditions-based trauma	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Students not having basic supplies (pencil, paper, technology, books) when other more affluent schools do have supplies for their students</li> <li>– Failure to fix broken desks and chairs</li> <li>– No air conditioning</li> <li>– Student bathrooms that were always locked or not in working order</li> <li>– Apparent lack of concern for teachers who appear to be struggling by the administration</li> <li>– General education teachers being allowed to disregard their legal and moral obligation to teach students with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Excessive workload for special education teachers – feeling as if they have more jobs than just teaching</li> <li>– Failure to include teachers in conversations about how to best handle and support the students they teach on a daily basis</li> <li>– Failure to convene as a staff to process, discuss, and debrief when traumatic events occur to students in the school</li> <li>– Targeting teachers for discipline</li> <li>– Retaliating against teachers who speak up</li> </ul>

Given the array of trauma experiences described by teachers, there were also quite a few trauma responses described. A few notable responses included: teachers setting aside personal emotions to be present for the students and their trauma even when the situation was bothersome; developing a fear of parent interaction or a feeling of dread every time they had to make a phone call to parents; and hiding from students and parents when seeing them in public outside of the school. Teachers also described being discouraged with staff members and the school community, wanting to quit, give up, or not go to work. Table 12 includes the full array of trauma reactions described by the interviewed teachers. It is included here because of how close these reactions mirror the compassion fatigue responses at the organizational level (Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project ©, 2017).

Table 12  
*Reactions to Trauma Described by Teacher Interviewees*

- Emotional pain that stems from being able to relate their personal backgrounds to that of the traumatized students. One teacher even used the words, “hurts the heart.”
- Compartmentalizing personal emotions from student’s trauma
- Feeling terrible, afraid, and/or worried about the students and their wellbeing
- Setting aside personal emotions to be present for the students and their trauma even when the situation was bothersome
- Adopting a negative attitude towards school site administration "until you walk in my shoes, you can't tell me...You come into my classroom for about 15 minutes, 10 minutes, but you don't really deal with these kids the way I do."
- Becoming less compassionate towards kids who externalize their pain from trauma
- Coping by convincing themselves that they can't save everyone. This includes numbing emotions and repeating mantras like "your job is to teach. Your job is to be there for these kids, so you need to pull yourself together."
- Dealing with problem students by constantly sending them to the office with referrals so that the administration can do something real and actionable with the students
- Feeling unsupported
- Becoming discouraged with staff members and community
- Developing a fear of parent interaction—feeling of dread every time they had to make a phone call to parents
- Hiding from students and parents when seeing them in public outside of the school
- Wanting not to go to work
- Taking time off from work – sometimes days and even months at a time
- Requesting a reduced workload schedule – part-time
- Retiring or leaving the school
- Physical exhaustion
- Experiencing sleepless nights
- Crying at home and at school
- Triggering of personal experience or memories of sexual abuse
- Suffering nervous breakdown
- Suffering mental breakdown
- Burning out
- Depression and sadness
- Anxiety
- Irritability and in particular, snapping at their own families
- Hyperventilating or shortness of breath

### **Thematic Analysis and Illustrative Vignettes**

The following themes and subsequent subthemes were derived from the analysis of the interviews. They exemplify teacher sentiments expressed throughout the interviews at the latent

level. That is, the themes not only capture feelings that were expressed explicitly, but also underlying ideas that helped form the sentiment in the first place. One undercurrent that ran through all the interviews was the recognition or lack thereof that everyone is a part of the school— teachers, administrators, students, and parents – and system stressors affect everyone. As the following themes emerged, they all take into account the underlying difficulty inherent in the teaching profession that is compounded by additional societal factors such as poverty, race, and trauma.

**Theme 1-Teachers experience secondary trauma.** Teachers described how the trauma their students experienced affected them both consciously and unconsciously, personally, and professionally. A subtheme that emerged was that teacher's *secondary trauma impedes teacher self-efficacy*. The secondary trauma experiences impaired their ability to be as successful as they wanted to be in the classroom for various periods of time, while mental, physical, and emotional stress made it difficult for them to teach. One trauma that was a common occurrence amongst middle and high school teachers was suicide. Experiencing student suicide had a profound effect on the teachers. One more subtheme is that *teachers lives outside of school cause stress too*. All the trauma mentioned was compounded by the notion that school stress and trauma is not the only stress teachers experience in their lives. Figures 21 through 23 contain vignettes that illustrate Theme 1 and its subthemes.



**Theme 1 - Teacher's Experience Secondary Trauma**  
**Amy, Highschool Teacher**

This last year was one of the roughest years I have ever had. My colleagues and I couldn't wait for the school year to be over. The fires and mudslides just wrecked our city. Some of my students lost all of their belongings, and one student even lost their life. I tried to do what I could to help them, but even now just talking about this makes me want to cry. Yet, even with all of that, in one year, a student committed suicide at the end of the year right before graduation. I remember the administrator interrupting class over the loudspeaker to ask us, teachers, to read an email that was just sent to us. I did, and it was all I could do to keep from crying. The administrator apologized in the email because they did not know how else to tell us, given that so many students were asking about it and they did not want us to be caught off guard. Then, the administrator got on the loudspeaker again and asked us to read the email to the students because rumors were flying like rampant through the school by that time. I read it to my students. I told them that it was a hard letter to read and that I would probably cry, which I did, but I got through it. The student who had died was the same grade as the students in my class, and so a lot of them knew the student. The room it was so heavy with the weight of the silence and pain. We just sat there. Finally, to lighten the load, I just said, 'well we are almost done with the lesson, why don't we just finish it.' I had never seen my students so happy to do math as I did at that moment.

*Figure 20. Vignette 1, Amy, teachers' experience secondary trauma*



**Theme 1 Subtheme - Secondary Trauma Impedes Teacher Self-Efficacy**  
**Alice, Elementary School Teacher**

My students come from diverse backgrounds, and they have different personalities and behavior issues. I think it is easier to handle students' issues when you are dealing with four and five-year-old students. Though easy may not be the right word. I think I am more accepting of it because they are so young. Because, as a teacher, you deal with a whole lot of emotion. I try really hard not to bring my personal situations into the classroom so that I can deal with my students' personal situation because my classroom is a safe haven; but, emotionally it's a bit much. You know, when I first became a teacher, sometimes I would come home and cry just seeing the situation that these kids have to deal with, and not knowing what they're going to go back home to when they leave my classroom. It hurt my heart actually. It was a bit emotional. I did have some sleepless nights worrying about what was going to happen to this child or the well-being of that child. There were days where I didn't want to be in the classroom. There were days I would have to deal with myself and deal with pulling my emotions together. At times it did affect me and my teaching abilities. Eventually, I decided that I couldn't give my students all my worrying about a specific situation or something like that. I had to pull myself together and I told myself, 'it's not about me, it's about these kids, and you are all they have right now in this classroom. I have to be stronger than this, even though it did bother me.'

*Figure 21. Vignette 2, Alice, secondary trauma impedes teacher self-efficacy*



**Theme 1 Subtheme – Teachers’ Lives Outside of School Cause Stress Too**  
**Alan, Highschool Teacher**

What people don’t understand is that teachers have a life outside of school that can cause just as much stress. For example, my grandmother was ill and in and out of hospice care, and a close friend’s father died, another friend attempted suicide, and a friend of mine was brutally raped. That alone was a lot. But it was compounded when I went to work and watched my students being slighted in their education by their general education teachers or shut down because they are not getting the encouragement that they need from their helicopter parents. All coupled with paperwork that I have to complete for the individualized education plans (IEPs), or interpreters, preparing to teach, phone calls to make, a lot of which I did at home in the evening, sometimes until 8 p.m. at night, because there was no time during the school day to do it. I often felt like I was doing three jobs in one. It’s exhausting and overwhelming. I literally never got a break. It’s just too much, too much, which is why I left the school.

*Figure 22. Vignette 3, Alan, teachers’ lives outside of school cause stress too*

**Theme 2- Secondary trauma is not the only trauma that teachers experience.**

Secondary trauma from students is not the only trauma that teachers are experiencing; sometimes that trauma is school conditions and climate based and occurs explicitly at the hands of parents or school site administration. All of the teachers discussed in some way that they did not always feel supported by their school administrators (principal and vice principals). The implication that *school administrators do not always understand teachers’ everyday classroom experience* emerged as a subtheme. Teachers shared that one reason the lack of understanding occurs is because discussions about how to build positive and improved school climate together as a school are not happening with administration, parents, or students. There were almost no instances in which teachers were asked their opinion about how to improve climate or school discipline.

The teachers' all expressed concern about negative interactions with parents. A subtheme became clear: *parents are not supposed to be the enemy, but sometimes it feels that way*; especially when administration appears to take the parents side over the teachers,' or when the teacher perceives the parent's behavior as attacking. Working conditions are exacerbated by decisions administrators make regarding teaching assignments, teacher workload, student discipline, staff discipline, parent interactions, and supplies. Ultimately, teacher stress levels can be negatively affected when situations around student trauma, student discipline, and parent interactions are mishandled. Figures 23 and 24 contain vignettes that illustrate Theme 2 and its subthemes.



**Theme 2- Secondary Trauma Is Not the Only Trauma That Teachers Experience**  
**Abby, Middle School Teacher**

I remember being called out of class by my administrator to go down to the office to meet with a parent. The administrator said they'd cover my class so that I could take the meeting. I remember feeling taken aback, 'you want me to lose 20 minutes of instructional time to take a meeting right now?' I figured they must of have had a reason and so I went downstairs to meet with the parent. I was in for such a shock, because the parent preceded to verbally attack me, yell at me, and describe all the ways they thought I had failed her child. After a few minutes, the administrator found coverage for my class and joined me in the meeting but didn't say anything. He just sat there while this parent yelled and berated me. I even asked the administrator if they had anything to say, because I wanted to give them a chance to protect me, but he didn't. I felt horrible. I felt set-up to fail because the fact is, they pulled me out of class, so I could meet with the parent and did not let me know what I was walking into. Even still, they could have said something. That single incident affected me greatly – I became afraid to talk to parents after that. I would dread making phone calls to parents. My breathing would get so rapid, that I would hyperventilate. It only got better once I talked about it with the school psychologist. That whole incident had a big impact on me.

*Figure 23. Vignette 4, secondary trauma is not the only trauma that teachers experience*



**Theme 2 Subtheme - School Administrators Do Not Always Understand Teacher's Everyday Classroom Experience**  
**Alex, Middle School Teacher**

You know just once I wish my administration would acknowledge how difficult it is to teach at a high poverty, urban school. The kid's home lives are tough, you know. A lot of the students are experiencing some really horrific circumstances. Then when I try to teach them, just getting them to care is a chore in itself. And then their behavior, oh my gosh, it can be over the top. It takes it's toll on me. So just once, just once, I would like it to be acknowledged that working at this school is harder than other schools. That alone would go a long way in letting me know that my administration sees me and understands what I am dealing with on a daily basis.

*Figure 24. Vignette 5, Alex, school administrators do not always understand teachers' everyday classroom experience*

**Theme 3 - It is easier to have compassion for students who are easier to handle.**

Concerns about student discipline were prevalent. Dealing with students' negative behaviors on a daily basis takes a tremendous amount of energy and kills teachers' desire for compassion towards the students with extreme behavior issues. There is much blame being placed on students, teachers, and administration for the misbehavior. It is as if the stress is causing teachers to see students, parents, and administration as enemies. It does not help that certain behaviors that students, parents, and administration exhibit make this notion appear to be true. Cognitive dissonance exists between teachers feeling as if they are making a difference in the lives of the students versus feeling as though they are not, especially in the face of horrific student behavior. Figures 25 contains a vignette that illustrates Theme 3.



**Theme 3 - It Is Easier to Have Compassion for Students Who Are Easier to Handle**  
**Adam, Middle School Teacher**

My principal used to brag about our school. He would say we will accept any student and work with them. I remember thinking that is not a good thing. I mean some of these kids do not belong here. Their parents would try and pretend like they had some sort of disability, but really, they were just making excuses for their child's poor behavior. Take this year, for example, David, was this awful student. He was being passed around from class to class because nobody could handle him. He was just filled with rage. Whenever I would tell him to take a seat or something, he would just howl and yell nasty things at me, yes, he totally was just triggering me. There's one day, I'll never forget it, where I'm calling every single person in the school because I needed to have him removed from class and none of them were answering their phone. I'm like, 'where is admin? I need this kid out of here!' And this kid was for five minutes, FIVE minutes, yelling at me in front of the class, at the top of his lungs. "You motherf@\*#ing , f@\*# this. I am not f@\*#ing following your f@\*#ing rules. You f@\*#ing suck. Nobody wants or likes your class. Everyone hates you." This is literally only two weeks in the school year, and nobody knows me, you know, and I just said, 'no I am not dealing with this. I am not!' I told admin 'you cannot keep this kid in my class yelling at me every single day.'

Then the mom shows up at my door one day while I am in the middle of teaching class with a visitor pass on her shirt. She wanted to talk to me right then and there and said she would wait. And she stood at the door, tapping her foot, with her arms crossed looking at me with a real um disdain. I didn't know who she was at the time, and I was really taken aback. Then I come to find out she was the boy's mother. And she was there because her boy is a good boy, he doesn't do anything wrong. And, it was all me, it was me. I was the one in the wrong. Get this, admin even started looking at me like it was my fault. I and was like, 'no! This kid has yelled at me every day. He cannot stay in my class.' He finally got moved out of my class, and the other teachers were telling me, well complaining to me, about this kid. He owns the school now. He does whatever he wants.

Yeah, we take every kid at this school, and maybe it makes the school and the principal look good, but teachers, we are all burning out on these very few kids who are just so disruptive to the learning process. It's like admin doesn't realize that they are over compassionate for these kids and it actually breeds a lack of compassion in us for these students. Then we start getting more hardened and feeling like we've got to be the one to control the kid if, administration is not going to do it. It is so demoralizing and tiring, which is why I am retiring. 'I can't take teaching anymore.'

*Figure 25. Vignette 6, Adam, it is easier to have compassion for students who are easier to handle*

**Theme four – I still have a job to do.** The obligation and duty felt to ensure students are learning the curriculum is always foremost in the mind of the teacher. They feel guilty when the obligation is not met. In the face of such distressing events, trauma, and behavior, teachers

blame themselves and/or feel guilty, inadequate, and less efficacious. They feel like a failure. Feeling like a failure seemed to lead to one of two choices – leaving the school site and thus the situation or staying at the school site to try and improve. Both decisions were made as a result of self-care. In other words, there is an awareness that for the teachers to be effective they had to make a shift either in mindset or location. *Leaving tumultuous school settings as a means of self-care* is a subtheme. Figure 26 contains a vignette that illustrates Theme 4.

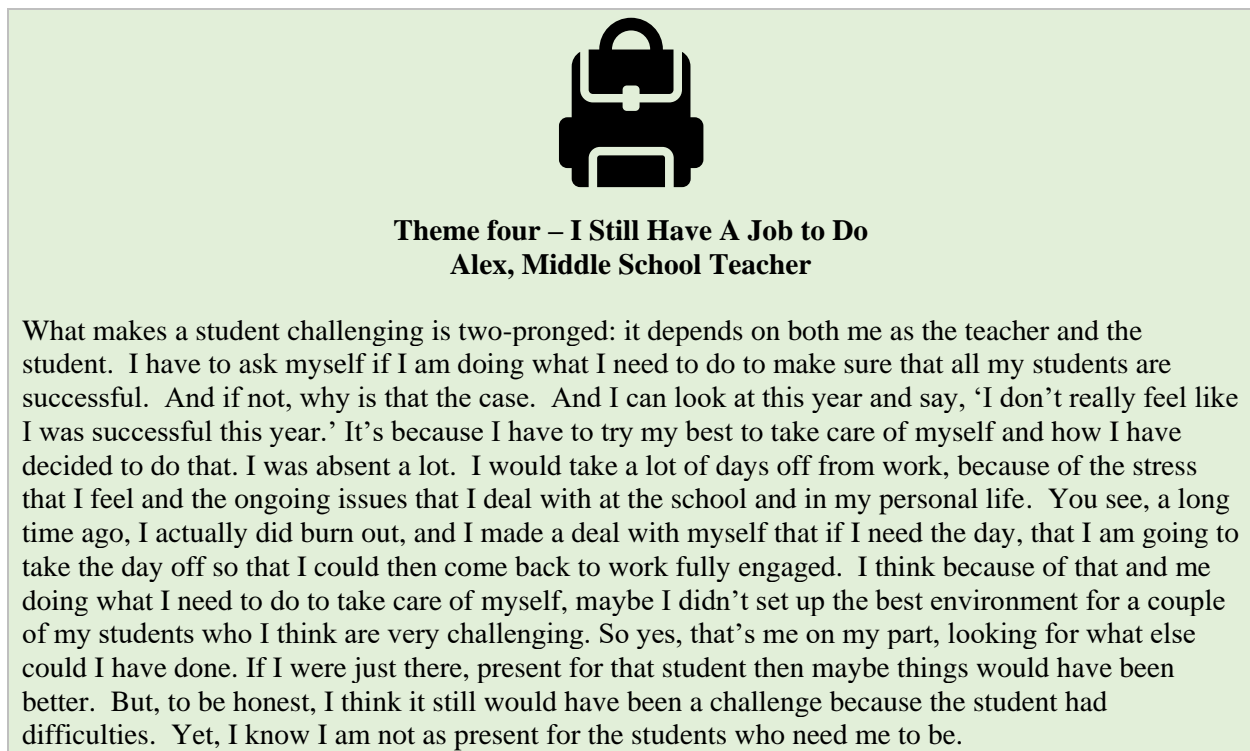


Figure 26. Vignette 7, Alex, I still have a job to do

**Theme five – Teachers have conscious and unconscious bias towards an ideal type of student.** The bias factors into the teacher’s perceptions of the school’s climate. The ideal student is respectful, smart (or at least has the potential to be smart) and may be in need of additional support due to concerning life circumstances. The race of the student was not

expressly mentioned as having any factor in the description of an ideal student. However, the race of students who were more challenging to manage behavior wise or who were being treated unfairly by the school system was mentioned during the interviews. It appears that the race of the student does factor into the opinions' teachers form about the school's climate and working conditions. Figure 27 contains a vignette that illustrates Theme 5.



**Theme Five – Teachers Have Conscious and Unconscious Bias Towards an Ideal Type of Student**  
**Abby, Middle School English Teacher**

When I first started teaching at this school, I taught English Learners. I had a good mix of Mexican, Guatemalan, El Salvadorian, Russian, Hmong, and Vietnamese and other Asian students, and in my later year's new refugee students. As part of my work, I had to do home visits, and I made it my goal to visit every student every year at least once or twice, so I could know their families and home lives well. It was very eye-opening. I mean some students were living with ten to fifteen people in the home or the homes were dim. It was very helpful because I could see right away whether or not my students would have quality homework time based on their living conditions even though we were trained to think that our students would have quality homework time; it's not always true. Anyway, I loved visiting because the parents were always very welcoming, receptive, thankful, and appreciative of the work teachers were doing for their kids. That's not to say that all the students were always respectful, but it made the disrespect easier to handle.

In my last couple of years at the school, before I left for another school, I had classes that we're not English Learner classes. Those classes were filled with mostly African American or Caucasian students, just because. I do not know how they got [there] they got lost. And then I had a few beginning English Learners shoved into the mix because they disbanded the EL class. So, the demographics definitely changed, and I think this is where things got more emotionally difficult for me. A lot of the parents were the opposite of appreciative. They blamed me for many things. One of the things that we were asked to do was to call home for this or call home for that, and I would get sick to my stomach, thinking of, oh another call where they're going to yell at me and tell me I should be fired and lose my job. So, some of those kids tended to also range in terms of behavior and affect. Some of them were really nice kids, some were very angry for different reasons, and some we're very defiant to any authority or to me for a lot of reasons. There was also a disrespect for education that I felt a lot of these students had. This disrespect for education came from all different races, mind you, it wasn't just one group or kind of kid. A lot of times, in large bulk, it felt like I was just trying to convince them to get out their pencil and do something. We talk a lot of getting students to buy-in, helping them see how this would apply to their life, but I felt that after many years of doing that, much as I tried, for the most part, kids were really disengaged, and just wanted to leave. They spent a large amount of time, saying things like 'why do we have to be here. I don't want to be here, I don't even like you!'

Leaving that school made me feel better. I feel bright and cheery again. I feel like I have a new career. With my other school, I was just worn out by my students and colleagues. Now, at the new school, I like the people I work with, and I enjoy my students. I don't hide when I see them in public; I say hi to them and their parents. The parents there have mixed socioeconomic backgrounds, but many are just like me, they're not either one range or the other. That's been really refreshing. Refreshing I think is the best word to describe how I feel now about my school's climate and working conditions.

*Figure 27. Vignette 8, Abby, teachers have conscious and unconscious bias towards an ideal type of student*

## Supports That Would Help the Teachers Thrive

The six teachers were expressly asked about what support would help them to thrive to better understand the type of support needed to combat teacher compassion fatigue. Preliminary results of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 were shared with educators (teachers, administrators, counselors) in a large group setting. They were then asked to reflect on the data and share their thoughts on what supports teachers needed to combat compassion fatigue. Teachers had a lot to say when they were asked what supports teachers needed or wished they had but may or may not be currently receiving. For example, Alex recommended that school site administration intentionally attend to the social-emotional needs of staff on a continuous and consistent basis. Abby would like educator self-care talks that are mandatory for everyone to be held every year. Teachers also expressed that teacher care should be provided in addition to student care whenever there are traumatic events at school - especially for suicides. The following themes capture the supports teachers expressed a desire to have and Figure 28 shows the relative strength of each requested support.

- **Administration Support:** Administrators should actively work to show they care about, appreciate, and understand the teachers experience by acknowledging the difficulty of the work, providing teacher-informed support and practices, and intentionally checking-in with staff who appear to be struggling.
- **Teacher-informed support:** There should be more emphasis on the need for teacher support in the teaching profession. The support should be defined by teachers themselves and not by others for teachers and should include opportunities for peer support in addition to administrator support.
- **Classroom Management and Student Support:** Provide more trainings in classroom management to ensure teachers can show compassion and empathy with all their students rather than resentment.
- **Safe Spaces for Teacher Voices to Be Heard:** Emotionally support teachers by providing space for them to share their experiences with other staff, especially administrators. The support could be just to listen or to help. Determine what emotional support is needed by asking teachers what they need in that space.

- **Community Understanding:** Ensure staff know the characteristics and nuances of the community of students they serve including addressing the school's climate explicitly in conversations and in meetings.
- **Improvement of School Site Working Conditions for Teachers:** Adjust class-size ratios, provide more classified staff support in special education classrooms, and enforce school rules consistently and fairly.
- **Support for Self-Care:** Provide mandatory professional development on educator self-care and compassion fatigue, including encouragement to participate in the trainings without judgement.
- **Support for Positive Parental Interaction:** Develop training for teachers to actively engage with parents in a positive way. Create ways for parents to show they value teachers too-and ensure parents understand the impact that appreciating teachers can have on the classroom environment.
- **Improvement of School Site Conditions for Students:** Fix things that are broken and supply students with resources they will need to be successful. Eliminate disparities in treatment and resources between low and high poverty schools.
- **Crisis Response Expansion and Improvement:** Include teachers as recipients of support in addition to students whenever traumatic events occur. Increase the number of crisis trainings that occur so teachers can be better equipped to handle crisis situations.

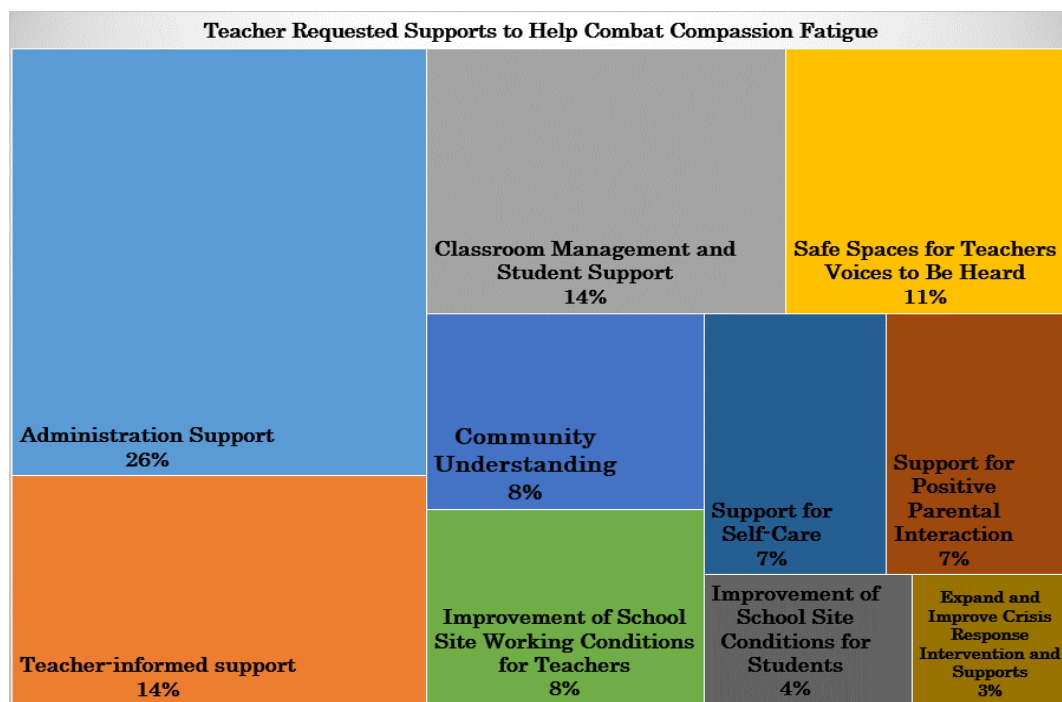
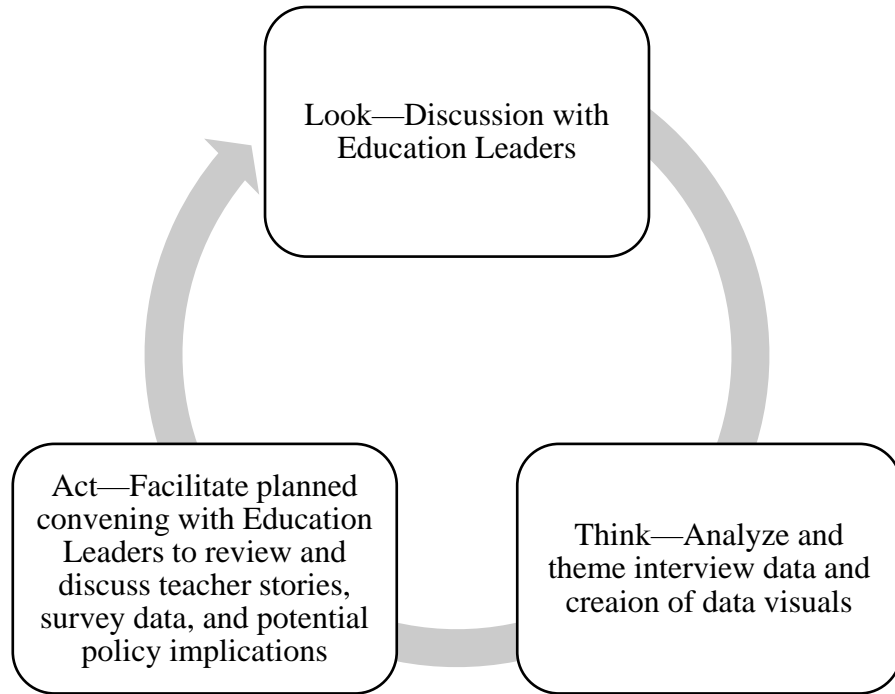


Figure 28. Teacher requested supports for combatting compassion fatigue

The interviews illuminate the precarious predicament we are in as a school system. Our students clearly are struggling, but as result of their struggle teachers are too. The descriptions of burnout and secondary trauma clearly belay just how much stress are teachers are under. The themes capture just how difficult it is for teachers to remain compassionate in the face of such trauma. Yet, even still the teachers exhibited a keen awareness as to what they think is needed to support the effective management of the effects of burnout and secondary trauma. The suggested supports are practical and actionable. It is up to policy-makers to take heed of the suggestions in order to improve school climate and working conditions for teachers and to support teacher retention. In Chapter 6, I share recommendations for policy action that can be taken to support teachers suffering from Compassion Fatigue in the form of a policy brief.

## Chapter 6: Cycle 3 Using Story to Shift Practice Results



*Figure 10.* Action cycle 3 using story to shift practice

### The Process

The aim of Cycle 3 was to attend to the ultimate goal of this action research-based dissertation; translating the effects of compassion fatigue in urban educators on teacher shortage into a policy issue that is seen as important enough to address with governmental action (Fowler, 2013). Fowler (2013) argues that the best way to do this is with awareness raising by defining compassion fatigue as an issue for teachers and then actively working to get it on policy agendas throughout the state of California. Thus Cycle 3 involved disseminating the results of Cycles 1 and 2 to key education leaders and education practitioners via discussion to garner their thoughts

and expertise on how best to move forward with a policy agenda to address teachers' compassion fatigue.

The education leaders and practitioners who discussed the results included one researcher active in educational justice advocacy for people of color and impoverished people (Ed Trust West, n.d.), Lucy, and one active in k-12 educational reform and policy, Lana (UC San Diego, 2018). Three discussions also occurred with one education philanthropist, Lena, over the course of five months beginning in August 2018 and ending in December 2018. Three CDE staff named Linda, Lola, and Leyla, in addition to Price, provided invaluable insight and feedback over the course of three months beginning in October 2018 and ending in December 2018. One discussion occurred with an education consultant, Lill, who is an expert in educational equity. These conversations took place over the course of five months, affording the participants the opportunity to be a part of the iterative journey of the policy brief and to provide feedback for improvement along the way.

The intent of each conversation was to gather support for this work and suggestions for thoughtful recommendations that, if implemented, would likely improve school climate and working conditions for teachers suffering from compassion fatigue. The questions from the discussion protocol in Appendix D guided the conversations. Yet, due to the semi-structured nature of the discussion protocol, the conversations were more organic, ebbing and flowing as the participant was engaged in dialogue over the results. Table 13 contains a summary of the feedback received in the discussions with each participant and how it was incorporated into the final draft of the brief.

Table 13

*Summary of Education Leaders Feedback*

Name	Feedback	Revisions
Lucy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Break the recommendations into levels like state and counties</li> <li>– Be mindful of terminology describing correlations as this is not causal</li> <li>– Recommendations to improve school climate and to attend to the social emotional learning (SEL) needs of adults are going to be very interesting to the field so make sure they are strong</li> <li>– Address the undercurrents of racial bias that may seems to be present in the data</li> <li>– Further explore the role teacher ethnicity has on the correlations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The recommendations are addressed to state, county, district, and school site level policy leaders</li> <li>– Recommendations to address bias are incorporated</li> <li>– Strengthened the section on school climate and SEL by incorporating recommendations teachers provided in Cycle 2 and referred to the school conditions and climate work group recommendations</li> </ul>
Lana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The findings section of the policy brief should be short and to the point and include a summary sentence of what the finding is all about.</li> <li>– The implications for the teaching profession are going to be impactful, be as specific as possible with the recommendations</li> <li>– Remove as much background information as possible and dive quickly into the recommendations</li> <li>– Remember to add data labels to the figures</li> <li>– Present this information in as many avenues and forums as possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Shortened the findings section and added a red bolded summary sentence to each one</li> <li>– Shortened the background section</li> <li>– Added data labels to the figures</li> <li>– Incorporated recommendations to address bias</li> <li>– Ran additional statistical analysis to explore the impact of teacher ethnicity on teacher compassion satisfaction and fatigue scores</li> </ul>
Lena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The information is extremely relevant and comes at a good time since the teacher shortage is foremost on our minds policy wise</li> <li>– Address the undercurrents of racial bias that may seems to be present in the data</li> <li>– Add recommendations to strengthen teacher and administrator relationships since the vignettes illustrate the need for it</li> <li>– Needs a short executive summary or brief that can be shared as many policy leaders will not read the entire document</li> <li>– Disseminate this information widely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Recommendations to address bias are incorporated</li> <li>– Added recommendation to improve labor management relations</li> <li>– Created an executive summary which is included in Appendix I</li> </ul>

Table 13 (continued) <i>Summary of Education Leaders Feedback</i>		
Name	Feedback	Revisions
Linda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs a short executive summary or brief that can be shared as many policy leaders will not read the entire document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Created an executive summary which is included in Appendix I</li> </ul>
Lola	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The information is extremely relevant</li> <li>The CDE should actively work to implement these recommendations as they focus on retention efforts, which the California is sorely not working to address at this time</li> <li>Many of the recommendations appear to be relevant for administrators too</li> <li>The tiered levels of recommendations need reorganizing so that all truly means all (teachers working and entering the profession).Some could address the people who are currently working at urban schools, and then few could represent teachers who are in extreme crisis.</li> <li>Address the undercurrents of racial bias that may seems to be present in the data</li> <li>Disseminate this information widely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reorganized the tiers to reflect the feedback</li> <li>Recommendations to address bias are incorporated</li> <li>Suggested places in which recommendations could apply to administrators in addition to teachers</li> </ul>
Leyla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider what happens when teachers are in extremely stressful or even catastrophic situations, above and beyond the daily trauma they are experiencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tier 3 recommendations address concerns around extremely traumatic and catastrophic situations</li> </ul>
Lill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The work is quite impactful</li> <li>Address the undercurrents of racial bias that may seems to be present in the data</li> <li>Further explore the role teacher ethnicity has on the correlations</li> <li>Disseminate this information widely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations to address bias are incorporated</li> <li>Ran additional statistical analysis to explore the impact of teacher ethnicity on teacher compassion satisfaction and fatigue scores</li> </ul>
Glen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommend incorporating power recommendations</li> <li>Address the undercurrents of racial bias that seems to be present in the data</li> <li>Look at other policy briefs written by researchers or think tanks you like and try to model the brief after them</li> <li>Disseminate this information widely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worked to update the structure of the brief to be more appealing</li> <li>Added an overarching recommendation from which all other recommendations flow to address the power recommendation</li> <li>Recommendations to address bias are incorporated</li> </ul>
Please see Appendix H for the complete text of the policy brief.		

The results of the conversation were analyzed and used to update the draft of the policy brief on the role compassion fatigue plays in teacher attrition entitled *Reducing the Teacher Shortage by Addressing Teachers Compassion Fatigue*. The brief is the vehicle that was used to frame compassion fatigue as a public policy issue (Fowler, 2013). Please see Appendix H for the full text of the compassion fatigue policy brief. It is incumbent on the reader to read the brief prior to reading Chapter 7 because it is a crucial component of this research that provides much needed context for the final discussion in the chapter and houses the all recommendations for action for the educational field at large.

### **Plans for Dissemination**

Price was engaged in one final conversation to review the final draft of the brief, make any edits for changing, and then to discuss plans for disseminating. But first, the brief was uploaded in PDF format to Google Drive. A link was then created to allow the brief to be easily shared with others in a quick and efficient way. Please see <https://goo.gl/ymbxp> to access the policy brief. Then I spent time actualizing the remaining portion of Cycle 3, which was to develop a plan to disseminate the brief to the California education community at large as suggested by all of conversations (see Table 13). Price and I produced several ideas for sharing the information with key education policy leaders. The ideas included:

1. Sharing the brief via an additional facilitated conversation with key education stakeholders and practitioners such as the California Department of Education, the Education Trust West, California School Boards Association, California Federation of Teachers, California Teachers Association, county and school district Superintendents, and various education thought leaders to get the word out about the research (target date: December 2018);
2. Embedding the link in an email message that could be shared easily across the same stakeholders articulated previously in Idea 1;
3. Sharing the brief with the CDE Foundation, an education philanthropy organization, specifically addressed to the organization's California Labor Management Initiative (CA

LMI) coordinator asking for this topic to be included in one of its convenings or learn labs for use by school labor and management teams;

4. Embedding the link in a message that can be shared widely on social media sites;
5. Exploring avenues for publishing the policy brief as is, or just the content within, and portions of the dissertation as articles once the dissertation process is final; and
6. Presenting the information contained in this dissertation at as many forums (conferences, communities of practice, meetings, and so on) as possible to get the word out to others.

### **Actualizing the Dissemination Plan**

Idea number 1 was completed on December 28, 2018. Due to the holiday and conflicting schedules, approximately eleven people were able to join. But the email message that accompanied the request to join the conversation was sent to approximately 40 people. Seven email replies from invited guests were received stating their inability to join the conversation but that they would read the brief. Two of the seven replies asked to connect with me to engage with the content at a later date. Appendix J contains the content shared during the facilitated conversation. Three key suggestions arose from the conversation and have been incorporated into this dissertation. The first recommendation was to generate a one-page policy paper that can be shared with policy makers. The one-pager should contain highlights of the specific recommendations' policymakers should enact first. This recommendation was incorporated because it would likely be seen by politicians such as the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Governor thus setting a direction for California's policy agenda to address the teacher shortage. The one-pager is included in Appendix K.

The second recommendation was to consider identifying outliers or teachers and schools who are enjoying success even in the midst of compassion fatigue. These outliers could provide valuable information to the field about what to do with regards to teacher retention. This recommendation was incorporated into the Implication for Future Research section of Chapter 7.

The third recommendation was to consider the idea of developing a compassion centered education approach to teaching and teacher training. This recommendation was incorporated into Chapter 7.

### **Looking Towards the Future**

Educational reform is “grounded in creating new context” (Fullan, 2006, p.114) and addressing compassion fatigue in urban educators does create a new context that supports education leaders and policymakers efforts to engage in work that improves the school system for all educators and students (Cook, 2012). To do this requires raising awareness and action. Cycle 3 helped generate awareness and understanding of the teaching profession and all aspects of the work teachers do, including those aspects that are unpleasant and born of suffering. Recall that the central action of this research was to influence the policy agenda by translating compassion fatigue in urban educators in relation to the teacher shortage into a policy issue that is seen as important enough to address with governmental action (Fowler, 2013). As such, the full impact of the results of this dissertation are yet to be seen, but with awareness of this issue, compassionate responses and policies that truly make a difference in the life of teachers and ultimately students can be born (Feldman, 2005).

The policy process is driven by awareness raising and it should not stop because the dissertation is final (Fowler, 2013). To that end, draft language for ideas 2 – 4 has already been generated and is included in Appendix L. The specific actions outlined in each idea will be completed after this dissertation is finalized. These are shared now to illuminate future actions that will be used to continue influencing the policy agenda around the teacher shortage. In addition, several opportunities have already presented themselves for Idea 6. Offers to present at two conferences in January 2019 and March 2019 have been received and accepted. more

opportunities to share are being sought. Options for Idea 5 are being explored, including the possibility of self-publication.

In Chapter 7, a summary of this study, a personal reflection based on this research, discussion of major findings, and suggestions for future research are presented.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

When I first embarked on this dissertation journey, compassion fatigue in educators was a relatively novel idea. Since then more research has been written on the topic and is readily available. For example, Wolpow et al. (2009) explore the concept of Compassionate Schools in Washington State. Wolpow et al. (2009) explain that “Compassionate schools are particularly open to students who have experienced trauma or live in crisis. They respond to trauma by providing an environment where healing can occur” (p.18). Compassionate schools are responsive to the needs of their community (students, staff, parents) and intentionally equip staff with the skill set and understanding needed to maintain a compassionate approach to schooling while exercising self-care (2009).

Empathy fatigue has also been a topic of discussion that “results from a state of psychological, emotional, mental, physical, spiritual and occupational exhaustion that occurs as the counselors’ own wounds are continually revisited by their clients’ life stories of chronic illness, disability, trauma, grief and loss” (Shallcross, 2013). However, I maintain that connecting compassion fatigue with teachers’ perception of their school climate and working conditions in the context of California’s teacher shortage and retention challenges is an idea that is worth exploring. The data is too compelling to ignore.

The information contained in the remainder of this Chapter is a summary of this study and conclusions drawn from the data presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. This Chapter includes a personal reflection from the author, an overview of the research study, an analysis of the major findings, a discussion of implications for action for the education field, and recommendations for further research in this area (Roberts, 2010). The rest of this Chapter is also the explanation for Figure 29.

## Personal Reflection

I decided to study the relationship between compassion fatigue and the teacher shortage as a sort of love letter to teachers. I was once a student facing some very traumatic life circumstances. School was my safe haven. Teachers were the creators of that safe space for me. I loved helping grade papers, clean up, run errands, and tutor others because it all gave me a sense of something beyond myself. What was once a personal outlet for a student seeking safety became an amazing career as a teacher and administrator for a professional following her passion.

However, as I grew in the profession and chose to work in urban schools with students who looked like me and were likely experiencing trauma themselves, the work began to take its toll. The students' trauma triggered traumatic memories within me, and before I knew what happened I was in the midst of full-blown post-traumatic stress disorder, brought on in part by the secondary trauma I was experiencing. To heal I focused on self-care and eventually left the school site. With intensive healing and support I was able to make a full recovery. However, I decided not to return to teaching or school site administration. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about returning, but I hear myself saying "no – there is something else you must do first. I must tell my story. As a way to tell the stories of so many beautiful educators, so that they too can get the help they need to continue being beacons of light for students."

Along my healing journey, I came across the term compassion fatigue. According to Figley (1995) compassion fatigue, is the mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion that comes with working people who are in constant states of distress or trauma. Left unaddressed it can cause extreme mental and physical health challenges for the caregiver (Figley, 1995). The term immediately resonated not only with me but also with every educator I talked to about compassion fatigue. I recognized that compassion fatigue likely played a role in my departure

from direct student service. I know that departure is precisely why I chose to explore the relationship between compassion fatigue and California's teacher shortage. I believe in this work and know that if taken seriously it could change the educational landscape for urban students and teachers for the better.

The journey taken to finish this action research dissertation was complex. The introduction, literature review, methodology, completion of three action cycles including development of a policy brief, coupled with the discussion of findings and a conclusion, resulted in seven chapters instead of the traditional five. Given this complexity, a culminating graphic is offered in Figure 29 to summarize the dissertation's intricacy in a format that can be easily comprehended (OPWL, n.d.). The graphic contains images from Creative Commons licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#). The image also draws some inspiration from Wolpov et al. (2009).

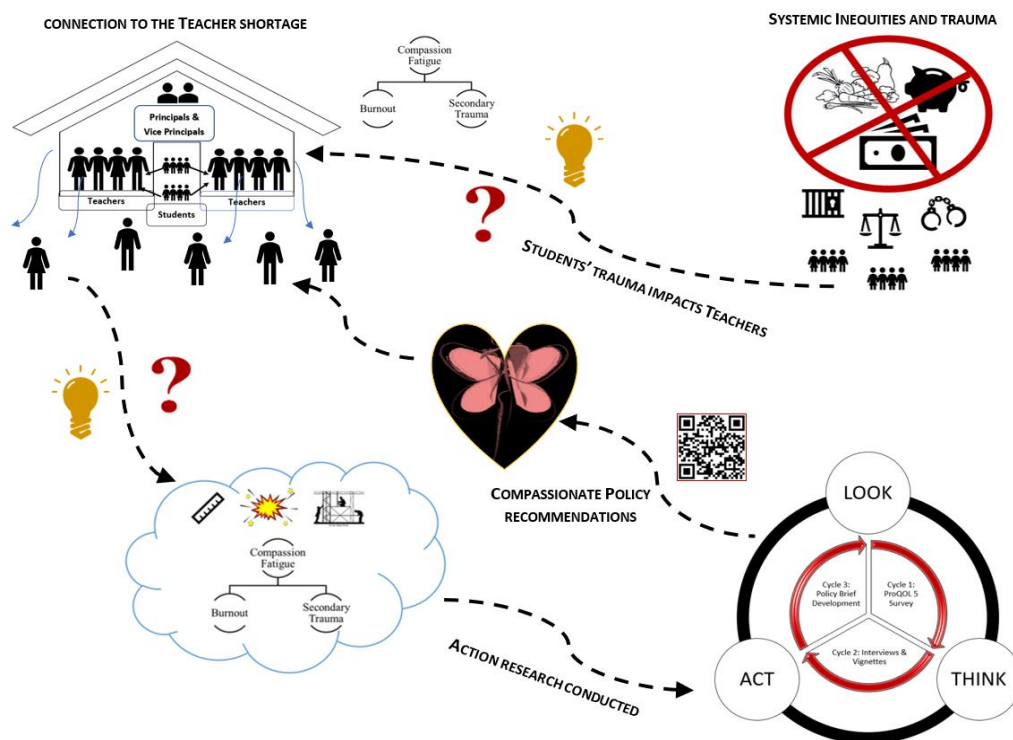


Figure 29. Culminating dissertation graphic

The information contained in the remainder of this Chapter is a summary of this study and conclusions drawn from the data presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. The Chapter includes a personal reflection from the author, an overview of the research study, an analysis of the major findings, a discussion of implications for action for the education field, and recommendations for further research in this area (Roberts, 2010). This rest of this chapter is also the explanation for Figure 29.

### **Summary of The Study**

In its simplest form, compassion fatigue is the “natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other – the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person” (Figley, 1995, p.8). The cumulative effects of the use of empathy, combined with secondary traumatic stress (STS) and burnout can lead to a generalized syndrome known as Compassion Fatigue (Figley 1995; Newell and MacNeil, 2010). Stamm (2010) conceptualizes Compassion Fatigue as the combination of secondary trauma and burnout. Burnout causes “feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively” (p.13) while STS is “about work-related, secondary exposure to people who have experienced extremely or traumatically stressful events,” (p.13) both of which have negative consequences for the helping professional. Though they share common symptoms, what makes compassion fatigue different is that one must be dealing with a traumatized population to develop it (Lerias & Byrne, 2003). Left unaddressed, compassion fatigue can be problematic for practitioners charged with the care and support of those suffering from trauma (Figley, 1995).

Experiencing secondary trauma due to interactions with someone who has experienced trauma first-hand suggests that trauma is contagious. Given that trauma is seen as contagious for helping professionals (Figley, 1995), would it then be contagious for educators – especially

teachers? I set out to see whether compassion fatigue might be one reason why teachers are leaving the profession and conducted a practical action-based mixed methods study to answer these three questions:

1. To what extent do California urban schoolteachers experience compassion fatigue?
2. How does compassion fatigue impact teachers' perception of their schools working conditions and climate?
3. What organizational supports can be put in place to help urban educators suffering from compassion fatigue thrive?

The ultimate goal of this dissertation is to contribute to the current body of teacher shortage and retention strategies. All with the aim of manifesting a future in which the teacher shortage in California no longer exists for all types of teachers, including beginning and veteran, elementary, middle, and high school levels – especially in urban schools.

I believe the school system is designed to produce the conditions under which urban students and teachers experience and suffer from trauma. The essence of this belief is expressed in the conceptual framework in two ways. First, the conceptual framework represents a model of the school system that combines two existing theories: Mintzberg's Organizational Structure Theory (1979) and Compassion Fatigue as conceptualized by Stamm (2010) (see Figure 1). The combination is based on the idea that the reason urban teachers are leaving the school system in droves is due to the system's inability to recognize the effects that working with traumatized students has on school working conditions and school climate for teachers. Although the parts of the school system are connected and each system actor has some form of influence on the other (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Mintzberg, 1979), the bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of the school system means that those influencing and making the policy decisions (Kirtman & Fullan, 2016), are often far removed from the teacher experience. At times, this leads to misaligned,

incoherent, ineffective policies that exacerbate the school climate and conditions that contribute to teacher attrition in the first place (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

Second, a system's design intentionally reflects the values and beliefs of those in power who created the system (Fowler, 2013). Historical and societal factors such as segregation laws under which schools were developed, coupled with redlining, large concentrations of disadvantage and poverty (APA Task Force, 2005; Florida, 2017), and other decisions made by political bodies, have shaped the conditions in which urban educators are now working. For example, in areas of concentrated poverty, there is a disproportionate amount of people experiencing first-hand and witnessing community violence, especially amongst children (CDC, 2016; Feliti et al., 1998). This exposure can lead to urban children experiencing mental and psychological health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (APA Task Force, 2005) or trauma. The trauma students experience enters the school system via behaviors and coping mechanisms that can be frustrating to manage or heartbreaking to witness, effectively making a student's trauma another issue educators have to manage (Abraham-Cook, 2012; Hill, 2010). This framework in its current form is a novel idea. However, its conception emphasizes that we must find a way to bridge the hierarchical divide that is central to the school system's current design in order to intentionally create sound policies that effectively address the teacher shortage (Mintzberg, 1979; Fowler 2013).

To that end, participants were recruited and asked to complete the Professional Quality of Life Scale Version 5 or the ProQOL 5 (Stamm, 2010). The ProQOL 5 measures compassion fatigue in two parts – burnout and secondary trauma, and compassion satisfaction (the joy one experiences from work) (Stamm, 2010). Participants were also asked to complete an optional demographic survey to provide information helpful to survey result analysis. They were also

asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Once the survey window closed, data were analyzed using ANOVA, Pearson's  $r$ , and linear regression. Participants who indicated an interest in participating in a follow-up interview were contacted. A total of six teachers agreed to be interviewed. The data were then analyzed for themes relative to compassion satisfaction, burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and school climate and working conditions. Key stories from the interviews were turned into vignettes that illustrated the themes. Please see Chapters 5 and 6 for additional details regarding data collection and analysis.

### **Discussion of Major Findings**

Inquiry Question 1 asked, to what extent do California urban schoolteachers experience compassion fatigue? It was found that teachers working at high poverty schools experience statistically significant differences in compassion satisfaction and fatigue than teachers at low poverty schools. They experience less compassion satisfaction, higher burnout, and higher secondary traumatic stress.

Stress is pernicious. The two most recognized acute stress responses to trauma are fight or flight (Figley, 2002). Our brains are instinctually wired to survive, which fighting or fleeing helps one to do (Figley, 2002). However, researchers contend that compassion fatigue involves additional stress responses which occur as three components: biological, psychological, and social (Figley, 2002). With compassion fatigue, two failed survival strategy responses capture its essence (see Table 14).

Table 14 <i>Survival Strategy Responses That Capture The Essence of Compassion Fatigue Responses Excerpts From Figley, 2002, p. 24</i>								
Appraisal of Means of Survival	Survival Strategies	Biological	Psychological	Social	Biological	Psychological	Social	Trauma Responses
		Successful/Adaptive Responses			Maladaptive/Adaptive Responses			
Must Save Others		Must Save Others		Must Save Others		Must Save Others		Must Save Others
(relates to Compassion Fatigue)	Rescuing	(relates to Compassion Fatigue)	Rescuing	(relates to Compassion Fatigue)	Rescuing	(relates to Compassion Fatigue)	Rescuing	(relates to Compassion Fatigue)
Notes for Table 1.1. E = epinephrine. NE = norepinephrine. Immunocomp = immunocompetence [normal immune response (Brannon, 2018)]. Parasymp = parasympathetic (nervous system). Symp = sympathetic								

Figley (2002) asserts that due to the utilization of empathy helping professionals open themselves up to receive the traumatic information and stress their client shares, known as transference. However, given that the “intimate relationship between helpers and victims is a two-way affair” (p.20), it is possible that the helper also transfers their traumatic issues and stress to the client, known as countertransference. Unfortunately, “when helpers’ survival strategies are insufficient to resolve victim stresses, helpers become secondarily stressed by carrying both maladaptive [inadequate] victim survival strategies with which they identify and their own maladaptive complementary survival strategies, which become insufficient” (p.25). In other words, they compound each other’s trauma (p.20).

Given my stance that teachers are helping professionals who work directly with trauma victims or their students, it is possible that within the four walls of the classroom students and teachers are compounding each other’s trauma (Wolpow et al., 2009 ; Figley, 2002). Teachers and students are reacting to and triggering one another while in hyperarousal states that cause burnout symptoms such as irritability, anxiousness, aggression, callousness, pessimism, diminished work performance. It can also cause secondary traumatic stress symptoms like over-involvement and pathological bonding, or avoidance behaviors like numbness or withdrawal from the relationship (Figley, 2002, p.19). We know that high-poverty students are experiencing

trauma, which they bring into the classroom (Cole et al., 2005). The behaviors exhibited by traumatized students can be extremely challenging for teachers, and the traumas can be quite heartbreaking (Demaria & Schonfeld, 2013). We also know that burnout is high amongst teachers in urban schools (Farber, 1982; Millicent & Joanne, 1999), which is corroborated by this research project.

The typical stress survival strategy of flight is not an option within the classroom and teachers unaware that they are suffering from compassion fatigue may have no recourse but to fight. Unfortunately, teachers' responses in these hyper-aroused states have extremely negative repercussions for impoverished urban students including excessive punitive punishments like suspensions and expulsions (Wood, Harris, & Howard, 2018). For example, African American male students in Sacramento are likely to be suspended at a rate 5.4 times the California state average; and, this rate is higher in middle schools (Wood et al., 2018). African American female students also are suspended at higher rates than those of white male students at both the elementary and high school levels (Losen et al., 2015). In this context, the statistically significant correlation between burnout and secondary traumatic stress tcores of teachers and the socioeconomically disadvantaged status of the school makes perfect sense.

Correlation tests revealed statistically significant relationships between compassion fatigue and the school's racial demographics. For example, as the school's percentage of white students increases, compassion satisfaction tcores increase, while burnout and secondary traumatic stress tscore decrease. In contrast, as the school's percentage of African American students increases, compassion satisfaction tcores decline while burnout and secondary traumatic stress tcores increase. Even when controlling for poverty there still exists a statistically significant negative relationship between white students and secondary traumatic

stress scores of teachers at the middle school level. There also exists a statistically significant positive relationship between high school teacher burnout scores and African American students.

In hyper-aroused states, one is instinctively attuned to self-protect, often causing anxiety and physical and emotional exhaustion (Figley, 2002). In other words, teachers' minds are elsewhere, which is critical to note because talking about race-related bias issues like the correlations referenced above can evoke emotional responses like anger, shame, guilt, and despair (Tatum, 1992). Bias, or an opinion, is often hidden or unconscious (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016). Teachers who work in urban schools would likely say that they have no bias, just as the teachers interviewed in this study reported that they treat all students the same and have no favorites - an egalitarian notion (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016). However, Banaji and Greenwald (2016) show that it is more likely that teachers have hidden racial bias.

Teachers who have unconscious bias have something in common with American society in that of the approximately 940,000 racial implicit association test (IAT) respondents tested for one's hidden preference for White or Black people, 75% have an automatic White preference (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016; Xu, Nosek, Greenwald, & Lofaro, 2018). A score like this often signals that the IAT taker is likely to engage in research-observed discriminatory behavior such as decreased comfort and friendliness towards people of different races, especially African Americans. Given the correlations found between burnout and the percentage of African American students, and interview data in which one teacher expressed being in a weird place emotionally once she had African American and Hispanic students, Banaji and Greenwald's (2016) assertions make sense and substantiate that teachers have conscious and unconscious bias towards an ideal type of student and race does appear to factor statistically into this bias.

However, the race of the students is just one characteristic of urban schools. Teaching in

classrooms under extremely stressful conditions, combined with issues of race and poverty and the inability to flee, forces situations in which all teachers must come to terms with their privilege. Meaning that a teacher will have to see the effects that injustice and targeted systems of advantage for some people, like the wealthy and White people, wreak on urban school children. Teachers are no longer allowed to practice the “pathological detachment” (Kozol, 1991, p.194) that allows them to live their lives without acknowledging that urban students are disproportionality impacted by our nation's system, which affords more to a privileged few and less to others, just because of their race (Oluo, 2018). They can no longer pretend they cannot see the inequality (Picoult, 2016).

This notion coupled with knowing that there are significant correlations between teacher secondary traumatic stress scores and the percentage of African American students at the middle and high school level shows that African American students experience more trauma than any other student group in the sample. If it were not so, teachers would not be experiencing higher secondary traumatic stress scores related to the percentage of African Americans at the school. History and research show that African Americans experience historical trauma or the “the cumulative and collective psychological and emotional injury sustained over a lifetime and across generations resulting from massive group trauma experiences” (Sotero, 2009, p.96). The intergenerational trauma continues today through systemic racism, microaggressions, and violence towards African Americans like the recent rash of murders of unarmed African Americans (George, 2015).

An example intricately linked to secondary trauma teachers may experience via students is the killing of Philando Castile. Philando Castile was an African-American man shot by a police officer on July 6, 2016, in the front seat of his car while his girlfriend Diamond Reynolds

sat in the passenger seat and his four-year-old daughter sat in the backseat (Ellis & Kirkos, 2017). The experience of seeing one's father shot, your mother sitting next to you handcuffed and scared, all while the police officer who shot your father continues to point a gun in the car is the very definition of trauma. Diamond Reynolds broadcast the aftermath of the incident live on Facebook (Ellis & Kirkos, 2017) for the world to see, including other children and teachers. How then does a teacher teach Philando Castile's daughter and her classmates without that traumatic experience taking its toll on the teacher? The answer is, they do not, and the statistically significant correlations support this response.

Whatever happens in our society is played out in the classroom. That is, the classroom is a microcosm of society at large (Battalio, 2005). So just as systemic policies rooted in racism have created high concentrations of poverty and disadvantage, they have also created the conditions for which students and teachers now experience in high-poverty schools. The disparities that play out in terms of academic achievement gaps and school discipline gaps are mirrored in society as well (Losen et al., 2015; Trust-West, 2015). When "compared to White Americans, Black Americans experience multiple consequential disadvantages – including, on average, less formal education, less satisfactory health care, less property ownership, less employment, less pay for the work they do, and higher rates of imprisonment" (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016, p.207), and as revealed in this study, more trauma.

This study also reveals that there are additional disparities in statistically significant correlations between burnout and secondary traumatic stress scores of teachers and the percentage of African American students contrasted with the percentages of other student groups, especially White students, that should be considered in the work taken to improve teacher retention. What's more, linear regression models showed that the percentage of African

American and White students in the school are statistically significant predictors of compassion fatigue (burnout and secondary traumatic stress tcores). At the middle school level, the socioeconomically disadvantaged status of the school and the percentage of white students in the school are statistically significant predictors of teacher compassion satisfaction and burnout scores; the percentage of African American students at the middle school level is only a statistically significant predictor of secondary traumatic stress tcores. Of all the demographics collected in this study, the statistical test results generated using the socioeconomically disadvantaged status and the percentage of African American and White students underscore that there still exists a racial divide in the classroom and in school settings, no matter the poverty level.

Even still, research shows that students benefit from having teachers who are have different racial backgrounds or the same racial background, but when controlling for the ethnicity of the teacher to calculate Pearson's  $r$ , the statistically significant relationships between compassion satisfaction and fatigue and poverty grew stronger alongside correlations of student race (Ingersoll & May 2011; McGee et al., 2016). When the race of the teacher is no longer an issue, teaching in schools, especially urban schools, is challenging for all teachers. These results also underscore just how much student poverty levels affect a teacher's happiness, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress levels. This is extremely concerning given that approximately 60.1% of California's students are eligible for free and reduced priced meals as of the 2017-18 school year (CDE Dataquest). That is, the majority of California students are urban students, which means the majority of California teachers are working with urban students. The trauma students and staff experience as a result is a pervasive concern for the health and well-being of California's teacher workforce (APA Task Force, 2005; Hart et al. 2013; Hill, 2011).

Compassion asks that we remain steadfast and engaged even while every fiber of our being wishes to be elsewhere, far away from the pain in front of us (Feldman, 2005). Yet, it is in this engagement that we can let go of expectations, demands, and insistence that things should be different and learn to accept our current situation (Feldman, 2005). Then, just maybe, with intention we can ease the suffering of our students and teachers and create a school environment that is life-affirming for all involved (Feldman, 2005; Quartz et al., 2003). However, remaining compassionate is difficult to do when stressed. Adams, Caposey, and Isiah (2018) argue that our school system and the actors within it have to work to decrease the stress of students, parents, and staff. This can be done by attending to “the hierarchy of basic needs that influence a person’s ability and motivation to succeed” (p.17). If we can reduce the stress students and teachers experience by attending to basic needs we can “develop competence, confidence, and compassion” (p. 20) in our school’s climate and working conditions. Doing so will also unleash “critical thinking and creativity” (p.20) in students as well as school site staff that is desperately needed. Essentially, meeting the complex needs of students, parents, and staff can create a socio-emotionally safe school environment where compassion and positive, supportive action can flourish (Adams et al., 2018). Addressing the compassion fatigue of California’s teachers – and by proxy, that of their students – is one basic need to which we can attend.

Furthermore, Feldman’s (2005) notion of compassion allows a teacher to put herself in the metaphorical shoes of the students and to stay there and notice what is occurring, as well as the needs to be met. Yet as a system we have trained teachers to focus mostly on the intellectual needs of students (Noddings, 2013), to teach the academic subject rather than the human subject sitting before them. We are training teachers to omit the support and care students need in addition to the intellectual stimulation. Approaching education training this way ensures that we

are only ever addressing a part of the child, not the whole-child (Noddings, 2013). In this way, as a system we are also only addressing a part of the teacher, not the whole-teacher.

Noddings (2013) argues that “the primary aim of every educational institution and of every educational effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring (p.172). Given that caring is central to compassion, Noddings is advocating for a compassionate approach to education. (Figley 1995; 2002; Wolpow et. al, 2009). An approach that recognizes “that teachers are, with students, the heart of the educational process” (p.197) and thus endeavors to work to enhance teachers’ self and student care (p.197). This research shows that teachers are experiencing compassion fatigue to a worrisome degree, compounding the need to shift how we approach the development, training, and support of teachers so that compassion-centered education becomes the ideal goal, rather than a burden.

This study also revealed that secondary trauma from students is not the only trauma teachers are experiencing. Sometimes trauma is school conditions and climate based and is caused by parents or school site administration. The implication that school administrators do not always understand the teachers’ everyday classroom experience and that parents are not supposed to be the enemy, but sometimes feels that way to teachers, was a common thread through all interviews. The stress teachers experience is coming from all actors in the school system – students, parents, administrators, and even other teachers. Attending to the relationships’ teachers have with administrators and families can go a long way to healing the trauma they have endured (Adams et al., 2018).

Strong staff and student relationships are key aspects of positive school climate and working conditions (CDE Recommendation Framework, 2017). Analysis of teacher interviews revealed that a school’s climate and working conditions matter. The character and quality of the

school (Collie et al., 2012, p. 1191) and the values, expectations, interpersonal relationships, critical resources, supports, and practices that foster or inhibit a welcoming, inclusive, and academically challenging environment are extremely important (CDE Recommendation Framework, 2017). This study revealed that teachers have concerns about how actions taken by school environment actors including parents, students, other teachers, and administrators affect their ability to create safe and academically challenging environments. Teacher morale is often affected by how students are treated or how students are treating them.

McCarthy and Rubenstein (2017) have proven that when positive collaborative relationships exist between teachers and administrators, teacher turnover is reduced and teacher commitment to the school is stronger, especially at high-poverty schools. That is, “no statistical difference between turnover in high-poverty and low-poverty schools” (p.3) occurs. When these relationships exist, they have an enormous positive impact on teacher retention. Collaborative school relationships also improve teachers’ perception of school site working conditions (McCarthy & Rubenstein, 2017). In other words, relationships matter not only for students but also for teachers and administrators – a key characteristic of positive school climate (CDE Recommendation Framework, 2017; Podolsky et al., 2016).

### **Implications for Future Research**

The results of this research have illuminated many areas for education system actors to explore as they work to establish compassionate responses and policies that make a difference in the life of teachers. Most of these are discussed in the policy brief written as part of Action Cycle 3 (see Appendix H). However, there are many limitations to this study that would lend itself to further exploration. First, the study sample contained 100 teachers from various poverty levels. To better understand how compassion fatigue impacts California’s education landscape, additional survey research and qualitative interviews should be conducted exclusively with

teachers from high-poverty schools, low-poverty schools, small and rural districts, and large urban school districts. The sample numbers should be larger than 100.

Second, compassion fatigue is not exclusive to teachers. This research should be expanded to explore the effect compassion fatigue has on school site administrators' perceptions of their schools' climate and working conditions, especially at urban schools. The research could explore whether this contributes to urban school administrator attrition. Third, this research could be turned into a longitudinal study meant to understand the effects of implementing any number of the policy recommendations in Appendix H has on teacher retention. Fourth, the decision to approach this action research from the state level perspective affords the opportunity to explore micro-level examples of schools or districts that are already taking steps to address compassion fatigue. Exploring outliers in ProQOL 5 t-scores of teachers who have scored high on compassion satisfaction while working in urban schools with any combination of low, medium, and high secondary traumatic stress t-scores could illuminate successful teaching and positive climate building strategies that help retain teachers at urban schools. In addition, case studies of these outliers or bright spots, can provide additional guidance and support to others as they seek to improve teacher retention by addressing compassion fatigue.

Fifth, given that the research in this dissertation is not causal, the disparities in correlations for teacher compassion satisfaction and fatigue t-scores and student racial groups (i.e. – the contrast between correlations with the percentages of White and African American students) warrant the use of causal relationship research methods to understand why exactly these results are occurring. Lastly, the correlations also show that teaching at the middle school level is a pivotal factor in this study. Additional research focused solely on the middle school

level could provide valuable insight into understanding the nuances of middle school teaching especially as it relates to compassion fatigue.

*“The saddest thing in life is wasted talent and the choices you make will shape your life forever.” —Chazz Palminteri*

The choices we make now to address the teacher shortage, especially in urban schools, will shape the lives of students forever. Education is too precious a commodity to allow some of our citizens to benefit greatly from it while others suffer mightily from a lack of access to it. Kozol (1991) argued that poverty forces impoverished people to accept inequalities in the school system. He expressed that impoverished schools and the students, staff (certificated and classified), and families who are a part of the schools are invisible to most of society. Such invisibility means that the needs of students, whether they be fiscal, mental, or academic, are ignored and thus never met. In the midst of concentrated poverty and in an attempt to remain visible, “they [parents] will accept the lesser injustice of two kinds of schools within one system. Even within a single school, they will accept a dual track of two separate schools within one building” (Kozol, 1991, p.186). As a state, we can and must do better.

It is time to accomplish the mission of the Every Student Succeeds Act in California (ESSA State Plan, 2018) and improve the quality of elementary and secondary education for students, especially low-income, disadvantaged, and high needs students once and for all. The ESSA was and still is a law that has given so many students in poverty the resources necessary to receive an equitable and strong education foundation. In 1965 President Johnson first signed the ESEA into law. At the signing he said, “by passing this bill [ESEA], we bridge the gap between helplessness and hope for more than five million educationally deprived children,” yet we know that gap still exists today (Johnson, 1965). It is a gap that will most certainly

continue to widen if there are not teachers willing to teach in the schools these students attend.

Willingness is a crucial word in this context. We already know that teachers who work in inner-city urban schools have a calling (Brunetti, 2006). And yet despite this calling, the system, which has created the challenging and sometimes unpleasant school climate and working conditions at urban schools that students and teachers now experience, is driving teachers away. The needs of urban students, as evidenced by the infusion of trauma informed practices, are no longer invisible. It is my hope that with this research the needs of urban schoolteachers will also no longer be invisible. Martin Luther King, Jr. pointed out long ago that the war against poverty, of which the ESEA is a part, “seemed to herald a new day of compassion. It was the bold assertion that the nation would no longer stand complacently by while millions of its citizens smothered in poverty in the midst of opulence” (King Jr, 1968, p. 86). As a system we recognized in the 1960’s that compassion is needed to address issues of poverty. Compassion is still needed today, especially in high poverty schools.

To that end, we must recognize the actions our national system has taken to create concentrated poverty and take precise measures to make what is wrong with the school climate and conditions of all schools – especially urban schools – right. As a state, we can do this by making compassion centered education California’s goal for public schools by shifting how we approach the development, training, and support of teachers via implementation of compassionate policies that boldly and definitively address teacher compassion fatigue (Wolpov et. al, 2009). With compassion, we can effectively use the system to change the system (Fullan and Quinn, 2016). And collectively, with compassion, we will be one step closer to manifesting

a future in which the California teacher shortage no longer exists. I, for one, look forward to this future. I hope you do too.

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## APPENDIX A: DRAFT RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

**Insert Date**

Dear [insert name]

My name is Jacquelyn Ollison and I am a doctoral student at the University of the Pacific, Sacramento Campus Benerd School of Education. You are invited to participate in a research study I am conducting, which involves the exploration of the effect compassion fatigue has on teacher attrition. Specifically, I am surveying teachers to explore if Compassion Fatigue is an issue with urban schoolteachers. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are teacher in an urban school setting.

Based on the overarching question: how might we best manifest a future in which the urban teacher shortage in California no longer exists? The following questions will drive the inquiry:

1. What effect does compassion fatigue have on an urban educator's ability to create school climates conducive to successful teaching and learning?
2. How does compassion fatigue impact a teacher's perception of their schools working conditions and climate?
3. What organizational supports can be put in place to help retain urban educators suffering from compassion fatigue and to thrive?

I would greatly appreciate if you could complete the brief Professional Quality of Life Scale questionnaire here [insert link]. The Professional Quality of Life Scale, known as the ProQOL 5, is the most commonly used measure of the positive and negative effects of working with people who have experienced extremely stressful events. There is also an accompanying demographic survey that will be used to help better understand how compassion fatigue is impacting the teaching professional. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Prior to completing this survey please read the attached informed consent form. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

By clicking the check box below, you indicate that you have read and understood the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate. Thank you for completing this survey by **(Insert Return Date)**.

I willingly agree ☐

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please call me at 916-204-2769 or Dr. Rod Githens at 916-739-7332. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Jacquelyn Ollison  
916-204-2769  
Doctoral Student  
University of the Pacific

Dr. Rod Githens  
916-739-7332  
Dissertation Chair  
University of the Pacific

## APPENDIX B: PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE (PROQOL)

***Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue  
(ProQOL) Version 5 (2009)***  
**Copyright**

© B. Hudnall Stamm, 2009. *Professional Quality of Life: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5 (ProQOL)*. /www.isu.edu/~bhstamm or www.proqol.org. The ProQOL measure may be freely copied as long as (a) author is credited, (b) no changes are made other than those authorized below, and (c) it is not sold. You may substitute the appropriate target group for / [helper] / if that is not the best term. For example, if you are working with teachers, replace / [helper] /with teacher. Word changes may be made to any word in italicized square brackets to make the measure read more smoothly for a particular target group.

**Introduction:**

When you *teach* people, you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you *teach* can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a *teacher*. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the *last 30 days*.

**Note:** This survey will be recreated in electronic format using a survey software such as Google Forms.

**1=Never 2=Rarely 3=Sometimes 4=Often 5=Very Often**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. I am happy.  | 10. I feel trapped by my job as a <i>teacher</i> .  |
| 2. I am preoccupied with more than one person I <i>teach</i> .  | 11. Because of my <i>teaching</i> , I have felt "on edge" about various things.               |
| 3. I get satisfaction from being able to <i>teach</i> people.   | 12. I like my work as a <i>teacher</i> .  |
| 4. I feel connected to others.  | 13. I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I <i>teach</i> .      |
| 5. I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.  | 14. I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have <i>taught</i> .           |
| 6. I feel invigorated after working with those I <i>teach</i> .   | 15. I have beliefs that sustain me.   |
| 7. I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a <i>teacher</i> .                              | 16. I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with <i>teaching</i> techniques and protocols. |
| 8. I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I <i>teach</i> . | 17. I am the person I always wanted to be.  |
| 9. I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I <i>teach</i> .                        | 18. My work makes me feel satisfied.  |
|   | 19. I feel worn out because of my work as a <i>teacher</i> .                                  |

20. I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I *teach* and how I could help them.
21. I feel overwhelmed because my case [work] load seems endless.
22. I believe I can make a difference through my work.
23. I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I *teach*.
24. I am proud of what I can do to *teach*.
25. As a result of my *teaching*, I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.
26. I feel "bogged down" by the system.
27. I have thoughts that I am a "success" as a *teacher*.
28. I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.
29. I am a very caring person.
30. I am happy that I chose to do this work.

## APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

**Introduction:** The following questions pertain to demographic information that will help to further guide the analysis of the results collected. Thank you in advance for completing all responses.

**Directions:** Enter the response that best describes you for each section below. Please answer all responses.

**Note:** This survey was created in electronic format using Google Forms.

- Demographic variables:
  - Gender:  
(Male) (Female)
  - Position:  
(Teacher) (Administrator)
  - Race/ Ethnicity:  
(African American) (Hispanic/Latino) (Asian/Pacific Islander) (White) (Other)
  - Age:
    - (fill in the blank)
  - Years at the School Site:
    - (fill in the blank)
  - Years Working in the Profession:
    - (fill in the blank)
- Work setting:
  - School Site Name: [insert here]  
(Elementary) (Middle) (High school)
  - School Site Zip Code:

The following information will be collected by the researcher for each school in which a teacher shared a zip code after all surveys are completed via CDE's Dataquest system.

- Percentage of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Priced Lunch:
  - (fill in the blank)
- Percentage of Socioeconomically disadvantaged students:
  - (fill in the blank)
- Percentage of English Language Learners:
  - (fill in the blank)
- Percentage of Students with Disabilities:
  - (fill in the blank)
- Percentage of African American Students:
  - (fill in the blank)
- Percentage of White students:
  - (fill in the blank)
- Percentage of Asian/Filipino/Pacific Islander Students:
  - (fill in the blank)

- Percentage of Hispanic Students:
  - (fill in the blank)

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL GUIDE, SCRIPT, AND QUESTIONS

<b>Interview Protocol Guide – Ollison Dissertation</b>		
<b>Materials</b>	<b>Interview Protocol Guide</b> Interview Questions Definitions Page (compassion fatigue and burnout) Consent forms Chart Paper, note paper, markers Recorder Tissues Helpline/hotline information	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Notes</b>
	<b>Select the Participants</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the interview participants</li> <li>• Assignment – identify the key stakeholders whom we should speak to [ use list of diversity training participants initially]</li> <li>• Send participants the materials to review prior to the meeting – definitions, and data visualizations – <b>(policy makers only)</b></li> <li>• Number of Interviewees _____</li> </ul>	Prework to be completed ahead of the interview
	<b>Determine duration and location of interview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length [insert number of hours]             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Range of 1-2 hours</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Location [insert room number]</li> </ul>	
	<b>Prepare/review interview protocol</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note: The discussion guide is an outline, prepared in advance, that covers the topics and issues to be discussed. It should contain few items, allowing some time and flexibility to pursue unanticipated but relevant issues.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Introduction (read aloud) – Teachers</b> Read Script Aloud	
	<b>Conduct the interview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use open-ended questions (see Interview Questions below)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do not use Why questions – puts people on the defensive</li> <li>○ Yes/no are one dimensional</li> <li>○ Use what and how</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Probe when necessary</li> <li>• Use naïve posture – convey you do not get it, so people will continue to clarify</li> <li>• Control dominating personalities – ways we prefer to work together</li> </ul>	

<b>Interview Protocol Guide – Ollison Dissertation</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use neutral comments— Anything else?” Why do you feel this way?”</li> <li>• Pause after each question (make sure no one chimes in right away to allow for think time)</li> </ul>	
	<b>Take notes during the interview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check to see if we can record</li> <li>• Get consents</li> <li>• Use participants language as much as possible</li> <li>• Reminder: Shortly after each interview, summarize the information, impressions, and implications of the information for the study.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Analyze results</b>	

### Script

Hello, my name is Jacquelyn Ollison. I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview today. I am studying to what extent compassion fatigue impacts urban educators’ ability to create, experience, and perceive their school’s climate and working conditions positively and if compassion fatigue plays a role in the teacher shortage, especially in urban schools. I seek to open a conversation on compassion fatigue to help educators become aware of its effects on their ability to create the school conditions and climate conducive to successful teaching and learning. I also want to help surface actions and implementation practices, educators at all levels of the system can employ now to mitigate the effects of compassion fatigue and its probable impact on the teacher shortage.

This interview is part of my dissertation journey. This interview is voluntary, and I want to thank you again for coming. Please note that it is very helpful for my process if this session is will be recorded to ensure I adequately capture your ideas during the conversation. However, the comments from the interview will remain confidential, and your name will not be attached to any comments you make or shared in my dissertation. Do I have your permission to record this interview? I just want to ask one more time, do you agree to participate in this study?

Today's conversation may cover sensitive material and could be upsetting. I want to encourage you to take care of yourself during today's conversation. Tell me if you start to feel uncomfortable in any way that would prohibit you from continuing. If you need to take a break or cannot continue, please let me know.

If after today's conversation you need more help, I encourage you to seek a licensed health professional for assistance. Do you have any other questions before we begin?

### **Semi-Structured Draft Interview Questions**

#### **Interviews with Urban School Teachers**

##### **A. Background Information**

- Tell me about your favorite teacher? Why were they your favorite?
- Tell why did you decided to become a teacher?
- Tell me why did you decided to work at [insert school name]?
- Describe [insert school name] school climate?
- Describe [insert school name] working conditions for teachers?

##### **B. Understanding Students**

- Tell me about your students.
  - Describe their background (race, socioeconomic status, home life).
  - Do you have a favorite student?
  - What makes them your favorite?
- Do you have any challenging students?
  - What makes the students challenging?
- Do you have any students who have experienced trauma? How do you know?
  - Share some examples.

### C. Experiences of Trauma

- Ask if the teacher has ever worked with students who have experienced trauma and how that affected them?
  - How did that make you feel?
- If the answer is yes, ask how they coped with their feelings. For example, did they experience fear, sleep difficulties, intrusive images, or try to avoid reminders of the student's traumatic experiences?
- Follow up with asking them to explain if it affected their ability to be teacher after the experience.
  - For example, were they distracted or off their game?

### D. Experiences of Burnout

- Can you recall a time when you experienced some level of burnout or trauma as a result of teaching?
  - Please share/describe.

### E. Home life

- Describe your typical work day from the moment you arrive on site until you finish working for the day.
- Do you work at home too? If so, for how long?
- Tell me about your typical evening home from work, describe what it's like?
- How does working at [insert school name] influence your home life?

### F. Support

- What types of supports are you receiving at work to help make the job easier to do?

- Are there any specific supports you wish you had that you are not currently receiving?
- How do you practice self-care?
- What are somethings that can be done at school/by the school to support your self-care?
- What are somethings that can be done at school/by the school to support your school's climate?
- What are somethings that can be done at school/by the school to support your school's working conditions?

#### G. Overall Impressions

- Some people say that working at an urban school can be traumatic, explain whether you agree or disagree with this sentiment.
- Tell me about something else that I should know that I have not asked about.
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

### **Facilitated Discussion with Education Leaders Draft Questions**

#### A. Background Information

- Tell me about your favorite teacher? Why were they your favorite?
- Tell me why you decided to become an educator/supporter of education?

#### B. Reflecting on the data

- What thoughts came up for you when reviewing the ProQOL 5 data from teachers that was shared with you?
  - What insights can you glean from this data?
- What thoughts came up for you when reviewing the teacher stories?

- What insights can you glean from this data?
  - What implications does the data shared with you have on your work?

#### C. Policy Implications

- How could this information inform policy regarding teacher retention and attrition?
- How could this information inform policy regarding school climate and working conditions?
- What ideas on California's teacher shortage policy come to mind in light of today's conversation?

#### D. Overall Impressions

- What are your key takeaways from today's conversation?
- Tell us something else that we should know that we have not talked about today.
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

## APPENDIX E: SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR ASSISTANCE

- Contact your Employer Assistance Program
  - An employee assistance program (EAP) is a work-based intervention program designed to identify and assist employees in resolving personal problems (e. g. , marital, financial, or emotional problems; family issues; substance/alcohol abuse) that may be adversely affecting the employee's performance. The plan may also include a wide array of other services, such as nurse advice telephone access, basic legal assistance and referrals, adoption assistance, or assistance finding elder care services. EAP services are usually made available not only to the employee but also to the employee's spouse, children and non-marital partner living in the same household as the employee. EAP plans are usually 100% paid by the employer. (Retrieved from <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/pages/whatisaneap.aspx>)
- Contact your health care provider for support and/or to make an appointment
- Locate a support group in your community
- Utilize the University of the Pacific Self-help Resources
- <http://www.Pacific.edu/Campus-Life/Student-Services/Counseling-and-Psychological-Services/Self-Help-Resources.html>
- Mental Health 24-Hour Crisis Line
  - If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please call (888) 881-4881.

## APPENDIX F: LIST OF VARIABLES USE FOR STATISTICAL ANALYSIS IN CYCLE 1

Please note: n represents a nominal variable; s represents a scale variable; and [n] n\_ represents a nominal variable recoded into a categorical variable with numerical values.

- [n] Gender
- [n] Race
- [n] Position
- [n] YrsPrfsn (number of years the teacher has worked in the profession)
- [s] Age
- [s] Numberofyearsattheschoolsite (number of years the teacher has worked at the school site)
- [s] RaceofStudentGroupWhite
- [s] RaceofStudentGroupAfricanAmerican
- [s] RaceofStudentGroupHispanicLatino
- [s] RaceofAsianPacificIslanderFilipino
- [s] SWD (students with disabilities)
- [s] FRPLSESDisadvantaged (Socioeconomically disadvantaged status of the school)
- [s] ELL (Percentage of English Learners at the school)
- [s] CS
- [s] BO
- [s] STS
- [s] tCS
- [s] tBO
- [s] tSTS
- [s] n\_gndr (numeric version of teacher gender)
  - 0 = F, 1 = M, 3 = Other)
- T\_F (Female teachers)
  - 1 = F; 0 = every other gender
- T\_M (Male Teachers)
  - 1 = M; 0 = every other gender
- T\_NB (Non-binary Teachers)
  - 1 = NB; 0 = every other gender
- [n] n\_etncty (numeric version of teacher ethnicity)
  - 0 = AA, 1 = W, 2 = HL, 3 = API, 4 = PN, TR = 5)
- T\_AA (African American Teacher)
  - 1 = AA; 0 = every other race
- T\_W (White Teachers)
  - 1 = W; 0 = every other race
- T\_HL (Hispanic/Latino Teacher)
  - 1 = HL; 0 = every other race
- T\_API (Asian Pacific Islander Teacher)
  - 1 = API; 0 = every other race
- T\_PN (Teacher preferred not to state race)
  - 1 = PN; 0 = every other race

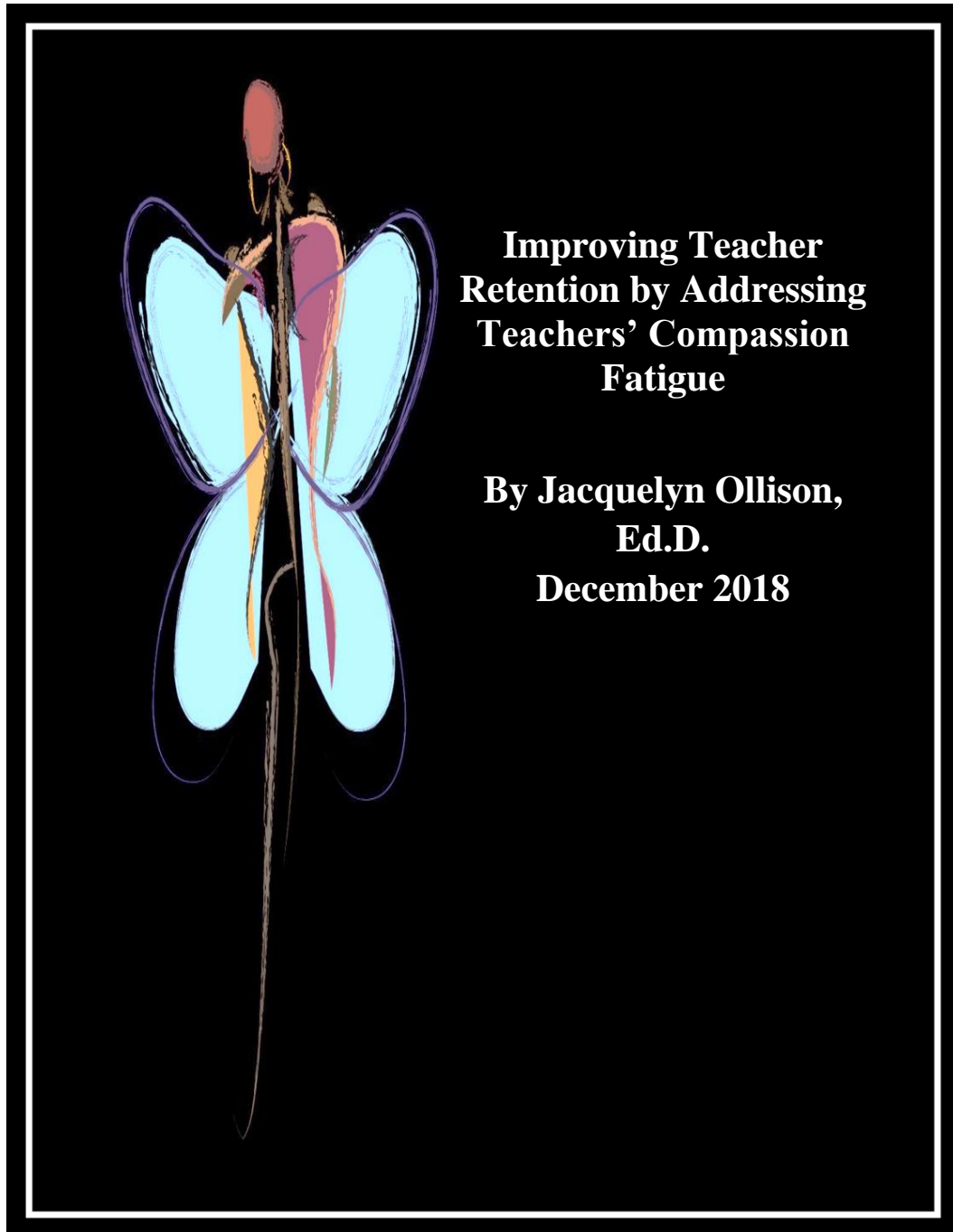
- T\_TR (Teacher declared two or more races)
  - 1= TR; 0 = every other race
- [n] n\_tpstn (numeric version of teachers' school level)
  - 0=TE, 1= TM, 2=TH
- [n] n\_SED (numeric range of socioeconomically disadvantaged status of school based on 70% or higher being typically used to represent a high-poverty school)
  - 0 = lowest thru 69.9%, 1 = 70% or higher
- [n] n\_EL (numeric range of English Learners at the school based on 20% representing the average percentage of English Learners in the State of California (Retrieved from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/cefelfacts.asp> on July 17, 2018))
  - 0 = lowest thru 19.99%, 1 = 20% or higher
- [n] n\_YrsSchlSt (numeric range of years at the school site based on that teachers who leave the profession usually do so in five years or less) (California Teacher Shortage Fact Sheet, CTA, 2016; Gray and Taie, 2015; Futernick, 2007)
  - 0 = lowest thru 4.99 years 1 = 5 years or higher
- [n] MinoritySchool (variable created to describe schools that have higher populations of AA and HL students than W and APIF students)
  - 0=False, 1= True
- [n] n\_YrsPrfsn (numeric range of years in the profession based on that teachers who leave the profession usually do so in five years or less) (California Teacher Shortage Fact Sheet, CTA, 2016; Gray and Taie, 2015; Futernick, 2007)
  - 0 = lowest thru 4.99 years 1 = 5 years or higher
- [n] n\_WStdnts (numeric range of white student population using the mean of the student group as the demarcation)
  - 0 = lowest thru mean, 1= mean thru highest
- [n] n\_AASdnts (numeric range of white student population using the mean of the student group as the demarcation)
  - 0 = lowest thru mean, 1= mean thru highest
- [n] n\_APIFStdnts (numeric range of African American student population using the mean of the student group as the demarcation)
  - 0 = lowest thru mean, 1= mean thru highest
- [n] n\_SWDStdnts (numeric range of student with disabilities population using the mean of the student group as the demarcation)
  - 0 = lowest thru mean, 1= mean thru highest
- [n] n\_HLStdnts (numeric range of Hispanic/LatinX student population using the mean of the student group as the demarcation)
  - 0 = lowest thru mean, 1= mean thru highest

## APPENDIX G: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR PROQOL 5 RESULTS

Mean ProQOL Scores by Sample Demographics				
		Compassion Satisfaction	Burnout	Secondary Traumatic Stress
Female	Mean	50.65	49.59	50.30
	<i>n</i>	78.00	78.00	78.00
	SD	10.35	10.28	9.66
Male	Mean	48.19	50.48	47.66
	<i>n</i>	19.00	19.00	19.00
	SD	7.79	8.40	9.80
Non-binary	Mean	44.56	57.73	57.11
	<i>n</i>	3.00	3.00	3.00
	SD	13.64	12.20	18.94
Percent of Change (Female /Male)		5%	-2%	5%
Socioeconomically disadvantaged status less than 70%	Mean	51.15	47.23	48.69
	<i>n</i>	40.00	40.00	40.00
	SD	9.61	8.79	8.45
Socioeconomically disadvantaged status more than 70%	Mean	49.69	51.43	51.44
	<i>n</i>	56.00	56.00	56.00
	SD	10.31	10.51	10.99
Percent of Change		-3%	8%	5%
Percentage of English Learners less than 20%	Mean	50.40	49.38	50.31
	<i>n</i>	38.00	38.00	38.00
	SD	9.14	8.78	10.49
Percentage of English Learners more than 20%	Mean	50.23	49.87	50.28
	<i>n</i>	58.00	58.00	58.00
	SD	10.60	10.80	9.85
Percent of Change		0%	1%	0%
Teaching less than 5 yrs.	Mean	49.11	50.95	50.98
	<i>n</i>	18.00	18.00	18.00
	SD	7.50	9.49	9.82
Teaching more than 5 yrs.	Mean	50.19	49.79	49.78
	<i>n</i>	82.00	82.00	82.00
	SD	10.50	10.15	10.09
Percent of Change		2%	-2%	-2%

Mean ProQOL Scores by Sample Demographics				
Teaching at School Site less than 5 yrs.	Mean	51.34	49.32	49.77
	<i>n</i>	46.00	46.00	46.00
	SD	8.81	8.84	9.61
Teaching at School Site more than 5 yrs.	Mean	48.89	50.61	50.29
	<i>n</i>	52.00	52.00	52.00
	SD	10.67	10.76	10.56
Percent of Change		-5%	3%	1%
Non-minority school Sum of African American Students and Hispanic Latino Students is less than Sum of White Students and Asian Pacific Islander and Filipino Students	Mean	50.03	48.56	49.57
	<i>n</i>	23.00	23.00	23.00
	SD	10.02	9.04	9.15
Minority school Sum of African American Students and Hispanic Latino Students is more than Sum of White Students and Asian Pacific Islander and Filipino Students	Mean	50.38	50.03	50.52
	<i>n</i>	73.00	73.00	73.00
	SD	10.06	10.32	10.38
Percent of Change		1%	3%	2%
<i>n</i> means n size; SD means standard deviation;				

APPENDIX H: POLICY BRIEF—IMPROVING TEACHER RETENTION BY ADDRESSING  
TEACHERS' COMPASSION FATIGUE



## A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Reader,

I took on this topic as a sort of love letter to teachers—all educators really. I was a student who was experiencing some very traumatic experiences. School was my safe haven. Teachers were the creators of that safe space for me. I loved helping to grade papers, clean up, run errands, tutor others because it gave me a sense of something beyond myself. It was an outlet that turned into an amazing career as a teacher and administrator for me.

However, as I grew in the profession and chose to work in urban schools with students who looked like me and were likely experiencing trauma themselves, the work began to take its toll. The student's trauma triggered traumatic memories within me, and before I knew what happened, I was in the midst of full-blown post-traumatic stress disorder, brought on in part because of the secondary trauma I was experiencing. To heal I focused on self-care and eventually left the school site. With intensive healing and support, I was able to make a full recovery. However, I decided not to return to teaching or school site administration. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about returning, but I hear myself saying no—there is something else you must do first. I feel called to tell my story. To tell the stories of so many beautiful educators, so that they too can get the help they need to continue being beacons of light for students.

Along my healing journey, I came across the term Compassion Fatigue. According to Charles Figley (1995) Compassion Fatigue is the mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion that comes with working people who are in constant states of distress or trauma. Left unaddressed it can cause extreme mental and physical health challenges to the caregiver (Figley, 1995). The term immediately resonated with every educator I talked to about Compassion Fatigue and with me. I recognized that Compassion Fatigue played a role in my departure from direct student service. I know that departure is precisely why I chose to explore whether Compassion Fatigue in urban educators is contributing to the California teacher shortage. I believe in this work and know that if taken seriously it could change the educational landscape for urban students and teachers for the better.

The recommendations contained in this brief are based on my dissertation. This brief is being disseminated widely to as many educators as possible, and especially those who play direct roles in shaping education policy for teachers and students. I share this with you in hopes that you will sponsor me with your support and advocacy of this important work. This research shows that Compassion Fatigue is a real concern for teachers. We must do our part to help mitigate its effects.

Thank you for in advance for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

Jacquelyn Ollison  
[ollisonj.yve@gmail.com](mailto:ollisonj.yve@gmail.com)

Suggested Citation: Ollison, J.YH. (2019). *Improving teacher retention by addressing teachers' compassion fatigue* (Excerpt from and unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of the Pacific, Sacramento, CA.

## BACKGROUND AND ABSTRACT

### Abstract

The recommendations in this brief are based on the findings of a study that analyzed Compassion Fatigue and its relationship with urban teachers' perception of their school's climate and working conditions utilizing a mixed methods practical action research approach involving three action cycles. Cycle 1 established a statistical baseline of evidence-based data using the Professional Quality of Life Scale version 5 (ProQOL 5) to measure Compassion Fatigue in 100 school teachers (Stamm, 2010). Cycle 2 gathered interview data collected from teachers to make real the experience of teaching at urban schools. Cycle 3 involves dissemination of the data via a policy brief.

The brief begins with background information on the teacher shortage, urban student trauma, and Compassion Fatigue. It is followed by a summary of the findings from Action Cycles 1 and 2 which begin on page 5. Next, there are three comprehensive sets of recommendations for action organized in an educator/teacher-focused multi-tiered system of support (EMTSS) aimed at promoting a healthy and robust teacher workforce at all levels, PreK-12. The three tiers address all teachers who are entering or already a part of the teaching profession, some teachers who work at urban school sites, and few teachers who work at schools in extreme crisis such as from natural disasters, school shootings, and suicide clusters (OCDE, n.d.). Illustrative teacher vignettes derived from the interviews in Action Cycle 2 are included throughout the brief. The brief ends with a summary sheet that explains the characteristics of Compassion Fatigue and how it manifests at the individual and organizational level.

Although the research conducted in this study was with teachers, the recommendations have implications for all education system actors including teachers, classified staff, administrators, unions, state and school board members, superintendents, and policymakers. The term educator will be used as appropriate throughout the brief. It is recommended that the reader start from the beginning, but the information does not have to be read sequentially. If time is limited, start with the Compassion Fatigue summary sheet on page 19, followed by the summary of findings on page 5, and then end with the recommendations beginning on page 7.

Please contact Jacquelyn Ollison at [ollisonj.yve@gmail.com](mailto:ollisonj.yve@gmail.com) for additional questions or information. The full dissertation will be available in the Summer of 2019 on the University of the Pacific Dissertation Database.

## GRATITUDE

Thank you to all of the wonderful thought partners who took the time to encourage, read, edit, and suggest enhancements for shaping this policy brief. I would especially like to thank Amanda Datnow, Shelly Masur, Hanna Ma, Brent Malicote, LeAnn Fong-Batkin, Monica Nepomuceno, Barb Murchison, Glen Price, and Guy Ollison. Your support is appreciated more than words can express.

### Background

California is facing an alarming teacher shortage (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas, 2016; 2018). California will need approximately 20,000 teachers in the 2019-20 school year but is only

on track to produce just under 12,000 (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Urban schools which typically have high percentages of low-income and minority students also have higher teacher attrition rates than most public schools and, in some cases, four times as many uncertified teachers (Sutcher et al., 2016). The teaching shortage has troubling adverse effects on urban students' academic achievement, often resulting in a decline in academic performance (Ingersoll & May, 2011).

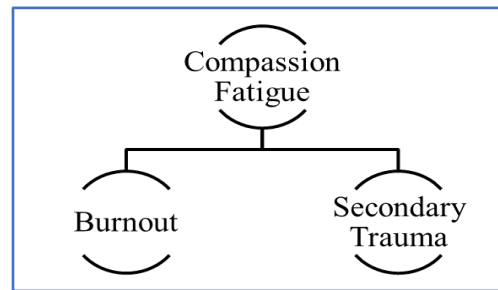
*“When there are not enough teachers to go around, the schools with the fewest resources and least desirable working conditions are the ones left with vacancies”  
(Sutcher et al., 2016, p. 5)*

The life circumstances affecting urban students are concerning for the educators who teach and serve them because many urban students experience trauma which can lead to urban students experiencing mental and psychological health challenges including the development of post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD (APA Task Force, 2005). Urban students with PTSD often display poor behavior in school that may include rudeness, irritability, truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, classroom misbehavior, and academic difficulties (APA Task Force, 2005).

As such, urban teachers serve, support, and teach trauma victims. Unfortunately, dealing with the traumatic issues urban students present can cause a weariness that affects the teacher's ability to maintain a positive perception of the school and the teaching profession (Quartz, Olsen, & Duncan-Andrade, 2003). Research shows that working conditions and school climates that are life-affirming not only help students, but they also help sustain and retain teachers (Quartz et. al, 2003).

Anyone who is exposed repeatedly to details of traumatic events can potentially be traumatized themselves and over time “the empathic strain and general exhaustion resulting” from repeated interactions with distressed or traumatized people is Compassion Fatigue (Figley, 1995; Turgoose & Maddox, 2017, p.172). Compassion Fatigue is the physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that comes from working with people who are in constant states of distress or trauma (Lerias & Byrne, 2003). Stamm (2010), conceptualized Compassion Fatigue as the combination of secondary trauma and burnout. Secondary trauma is a regular occurrence for anyone who works with people who suffer from trauma (Figley, 1995). See Figure 1.

**Figure 1 – Stamm’s (2010) Conceptualization of Compassion Fatigue**



Left unaddressed, Compassion Fatigue can cause detrimental effects on the caregiver’s mental, physical, and emotional health (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). Symptoms for Compassion Fatigue include depression, numbing of feelings, insomnia, anxiety, startled easily or jumpy, irritability and moodiness, susceptible to angry outbursts and of one’s ability to function normally at work, home, and in social situations (Bride et al. 2007; Figley (Ed) 1995; Lerias & Byrne, 2003; Wagaman et al., 2015; Yassen, 1995). And, at the organizational level, Compassion Fatigue symptoms include chronic absenteeism, high turnover rates, friction between employees, friction between staff and management, and the “inability for teams to work well together, strong reluctance toward change, [and an] inability of staff to believe improvement is possible” (Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project ©, 2017).

*"If we expect teachers to work with students who are regularly traumatized by poverty and violence, we have to support them in meaningful and powerful ways" (Quartz, Olsen, and Duncan-Andrade, 2003, p. 28).*

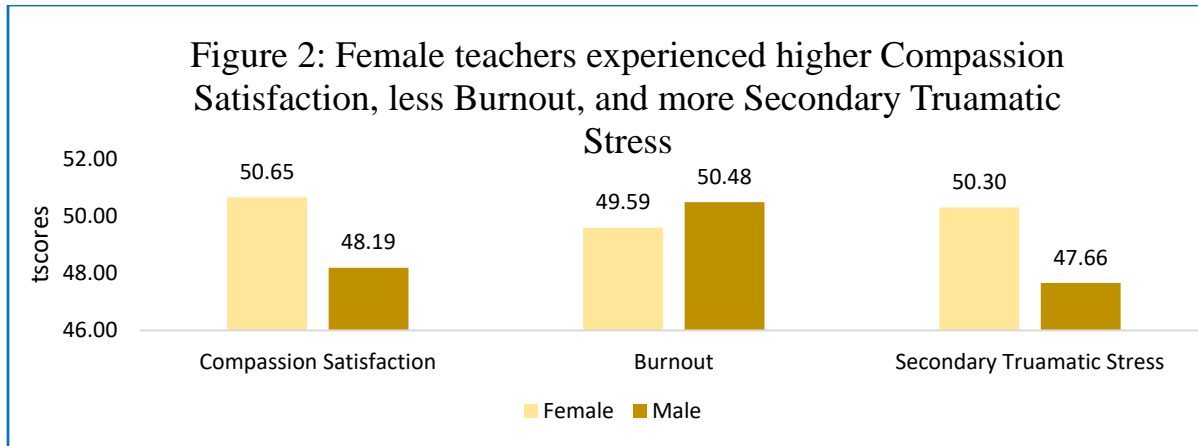
Furthermore, Compassion Fatigue may affect a teacher’s perception of their school’s working conditions and climate. Research shows that stress levels and burnout can impact a teacher’s perception of school climate, and since Compassion Fatigue is a stress response to trauma (Stamm, 2010), it is plausible that Compassion Fatigue can impact a teacher’s ability to see their school’s climate and working conditions positively (McCarthy et al., 2016). This should be a major concern for policy makers looking to address the teacher shortage in meaningful ways. The purpose of this brief is to shed light on actions and implementation practices that educators at all levels of the system can employ now to mitigate the effects of Compassion Fatigue and its effect on California’s teacher shortage.

The recommendations contained within this brief cast a broad net over California’s education landscape because they target areas that shift how teachers are prepared, expected to perform, and supported. They are born of research aimed at understanding the experiences urban schoolteachers have with Compassion Fatigue. By exploring teachers experiences with Compassion Fatigue, system actors like the state superintendent of public instruction, the state board of education members state legislature (Kirtman & Fullan, 2016), gain an awareness of what teachers are experiencing in all aspects of their work, including those aspects that are unpleasant and born of suffering. With awareness, compassionate responses and policies that genuinely make a difference in the life of teachers, and students, can be created and implemented. If implemented these recommendations will shift how California approaches its efforts to support and retain urban educators.

## Summary of Findings

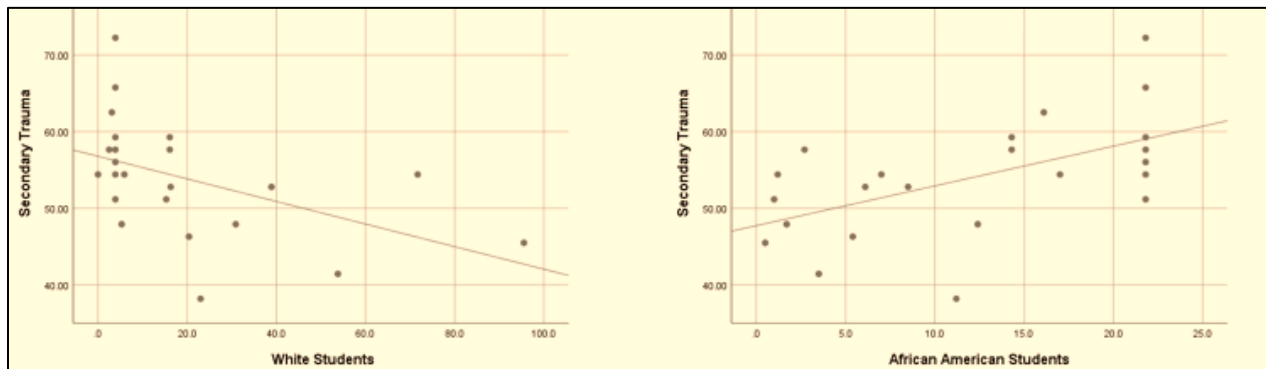
In this study, the ProQOL 5 was administered to teachers throughout the state of California, and subsequent follow-up interviews were conducted. The sample pool of 100 participants contained 35% of elementary school teachers, 24% of middle school teachers, 37% of high school teachers.

- **Female teachers experience more Compassion Fatigue.** On average female teachers scored approximately 5% higher on compassion satisfaction t-scores, 2% lower on burnout t-scores, and 5% higher on secondary traumatic stress t-scores than male teachers (see Figure 2).



- **Compassion Fatigue is more acute with beginning teachers than with veteran teachers.** Teachers with less than five years working in the profession experience higher Burnout, higher Secondary Traumatic Stress, and less Compassion Satisfaction than teachers with more than five years' experience (see Figure 3).
- **Teachers working at high poverty schools experience statistically significant differences in compassion satisfaction and fatigue than teachers at low poverty schools.** They experience less compassion satisfaction, higher burnout, and higher secondary traumatic stress.
- **Linear regression models showed that the percentage of African American and White students in the school is a statistically significant predictor of Compassion Fatigue.**
- **At the middle school level, the socioeconomically disadvantaged status of the school is a statistically significant predictor of teacher compassion satisfaction and burnout scores.**
- **Correlation tests revealed statistically significant relationships between teachers' Compassion Fatigue and the school's racial demographics and the English Language Learner student group.** For example, as the school's percentage of white students increases so do compassion satisfaction scores; burnout and secondary traumatic stress score decline. In contrast, as the school's percentage of African American students increases compassion satisfaction declines and burnout and secondary traumatic stress t-scores increase. When controlled for poverty there still exists a statistically significant negative relationship between white students and secondary traumatic stress scores of teachers at the middle school level. There also exists a statistically significant positive relationship between high school teacher burnout scores and African American students. Figure 4 illustrates this relationship.

**Figure 4. Side by Side View of teacher Secondary Traumatic Stress tcores Compared to the Percentage of White and African American Students at the school site**



Follow-up interviews with teacher participants illuminate additional areas of concern for policymakers.

- Secondary trauma from students is not the only trauma teachers are experiencing.** Trauma is school conditions and climate based. Parents or school site administration sometimes cause it. Common threads amongst all interviews were the implication that school administrators do not always understand the teacher's everyday classroom experience and that parents sometimes feel like an enemy, even though they are not supposed to be.
- Teachers still have a job to do.** The obligation and duty felt to ensure students are learning the curriculum are always foremost in the mind of the teacher, *and they feel guilty when the obligation is not met*. The guilt is compounded by teachers struggle with knowing that it is easier to have compassion for students who are easier to handle than others. Often, the students are so challenging it inhibits the teachers desire to want to engage with the student let alone teach them. What's more the perception of these students, all students, factors into the teacher's perceptions of the school's climate – sometimes for the worse.
- School climate and Conditions matter.** The character and quality of the school (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012, p. 1191) and the values, expectations, interpersonal relationships, critical resources, supports, and practices that foster or inhibit a welcoming, inclusive, and academically challenging environment are extremely important. Teachers have concerns about how actions taken by school environment actors including parents, students, other teachers, and administrators affect their ability to create safe and academically challenging environments. Teacher morale is often affected by how students are treated or how students are treating them.

If California is serious about producing and retaining high-quality teachers at all schools, and particularly, at urban schools, efforts to mitigate Compassion Fatigue should be undertaken immediately. The following recommendations are intentionally modeled after California's marquee component of the system of support aimed at improving school climate and conditions for student learning—the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). MTSS is “a method of organization” (CDE, 2018) used to align existing resources and initiatives to “promote the building of a stronger student academic and behavioral support system at the local level” (ESSA State Plan, 2018, p. 93)

## Recommendations

California should develop an educator/teacher-focused multi-tiered system of support (EMTSS) aimed at promoting a healthy and robust teacher workforce at all levels, PreK-12. The three tiers should address all teachers who are entering or already a part of the teaching profession, some teachers who work specifically at urban school sites, and few teachers who work at schools in extreme crisis such as from natural disasters, school shootings, and suicide clusters (OCDE, n.d.). The EMTSS should contain strategies that promote teacher retention through the healing of Compassion Fatigue. The following recommendations further illuminate components that should be included within EMTSS delineated by tier and specifically address state and local level policymakers. Although the recommendations are separated by tier they should be enacted as needed.

### Recommendations for Tier I: All Teachers – Those Entering Or Already Working In The Profession

#### *State Level—In situ Educators*

The California Department of Education (CDE), the State Board of Education (SBE), and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) should work together to:

- Update the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) to include recognition of Compassion Fatigue as an occupational hazard for educators, especially those who work with traumatized students (Figley, 1995).
- Design mandatory training on Compassion Fatigue in accordance with the California Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1973 (Cal/OHSA) injury & illness prevention guidelines for all educators as required by Title 8 California Code of Regulations (T8 CCR) § 3203 (Department of Industrial Relations, 1991). The training should be taken by all PreK-12 educators (certificated and classified). A suggested pathway for recognition is to work collaboratively with the Health in All Policies Task Force to submit a petition for a new health safety standard to California’s Occupational Safety & Health Standards Board (OSHSB).
- Develop professional development training focused on Compassion Fatigue, educator self-care strategies, adult social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies, and mental health first aid (MHFA) crisis response strategies (National Council, 2015) that support the health and wellbeing of students and staff.

#### *State Level—New Teachers*

The California Department of Education (CDE), the State Board of Education (SBE), and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) should work together to:

- Expand domains within California’s Teaching Performance Expectations (TPE), which are “purposely aligned to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession” (CTC, 2017, p. 2) to include recognition of Compassion Fatigue. Recommended expansions include:
  - Adding language to TPE 2: *Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning* regarding understanding and recognizing indicators that students may be experiencing trauma or are in crisis.
  - Adding language to TPE 6: *Developing as a Professional Educator* such as beginning teachers demonstrate awareness of Compassion Fatigue and educator self-care and establish self-care

goals and make progress to attend to their own adult social-emotional needs to maintain a healthy classroom and school environment.

- Include the development of a course on Compassion Fatigue and secondary trauma within the Preliminary Multiple Subject and Single Subject Credential Program Standards. The course should describe what Compassion Fatigue is and how it is measured such as with the use of the Professional Quality of Life Scale (Stamm, 2010). The course should also describe symptoms for individuals and organizations, factors that influence susceptibility, strategies to mitigate it, and self-care strategies (Figley, 1995) that can be added to all credential program (teacher and administrative) coursework requirements. The same updates should occur in Administrative Credential Programs.
- Update the requirement for credential program design and curriculum to adequately prepare teachers to understand the needs of urban students within the Preliminary Multiple Subject and Single Subject Credential Program Standards. Updates should address understanding trauma as an urban student condition, and the effects trauma may have on the student's social, academic, behavioral performance, and the educators who support them. The same updates should occur in Administrative Credential Programs.
- Update credential program coursework (teacher and administrative) on unconscious bias. The updated course should assist teachers to understand how their own hidden biases may be impacting their behavior and perceptions of urban students, especially when teachers are experiencing burnout and secondary traumatic stress. When educators bring their hidden biases "into conscious awareness...it is at least partly up to each individual to use that knowledge to move beyond dismay and to find ways to understand hidden biases and, if desired, to neutralize them before they translate into behavior" (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016, p.70) that may be potentially harmful to students and the educators themselves.



### **Secondary Trauma Impedes Teacher Self-Efficacy Alice, Elementary School Teacher**

My students come from diverse backgrounds, and they have different personalities and behavior issues. I think it is easier to handle students' issues when you are dealing with four and five-year-old students though easy may not be the right word. I think I am more accepting of it because they are so young. Because, as a teacher, you deal with a whole lot of emotion. I try really hard not to bring my personal situations into the classroom so that I can deal with my students' personal situation because my classroom is a safe haven, but emotionally it's a bit much. You know, when I first became a teacher, sometimes I would come home and cry just seeing the situation that these kids have to deal with, and not knowing what they're going to go back home to when they leave my classroom. It hurt my heart actually. It was a bit emotional. I did have some sleepless nights worrying about what was going to happen to this child or the well-being of that child. There were days where I didn't want to be in the classroom. There were days I would have to deal with myself and deal with pulling my emotions together. At times it did affect me and my teaching abilities. Eventually, I decided that I couldn't give my students all my worrying about a specific situation or something like that. I had to pull myself together and I told myself, 'it's not about me, it's about these kids, and you are all they have right now in this classroom. I have to be stronger than this, even though it did bother me.'

### *County Level—In situ Educators*

- Build the capacity of county offices of education to support and provide education, training and technical assistance to school districts and administrators regarding Compassion Fatigue.
- Dramatically increase the quality, availability, and access to stellar resources and supports regarding family engagement. Ensure that the resources recognize the dual nature of the parent-teacher relationship. The resources should support educators to engage effectively with parents and vice versa.
- Engage in practices to strengthen trust, partnership, and relationships between administrators and their staff such as the California Labor Management Initiative. See [California Labor Management Initiative](#).



#### **Secondary Trauma Is Not the Only Trauma That Teachers Experience** **Abby, Middle School Teacher**

I remember being called out of class by my administrator to go down to the office to meet with a parent. The administrator said they'd cover my class so that I could take the meeting. I remember feeling taken aback, 'you want me to lose 20 minutes of instructional time to take a meeting right now?' I figured they must of have had a reason and so I went downstairs to meet with the parent. I was in for such a shock, because the parent preceded to verbally attack me, yell at me, and describe all the ways they thought I had failed her child. After a few minutes, the administrator found coverage for my class and joined me in the meeting but didn't say anything. He just sat there while this parent yelled and berated me. I even asked the administrator if he had anything to say, because I wanted to give him a chance to protect me, but he didn't. I felt horrible. I felt set-up to fail because the fact is, they pulled me out of class, so I could meet with the parent and did not let me know what I was walking into. Even still, they could have said something. That single incident affected me greatly – I became afraid to talk to parents after that. I would dread making phone calls to parents. My breathing would get so rapid, that I would hyperventilate. It only got better once I talked about it with the school psychologist. That whole incident had a big impact on me.

### *District Level—In situ Educators*

Pertinent school district personnel including district office staff, school site administrators, psychologists, counselors, and teacher leaders should actively work together to:

- Expand crisis response strategies for traumas such as suicide and catastrophic events to include support for school site staff.
- Institute professional development training, developed at the state level, focused on Compassion Fatigue, educator self-care strategies and mental health first aid crisis response strategies (National Council, 2015) that support the health and wellbeing of students and staff.

### *Site Level—In situ Educators*

- Improve school climate and conditions at each school site. Suggested mechanisms for improvement include, but are not limited to:

- Set aside time to intentionally engage teachers in conversations regarding the climate of the school.
- Review the school climate survey results as required for the local indicator measure of Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) Priority 6 with all school staff. Using the data, meaning, and use cycle recommended by the School Conditions and Climate work group convened by the CDE at the request of the SBE will help the school to understand their school’s climate dynamics better. See page 28 of the [School Climate and Conditions Workgroup Recommendations](#) for a description of the data, meaning, and use cycle. See page 10 of the [local performance indicator guide](#) for details on the local indicator process for LCFF Priority 6.

### **Recommendations for Tier 2: Some Teachers – Those Who Work At Urban School Sites**

#### ***District Level—Some Teachers***

- Update budget to ensure urban school sites have enough financial resources to serve the student population effectively. Students should have on-site access to the same technology, curriculum, and programs that low poverty schools have.
- Work with teacher union leadership to ensure urban school sites have access to highly qualified and experienced teacher personnel who currently work in the district.

#### ***Site Level—Some Teachers***

Improve school climate and conditions at each school site. Suggested mechanisms for improvement include, but are not limited to:

- Administrators should actively work to show they care, appreciate, and understand the teacher experience by acknowledging the difficulty of the work, providing teacher-informed support and practices, and intentionally checking-in with staff who appear to be struggling. The appreciation should be regular, meaningful, and sincere (Pennington, 2017).
- Establish check-in and check-out processes (Kofman, 1994) for school site meetings to improve the effectiveness of staff meeting time.
- Attend to the adult SEL needs of school site staff (certificated and classified) by adopting practices that support educators’ ability to “effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (CDE, 2018, p. 2)
- Adapt the restorative justice practice of dialogue circles designed to build community, healing, and reconciliation especially after trauma such as suicides, or after particularly distressing interactions with students to address school site staff (certificated and classified) needs for self-care, processing, and support (Clifford, 2015).



**It Is Easier to Have Compassion for Students Who Are Easier to Handle**  
**Adam, Middle School Teacher**

My principal used to brag about our school. He would say we will accept any student and work with them. I remember thinking that is not a good thing. I mean some of these kids do not belong here. Their parents would try and pretend like they had some sort of disability, but really, they were just making excuses for their child's poor behavior. Take this year, for example, David, was this awful student. He was being passed around from class to class because nobody could handle him. He was just filled with rage. Whenever I would tell him to take a seat or something, he would just howl and yell nasty things at me, yes, he totally was just triggering me. There's one day, I'll never forget it, where I'm calling every single person in the school because I needed to have him removed from class and none of them were answering their phone. I'm like, 'where is admin? I need this kid out of here!' And this kid was for five minutes, FIVE minutes, yelling at me in front of the class, at the top of his lungs. "You motherf@\*#ing, f@\*# this. I am not f@\*#ing following your f@\*#ing rules. You f@\*#ing suck. Nobody wants or likes your class. Everyone hates you." This is literally only two weeks in the school year, and nobody knows me, you know, and I just said, 'no I am not dealing with this. I am not!' I told admin 'you cannot keep this kid in my class yelling at me every single day.'

Then the mom shows up at my door one day while I am in the middle of teaching class with a visitor pass on her shirt. She wanted to talk to me right then and there and said she would wait. And she stood at the door, tapping her foot, with her arms crossed looking at me with a real um disdain. I didn't know who she was at the time, and I was really taken aback. Then I come to find out she was the boy's mother. And she was there because her boy is a good boy, he doesn't do anything wrong. And, it was all me, it was me. I was the one in the wrong. Get this; admin even started looking at me like it was my fault. I and was like, 'no! This kid has yelled at me every day. He cannot stay in my class.' He finally got moved out of my class, and the other teachers were telling me, well complaining to me, about this kid. He owns the school now. He does whatever he wants.

Yeah, we take every kid at this school, and maybe it makes the school and the principal look good, but teachers, we are all burning out on these very few kids who are just so disruptive to the learning process. It's like admin doesn't realize that they are over compassionate for these kids and it actually breeds a lack of compassion in us for these students. Then we start getting more hardened and feeling like we've got to be the one to control the kid if, administration is not going to do it. It is so demoralizing and tiring, which is why I am retiring. 'I can't take teaching anymore.'

<b>Recommendations for Tier 3: Few Teachers – Those Who Work At School Sites In Extreme Crisis</b>
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*State Level—Few Teachers*

The State Legislature and the California Department of Education (CDE) should work together to:

- Ensure California can effectively respond to the mental health needs of students, staff, and families as a result of natural disasters such as wildfires, school shootings, suicide clusters and so on. Recommendations include, but are not limited to:
  - Allocate resources to pay for the mental health needs of students, staff, and families experiencing trauma as a result of natural disasters such as wildfires, school shootings, suicide clusters and so on.
  - Allocate resources to CDE to coordinate and support statewide efforts specific to mental health and trauma needs of students, staff, and families experiencing trauma as a result of natural disasters such as wildfires, school shootings, suicide clusters and so on. The money should go directly to CDE given the leadership role played on the governor’s office of emergency services (Cal OES) Schools Task Force and unified coordination group and the CDE’s and State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) ability to convene multi-agency partners statewide. Coordination and Support efforts should include, but are not limited to:
    - Establish a statewide mental health crisis response and recovery team that includes, at a minimum, members from the CDE, county offices of education (COEs), county departments of behavioral health, local government agencies, local educational agencies (LEAs), Cal OES, institutes of higher education, and mental health and trauma professionals and experts (Demaria & Schonfeld, 2013). Other stakeholder agencies should be included as needed. Responsibilities of the team should include:
    - Build the capacity of COEs and LEAs to effectively provide basic trauma and MHFA training to affected LEAs and schools by providing professional development in this area. Suggested curriculum includes the National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE curriculum (NASP, 2016). See information on PREPaRE at <https://www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum/about-prepare>.
    - Establish a list of vetted volunteer mental health service providers willing and able to provide support to affected counties and school districts throughout the state as needed. The list should be regularly monitored to ensure volunteers have valid credentials and are in good standing with their employers.
    - Coordinate and provide direct support to county offices of education who have school districts that are experiencing an extreme crisis. For example, the CDE coordinated with and supported Butte COE to provide mental health and trauma counseling for students, staff, and families.
    - Develop a model mental health “high quality school emergency operations plan” (REMS TA Center, n.d.) that COEs and LEAs can emulate. The plan should include “PPD-8 defines preparedness around five mission areas: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery” (REMS TA Center, n.d.).

***County Level—Few Teachers***

- Ensure school districts in the county’s region participate in basic trauma and MHFA training.
- Ensure school districts develop and adopt mental health emergency operations plans.

***District level—Few Teachers***

- Ensure all school sites develop and adopt mental health emergency plan operations. The plans should be reviewed with staff on an annual basis.



**Teacher’s Experience Secondary Trauma  
Amy, Highschool Teacher**

This last year was one of the roughest years I have ever had. My colleagues and I couldn’t wait for the school year to be over. The fires and mudslides just wrecked our city. Some of my students lost all of their belongings, and one student even lost their life. I tried to do what I could to help them, but even now just talking about this makes me want to cry. Yet, even with all of that, in one year, a student committed suicide at the end of the year right before graduation. I remember the administrator interrupting class over the loudspeaker to ask us, teachers, to read an email that was just sent to us. I did, and it was all I could do to keep from crying. The administrator apologized in the email because they did not know how else to tell us, given that so many students were asking about it and they did not want us to be caught off guard. Then, the administrator got on the loudspeaker again and asked us to read the email to the students because rumors were flying like rampant through the school by that time. I read it to my students. I told them that it was a hard letter to read and that I would probably cry, which I did, but I got through it. The student who had died was the same grade as the students in my class, and so a lot of them knew the student. The room it was so heavy with the weight of the silence and pain. We just sat there. Finally, to lighten the load, I just said, ‘well we are almost done with the lesson, why don’t we just finish it.’ I had never seen my students so happy to do math as I did at that moment.

# What is Compassion Fatigue?

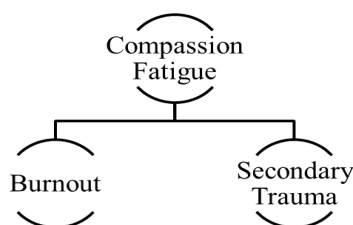
Compassion Fatigue is the cost one pays when caring too much about a trauma victim (Figley, 1995). The cost is so impactful that one's mental health can suffer as a result (Figley, 1995).

Compassion Fatigue refers to the detrimental effects to mental health one experiences because of helping others who suffer from trauma. The physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that comes from working with people who are in constant states of distress (Lerias & Byrne, 2003).

Symptoms occur in response to witnessing the trauma of others or the second-hand transmission of traumatic experiences (Figley, 1995).

Synonyms for Compassion:

Care, Concern, Kindness, Empathy, Sympathy, Consideration



Compassion Fatigue as Conceptualized  
by Stamm 2010



## Experience at the individual level (Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project ©, 2017)

- Adverse behaviors that affect the one's desire and ability to offer adequate services to their client
- Mental and physical exhaustion
- Excessive blaming
- Receiving lots of complaints
- Voicing complaints about administrative work
- Apathy
- Sadness
- Trouble sleeping – nightmares
- Flashbacks of traumatic experiences
- Poor self-care
- Chronic illness
- Denial that anything is wrong

## Experience at the organizational level (Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project ©, 2017)

- The organization itself suffers
- Chronic absenteeism
- Spiraling worker's comp costs
- High turnover rates
- Friction between employees
- Friction between staff and management
- "Inability for teams to work well together, strong reluctance toward change, [and an] inability of staff to believe improvement is possible" (Compassion Fatigue awareness project ©, 2017)
- "Organizational setting and bureaucratic constraints, inadequate supervision, lack of availability of client resources, and lack of support from professional colleagues" (Newell & MacNeil, 2010, p. 61).

## Ten factors that influence susceptibility (Turgoose and Maddox, 2017)

- Professionals' own trauma history (personally experienced or unresolved, first-hand)
- Mindfulness (lack of)
- Empathy,
- Caseload (large numbers of traumatized clients)
- Burnout
- Compassion satisfaction (liking and feeling effective at job)
- Sex (females more susceptible than males)
- Religion
- Work experience (longer time working with child trauma victims)
- Age (older)

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## APPENDIX I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY IMPROVING TEACHER RETENTION BY ADDRESSING TEACHERS' COMPASSION FATIGUE

### **Improving Teacher Retention by Addressing Teachers' Compassion Fatigue**

By Jacquelyn Ollison, Ed.D., December 2018

California is facing an alarming teacher shortage (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas, 2016; 2018). Urban schools which typically have high percentages of low-income and minority students also have higher teacher attrition rates than most public schools and, in some cases, four times as many uncertified teachers (Sutcher et al., 2016). The teaching shortage has troubling adverse effects on urban students' academic achievement, often resulting in a decline in academic performance (Ingersoll & May, 2011). In California, over approximately 60% of students are low-income/urban students (CDE, Dataquest, 2018). The life circumstances affecting urban students are concerning for educators who teach and serve them because many urban students experience trauma which can lead to urban students experiencing mental and psychological health challenges including the development of post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD (APA Task Force, 2005).

As such, urban teachers serve, support, and teach trauma victims. Secondary trauma is a regular occurrence for anyone who works with people who suffer from trauma (Figley, 1995). Over time "the empathic strain and general exhaustion resulting" (Turgoose & Maddox, 2017, p.172) from repeated interactions with distressed or traumatized people is Compassion Fatigue (Figley, 1995; Turgoose & Maddox). Stamm (2010), conceptualized Compassion Fatigue as the combination of secondary trauma and burnout.

Left unaddressed, Compassion Fatigue can cause detrimental effects on the caregiver's mental, physical, and emotional health (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). Symptoms for Compassion Fatigue include depression, numbing of feelings, anxiety, irritability and moodiness, susceptibility to angry outbursts and impediments to one's ability to function normally at work, home, and in social situations (Bride et al. 2007; Figley (Ed) 1995; Lerias & Byrne, 2003; Wagaman et al., 2015; Yassen, 1995). At the organizational level, Compassion Fatigue symptoms include chronic absenteeism, high turnover rates, friction between employees, friction between staff and management, and "inability for teams to work well together, strong reluctance toward change, [and an] inability of staff to believe improvement is possible" (Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project ©, 2017).

Research shows that stress levels and burnout can impact a teacher's perception of school climate. Since Compassion Fatigue is a stress response to trauma (Stamm, 2010), it is plausible that Compassion Fatigue can impact a teacher's ability to see his or her school's climate and working conditions positively (McCarthy et al., 2016). This should be a major concern for policy makers looking to address the teacher shortage in meaningful ways. If California is serious about producing and retaining high-quality teachers at all schools, particularly at urban schools, efforts to mitigate Compassion Fatigue should be undertaken immediately.

The following recommendations are based on research aimed at understanding the experiences urban schoolteachers have with Compassion Fatigue and its effects on a teacher's perception of

his or her school's climate and working conditions. They intentionally target areas that shift how teachers are prepared, expected to perform, and supported. A brief summary of the research findings and an illustrative vignette derived from the research are included below.

Please see the brief on which this paper is based at <https://goo.gl/ymbxpg>.

### Summary of Findings

- Female teachers experience more Compassion Fatigue than male teachers.
- Compassion Fatigue is more acute with beginning teachers than with veteran teachers.
- Teachers working at high poverty schools experience statistically significant differences in compassion satisfaction and fatigue than teachers at low poverty schools. They experience less compassion satisfaction, higher burnout, and higher secondary traumatic stress.
- Linear regression models showed that the percentage of African American students in a school is a statistically significant predictor of Compassion Fatigue.
- Correlation tests revealed statistically significant relationships between teachers' Compassion Fatigue and the school's racial demographics.
- Secondary trauma from students is not the only trauma teachers are experiencing. Parents or school site administration sometimes cause it.
- Teachers still have a job to do but feel guilty when they are unable to do the job effectively. The guilt is compounded by teachers struggle with knowing that it is easier to have compassion for students who are easier to handle than others.
- School climate and Conditions matter. Teachers have concerns about how actions taken by school environment actors including parents, students, other teachers, and administrators affect their ability to create safe and academically challenging environments. Teacher morale is often affected by how students are treated or how students are treating them.

#### **Teacher's Experience Secondary Trauma Amy, Highschool Teacher**

This last year was one of the roughest years I have ever had. My colleagues and I couldn't wait for the school year to be over. The fires and mudslides just wrecked our city. Some of my students lost all of their belongings, and one student even lost their life. I tried to do what I could to help them, but even now just talking about this makes me want to cry. Yet, even with all of that, in one year, a student committed suicide at the end of the year right before graduation. I remember the administrator interrupting class over the loudspeaker to ask us, teachers, to read an email that was just sent to us. I did, and it was all I could do to keep from crying. The administrator apologized in the email because they did not know how else to tell us, given that so

many students were asking about it and they did not want us to be caught off guard. Then, the administrator got on the loudspeaker again and asked us to read the email to the students because rumors were flying like rampant through the school by that time. I read it to my students. I told them that it was a hard letter to read and that I would probably cry, which I did, but I got through it. The student who had died was the same grade as the students in my class, and so a lot of them knew the student. The room it was so heavy with the weight of the silence and pain. We just sat there. Finally, to lighten the load, I just said, ‘well we are almost done with the lesson, why don’t we just finish it.’ I had never seen my students so happy to do math as I did at that moment.

## **Recommendations**

California should develop an educator/teacher-focused multi-tiered system of support (EMTSS) aimed at promoting a healthy and robust teacher workforce at all levels, PreK-12 and include strategies that promote teacher retention by addressing Compassion Fatigue. The three tiers should address all teachers who are entering or already a part of the teaching profession, some teachers who work at urban school sites, and few teachers who work at schools in extreme crisis such as from natural disasters, school shootings, and suicide clusters (OCDE, n.d.).

### **Recommendations for Tier I: All Teachers – those entering or already working in the profession**

#### ***State Level—In situ Educators***

The California Department of Education (CDE), the State Board of Education (SBE), and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) should work together to:

- Update the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) to include recognition of Compassion Fatigue as an occupational hazard for educators, especially those who work with traumatized students (Figley, 1995).
- Design mandatory training on Compassion Fatigue in accordance with the California Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1973 (Cal/OHSA) injury & illness prevention guidelines for all educators as required by Title 8 California Code of Regulations (T8 CCR) § 3203 (Department of Industrial Relations, 1991). The training should be taken by all PreK-12 educators (certificated and classified). A suggested pathway for recognition is to work collaboratively with the Health in All Policies Task Force to submit a petition for a new health safety standard to California’s Occupational Safety & Health Standards Board (OSHSB).
- Develop professional development training focused on Compassion Fatigue, educator self-care strategies, adult social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies, and mental health first aid (MHFA) crisis response strategies (National Council, 2015) that support the health and wellbeing of students and staff.

#### ***State Level—New Teachers***

The California Department of Education (CDE), the State Board of Education (SBE), and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) should work together to:

- Expand domains within California’s Teaching Performance Expectations (TPE), which are “purposely aligned to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession” (CTC, 2017, p.2) to include recognition of Compassion Fatigue. Recommended expansions include:
  - Adding language to TPE 2: *Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning* regarding understanding and recognizing indicators that students may be experiencing trauma or are in crisis.
  - Adding language to TPE 6: *Developing as a Professional Educator* such as beginning teachers demonstrate awareness of Compassion Fatigue and educator self-care and establish self-care goals and make progress to attend to their own adult social-emotional needs to maintain a healthy classroom and school environment.
- Include the development of a course on Compassion Fatigue and secondary trauma within the Preliminary Multiple Subject and Single Subject Credential Program Standards. The course should describe what Compassion Fatigue is and how it is measured such as with the use of the Professional Quality of Life Scale (Stamm, 2010). The course should also describe symptoms for individuals and organizations, factors that influence susceptibility, strategies to mitigate it, and self-care strategies (Figley, 1995) that can be added to all credential program (teacher and administrative) coursework requirements. The same updates should occur in Administrative Credential Programs.
- Update the requirement for credential program design and curriculum to adequately prepare teachers to understand the needs of urban students within the Preliminary Multiple Subject and Single Subject Credential Program Standards. Updates should address understanding trauma as an urban student condition, and the effects trauma may have on the student’s social, academic, behavioral performance, and the educators who support them. The same updates should occur in Administrative Credential Programs.
- Update credential program coursework (teacher and administrative) on unconscious bias. The updated course should assist teachers to understand how their own hidden biases may be impacting their behavior and perceptions of urban students, especially when teachers are experiencing burnout and secondary traumatic stress. For when educators bring their hidden biases “into conscious awareness...it is at least partly up to each individual to use that knowledge to move beyond dismay and to find ways to understand hidden biases and, if desired, to neutralize them before they translate into behavior” (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016, p.70) that may be potentially harmful to students and the educators themselves.

### ***County Level—In situ Educators***

- Build the capacity of county offices of education to support and provide education, training and technical assistance to school districts and administrators regarding Compassion Fatigue.
- Dramatically increase the quality, availability, and access to stellar resources and supports regarding family engagement. Ensure that the resources recognize the dual nature of the parent-teacher relationship. Resources should support educators to engage effectively with parents and vice versa.
- Engage in practices to strengthen trust, partnership, and relationships between administrators and their staff such as the California Labor Management Initiative. See [California Labor Management Initiative](#).

### ***District Level—In situ Educators***

Pertinent school district personnel including district office staff, school site administrators, psychologists, counselors, and teacher leaders should actively work together to:

- Expand crisis response strategies for traumas such as suicide and catastrophic events to include support for school site staff.
- Institute professional development training focused on Compassion Fatigue, educator self-care strategies and mental health first aid crisis response strategies (National Council, 2015) that support the health and wellbeing of students and staff that was developed at the state level.

### ***Site Level—In situ Educators***

- Improve school climate and conditions at each school site. Suggested mechanisms for improvement include, but are not limited to:
- Set aside time to intentionally engage teachers in conversations regarding the climate of the school.
- Review the school climate survey results as required for the local indicator measure of Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) Priority 6 with all school staff. Using the data, meaning, and use cycle recommended by the School Conditions and Climate work group convened by the CDE at the request of the SBE will help the school to understand their school's climate dynamics better. See page 28 of the [School Climate and Conditions Workgroup Recommendations](#) for a description of the data, meaning, and use cycle. See page 10 of the [local performance indicator guide](#) for details on the local indicator process for LCFF Priority 6.

## **Recommendations for Tier 2: Some Teachers – those who work at urban school sites**

### ***District Level—Some Teachers***

- Update budget to ensure urban school sites have enough financial resources to serve the student population effectively. Students should have on-site access to the same technology, curriculum, and programs that low poverty schools have.
- Work with teacher union leadership to ensure urban school sites have access to highly-qualified and experienced teacher personnel who currently work in the district.

### ***Site Level—Some Teachers***

Improve school climate and conditions at each school site. Suggested mechanisms for improvement include, but are not limited to:

- Administrators should actively work to show they care, appreciate, and understand the teachers experience by acknowledging the difficulty of the work, providing teacher-informed support and practices, and intentionally checking-in with staff who appear to be struggling. The appreciation should be regular, meaningful, and sincere (Pennington, 2017).
- Establish check-in and check-out processes (Kofman, 1994) for school site meetings to improve the effectiveness of staff meeting time.
- Attend to the adult SEL needs of school site staff (certificated and classified) by adopting practices that support educators’ ability to “effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (CDE, 2018, p.2)
- Adapt the restorative justice practice of dialogue circles designed to build community, healing, and reconciliation especially after trauma such as suicides, or after particularly distressing interactions with students to address school site staff (certificated and classified) needs for self-care, processing, and support (Clifford, 2015).

### **Recommendations for Tier 3: Few Teachers – those who work at school sites in extreme crisis**

#### ***State Level—Few Teachers***

The State Legislature and the California Department of Education (CDE) should work together to:

- Ensure California can effectively respond to the mental health needs of students, staff, and families as a result of natural disasters such as wildfires, school shootings, suicide clusters and so on. Recommendations include, but are not limited to:
  - Allocate resources to pay for the mental health needs of students, staff, and families experiencing trauma as a result of natural disasters such as wildfires, school shootings, suicide clusters and so on.

- Allocate resources to CDE to coordinate and support statewide efforts specific to mental health and trauma needs of students, staff, and families experiencing trauma as a result of natural disasters such as wildfires, school shootings, suicide clusters and so on. The money should go directly to CDE given the leadership role played on the governor’s office of emergency services (Cal OES) Schools Task Force and unified coordination group and the CDE’s and State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) ability to convene multi-agency partners statewide. Coordination and Support efforts should include, but are not limited to:
  - Establish a statewide mental health crisis response and recovery team that includes, at a minimum, members from the CDE, county offices of education (COEs), county departments of behavioral health, local government agencies, local educational agencies (LEAs), Cal OES, institutes of higher education, and mental health and trauma professionals and experts (Demaria & Schonfeld, 2013). Other stakeholder agencies should be included as needed. Responsibilities of the team should include:
  - Build the capacity of COEs and LEAs to effectively provide basic trauma and MHFA training to affected LEAs and schools by providing professional development in this area. Suggested curriculum includes the National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE curriculum (NASP, 2016). See information on PREPaRE at <https://www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum/about-prepare>.
  - Establish a list of vetted volunteer mental health service providers willing and able to provide support to affected counties and school districts throughout the state as needed. The list should be regularly monitored to ensure volunteers have valid credentials and are in good standing with their employers.
  - Coordinate and provide direct support to county offices of education who have school districts that are experiencing an extreme crisis. For example, the CDE coordinated with and supported Butte COE to provide mental health and trauma counseling for students, staff, and families.
  - Develop a model mental health “high quality school emergency operations plan” (REMS TA Center, n.d.) that COEs and LEAs can emulate. The plan should include “PPD-8 defines preparedness around five mission areas: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery” (REMS TA Center, n.d.).

### ***County Level—Few Teachers***

- Ensure school districts in the county’s region participate in basic trauma and MHFA training.

- Ensure school districts develop and adopt mental health emergency operations plans.

***District level—Few Teachers***

- Ensure all school sites develop and adopt mental health emergency plan operations. The plans should be reviewed with staff on an annual basis

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APPENDIX J: CYCLE 3 DECEMBER 28, 2018 - FACILITATED CONVERSATION  
CONTENT

Full images and content can be accessed at <a href="https://goo.gl/odo9fU">https://goo.gl/odo9fU</a>	
Slide	Content
1.	Improving Teacher Retention by Addressing Teachers' Compassion Fatigue By Jacquelyn Ollison (Ed.D.in progress) (University of the Pacific) ollisonj.yve@gmail.com
2.	Goals for Today <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share research aimed at understanding how we manifest a future in which the urban teacher shortage in California no longer exists via the exploration of compassion fatigue and the teaching profession</li> <li>• Ponder together what implications this research has for the teaching profession</li> </ul>
3.	Focus/Discussion Questions What are your initial thoughts/reactions regarding what has been shared? What implications does this work have for California's ability to retain teachers, especially at urban school sites? What implications does this research have for teacher shortage and retention policies? What do you feel that you could do to address teachers' compassion fatigue?
4.	Compassion Focus Compassion asks that we remain steadfast and engaged even while every fiber of our being wishes to be somewhere else away from the pain in front of us. It is in this engagement that we can let go of expectations, demands and insistence that things should be different and learn to accept and honor what is. And then, just maybe, with intention we can ease the suffering. (Feldman, 2005).
5.	Brief Overview & Inquiry Questions Primary purpose: explore to what extent compassion fatigue impacts teachers' ability to create, experience, and perceive their school's climate and working conditions positively and if compassion fatigue plays a role in urban educator attrition. Inquiry Questions: 1. To what extent do California urban schoolteachers experience compassion fatigue? 2. How does compassion fatigue impact a teacher's perception of their schools working conditions and climate 3. What organizational supports can be put in place to help urban educators suffering from compassion fatigue thrive?
6.	Ultimate Action Goal - Image

Full images and content can be accessed at <a href="https://goo.gl/odo9fU">https://goo.gl/odo9fU</a>			
Slide	Content		
	<p>Translate compassion fatigue in urban educators in relation to the teacher shortage into a policy issue that is seen as important enough to address with governmental action (Fowler, 2013).</p> <p>Data Collection and Analysis</p>		
7.	Data Collection and Analysis – Image		
8.	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p>Sample Population of Teachers’ Characteristics n=100</p> <p>Teaching Position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School— 35%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Middle School — 24%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> High School—37%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Two or More Levels—4%</li> </ul> <p>Age Range</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 18-35 years—28%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 36 years and up—70%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say—2%</li> </ul> <p>Teacher Ethnicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> African American—9%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Asian/ Pacific Islander—10%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> White—57%</li> </ul> </td><td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino—9%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Two or More Races—12%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prefer Not to Say—3%</li> </ul> <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Female—78%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Male—19%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Non-Binary—1%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prefer Not to Say—2%</li> </ul> <p>Average Number of Years in the Profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fewer than 5 years—18%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 5 years or more —82%</li> </ul> <p>Average Number of Years at the School Site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fewer than 5 years—46.9%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 5 years or more —53.1%</li> </ul> </td></tr> </table>	<p>Sample Population of Teachers’ Characteristics n=100</p> <p>Teaching Position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School— 35%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Middle School — 24%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> High School—37%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Two or More Levels—4%</li> </ul> <p>Age Range</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 18-35 years—28%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 36 years and up—70%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say—2%</li> </ul> <p>Teacher Ethnicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> African American—9%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Asian/ Pacific Islander—10%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> White—57%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino—9%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Two or More Races—12%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prefer Not to Say—3%</li> </ul> <p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Female—78%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Male—19%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Non-Binary—1%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prefer Not to Say—2%</li> </ul> <p>Average Number of Years in the Profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fewer than 5 years—18%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 5 years or more —82%</li> </ul> <p>Average Number of Years at the School Site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fewer than 5 years—46.9%</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 5 years or more —53.1%</li> </ul>
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10.	<p>Measuring Compassion Fatigue: Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL 5) (Stamm, 2010)</p> <p>Compassion Satisfaction is characterized by feeling satisfied by one’s job and from the helping itself. It is characterized by people feeling invigorated by work that they like to do. They feel they can keep up with new technology and protocols. They experience happy thoughts, feel successful, are happy with the work they do, want to continue to do it, and believe they can make a difference.</p>		

Full images and content can be accessed at <a href="https://goo.gl/odo9fU">https://goo.gl/odo9fU</a>	
Slide	Content
	<p>Compassion Fatigue is characterized by the negative aspects of providing care to those who have experienced extreme or traumatic stressors. These negative responses include feelings of being overwhelmed by the work that are distinguished from feelings of fear associated with the work.</p> <p>Thus, there are two scales for Compassion Fatigue Image</p> <p>Compassion Fatigue as Conceptualized by Stamm 2010</p>
11.	<p>Quantitative Findings Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female teachers experience more Compassion Fatigue than male teachers.</li> <li>• Compassion Fatigue is more acute with beginning teachers than with veteran teachers.</li> <li>• Teachers working at high poverty schools experience statistically significant differences in compassion satisfaction and fatigue than teachers at low poverty schools.</li> <li>• Linear regression models showed that the percentage of African American students in a school is a statistically significant predictor of Compassion Fatigue.</li> <li>• Correlation tests revealed statistically significant relationships between Compassion Fatigue and the school's racial demographics even when controlling for poverty and teacher ethnicity.</li> </ul>
12.	<p>Qualitative Findings Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary trauma from students is not the only trauma teachers are experiencing. Parents or school site administration sometimes cause it.</li> <li>• Teachers still have a job to do but feel guilty when they are unable to do the job effectively. The guilt is compounded by teachers struggle with knowing that it is easier to have compassion for students who are easier to handle than others.</li> <li>• School climate and Conditions matter. Teachers have concerns about how actions taken by school environment actors including parents, students, other teachers, and administrators affect his or her ability to create safe and academically challenging environments. Teacher morale is often affected by how students are treated or how students are treating them.</li> </ul>
13.	Significant Correlations by Teaching Level - Image
14.	Significant Correlations by Teaching Level (controlled for poverty) - Image
15.	Significant Correlations by Teaching Level (Controlled for teacher ethnicity) - Image
16.	Differences in teacher burnout and a secondary traumatic stress in relation to the race of the student - Image

Full images and content can be accessed at <a href="https://goo.gl/odo9fU">https://goo.gl/odo9fU</a>	
Slide	Content
17.	<p>Traumatic events that negatively impacted the teachers</p> <p>Student-based trauma Parent-based trauma Working conditions-based trauma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Child abuse, neglect, molestation, Sexual assault</li> <li>– Hard home life –extreme poverty</li> <li>– Students cussing teachers out in the classroom in front of other students</li> <li>– Multiple student suicides and attempted suicide, siblings of students' suicide</li> <li>– Playing therapists for students who have connected with them and only asked for them even though they were not equipped to deal with the trauma the student was experiencing</li> <li>– Threatened by parents on the phone</li> <li>– Attacked verbally and professionally by parents in front of administration</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Mishandling of a parent complaint</li> <li>– Students not having basic supplies (pencil, paper, technology, books) when other more affluent schools do have supplies for their students</li> <li>– Failure to fix broken desks and chairs, no air conditioning, Student bathrooms that were always locked or not in working order</li> <li>– Apparent lack of concern for teachers who appear to be flailing by administration</li> <li>– Excessive workload for special education teachers</li> <li>– feeling as if they have more jobs than just teaching</li> <li>– Failure to include teachers in conversations about how to best handle and support the students they teach on a daily basis</li> <li>– Failure to convene as a staff to process, discuss, and debrief when traumatic events occur to students in the school</li> </ul>
18.	Teacher suggested supports - Image
19.	<p>Recommendations (pp.8-13)</p> <p>Develop an educator/teacher-focused multi-tiered system of support (EMTSS) aimed at promoting a healthy and robust teacher workforce at all levels, PreK-12.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tier I: All Teachers – those entering or already working in the profession</li> <li>Tier I: All Teachers – those entering or already working in the profession</li> <li>• Tier 2: Some Teachers – those who work at urban school sites</li> <li>• Tier 3: Few Teachers – those who work at school sites in extreme crisis</li> </ul>
20.	Discussion Time
21.	<p>Focus/Discussion Questions</p> <p>What are your initial thoughts/reactions regarding what has been shared?</p>


Full images and content can be accessed at <a href="https://goo.gl/odo9fU">https://goo.gl/odo9fU</a>	
Slide	Content
	<p>What implications does this work have for California's ability to retain teachers, especially at urban school sites?</p> <p>What implications does this research have for teacher shortage and retention policies?</p> <p>What do you feel that you could do to address teachers' compassion fatigue?</p>
22.	<p>Looking ahead...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given the state of this action-research thus far, what do you feel would be productive new areas of inquiry?</li> <li>• What would you suggest as next action steps? At what levels should they be taken (state, higher ed, LEA, etc.)? Who should move the next phases of this work forward - or who should be involved?</li> </ul>
23.	<p>Thank you!</p> <p>Understanding the teaching profession with awareness requires an awareness of all aspects of the work, including those aspects that are unpleasant and born of suffering. With awareness, compassionate responses and policies that genuinely make a difference in the life of teachers, and ultimately students, are born.</p>
24.	<p>Contact Information</p> <p>Jacquelyn Ollison</p> <p>Ed.D.in progress</p> <p>University of the Pacific</p> <p>Email: ollisonj.yve@gmail.com</p>



### Recommendations (pp.8-13)

Develop an educator/teacher-focused multi-tiered system of support (EMTSO) aimed at promoting a healthy and robust teacher workforce at all levels, PreK-12.

- Tier 1: All Teachers – those entering or already working in the profession
- Tier 2: Some Teachers – those who work at urban school sites
- Tier 3: Few Teachers – those who work at schoolsites in extreme crisis



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### Discussion Time

let's talk



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### Focus/Discussion Questions

What are your initial thoughts/reactions regarding what has been shared?

What implications does this work have for California's ability to retain teachers, especially at urban school sites?

What implications does this research have for teacher shortage and retention policies?

What do you feel that you could do to address teachers' compassion fatigue?

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### Looking ahead...



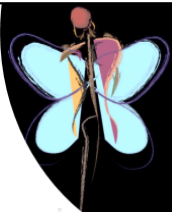
- Given the state of this action-research thus far, what do you feel would be productive new areas of inquiry?
- What would you suggest as next action steps? At what levels should they be taken (state, higher ed, LBA, etc.)? Who should drive the next phases of this work/formed – or who should be involved?

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### Thank you!

Understanding the teaching profession with awareness requires an awareness of all aspects of the work, including those aspects that are emotional and born of suffering. With awareness, compassion, respect and policies that genuinely make a difference to the life of teachers, and ultimately students, are born.



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### Contact Information



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## APPENDIX K: POLICYMAKERS ONE-PAGER

### Improving Teacher Retention by Addressing Teachers Compassion Fatigue

Compassion centered education recognizes that “that teachers are, with students, the heart of the educational process” and thus endeavors to work to enhance the teachers caring of self and the caring of students (Noddings, 2013, p.197). New research shows that teachers are experiencing compassion fatigue thus compounding the need to shift how we approach the development, training and supporting of teachers so that compassion centered education becomes the ideal rather than a burden.

#### Summary of Findings

- Female teachers experience more Compassion Fatigue than male teachers.
- Compassion Fatigue is more acute with beginning teachers than with veteran teachers.
- Teachers working at high poverty schools experience statistically significant differences in compassion satisfaction and fatigue than teachers at low poverty schools. They experience less compassion satisfaction, higher burnout, and higher secondary traumatic stress.
- Linear regression models showed that the percentage of African American students in a school is a statistically significant predictor of Compassion Fatigue.
- Correlation tests revealed statistically significant relationships between teachers’ Compassion Fatigue and the school’s racial demographics.
- Secondary trauma from students is not the only trauma teachers are experiencing. Parents or school site administration sometimes cause it.
- Teachers still have a job to do but feel guilty when they are unable to do the job effectively. The guilt is compounded by teachers struggle with knowing that it is easier to have compassion for students who are easier to handle than others.
- School climate and Conditions matter. Teachers have concerns about how actions taken by school environment actors including parents, students, other teachers, and administrators affect their ability to create safe and academically challenging environments. Teacher morale is often affected by how students are treated or how students are treating them.

Please see the brief on which this paper is based at <https://goo.gl/ymbxpg>. The following recommendations are offered for policy consideration:

The California Department of Education (CDE), the State Board of Education (SBE), and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) should work together to:

- Update the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) to include recognition of Compassion Fatigue as an occupational hazard for educators, especially those who work with traumatized students.
- Develop professional development training focused on Compassion Fatigue, educator self-care strategies, adult social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies, and mental health first aid (MHFA) crisis response strategies (National Council, 2015) that support the health and wellbeing of students and staff.
- Include the development of a course on Compassion Fatigue and secondary trauma within the Preliminary Multiple Subject and Single Subject Credential Program Standards. The course should describe what Compassion Fatigue is and how it is measured such as with the use of the Professional Quality of Life Scale from Stamm 2010. The course should also describe symptoms for individuals and organizations, factors that influence susceptibility, strategies to mitigate it, and self-care strategies that can be added to all credential program (teacher and administrative) coursework requirements. The same updates should occur in Administrative Credential Programs.

The State Legislature and the California Department of Education (CDE) should work together to:

- Ensure California can effectively respond to the mental health needs of students, staff, and families as a result of natural disasters such as wildfires, school shootings, suicide clusters and so on by allocating resources to pay for the mental health needs of students, staff, and families experiencing trauma as a result of natural disasters such as wildfires, school shootings, suicide clusters and so on.
- Build the capacity of COEs and LEAs to effectively provide basic trauma and MHFA training to affected LEAs and schools by providing professional development in this area.
- Establish a statewide mental health crisis response and recovery team that includes, at a minimum, members from the CDE, county offices of education (COEs), county departments of behavioral health, local government agencies, local educational agencies (LEAs), governor's office of emergency services (Cal OES), institutes of higher education, and mental health and trauma professionals and experts such as Demaria & Schonfeld, 2013.
- Develop a model mental health "high quality school emergency operations plan" (REMS TA Center, n.d.) that COEs and LEAs can emulate. The plan should include "PPD-8 defines preparedness around five mission areas: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery" (REMS TA Center, n.d.).

## APPENDIX L: CYCLE 3 – DRAFT LANGUAGE TO ACTUALIZE FUTURE PLANS FOR THE RESEARCH

**Idea Number 2- Draft Language:** Embedding the link in an email message that could be shared en masse to the same stakeholders from Idea 1

Email subject: Teacher Retention, School Climate and Working conditions, and Compassion Fatigue

Greetings,

I hope this day finds you well. I wanted to take a moment to thank you again for all of your support of me and this work throughout the duration of my dissertation journey. I am also writing to let you know that I have defended my dissertation as of **[insert date here]** and am now Dr. Ollison.

I am sharing with you now a policy brief I have written regarding the research. The full dissertation goes in depth with the quantitative and qualitative results, which I'd be happy to share with you. Please take a moment to review the policy brief entitled Improving Teacher Retention by Addressing Teachers' Compassion Fatigue by Jacquelyn Ollison at <https://goo.gl/ymbxp>.

Feel free to connect with me at ollisonj.yve@gmail.com for additional questions, information, or to explore how this research might of use to you. Ultimately, it is my hope that these recommendations are enacted – our students and staff need support in this area.

With gratitude,

[insert signature block]

**Idea Number 3-Draft Language:** Sharing the brief with the CDE Foundation, an education philanthropy organization, specifically addressed to the organization's California Labor Management Initiative (CA LMI) coordinator asking for this topic to be included in one of its convenings or learn labs for use by school labor and management teams.

Hello [insert name here],

I wanted to take a moment to thank you again for all of your support of me and this work throughout the duration of my dissertation journey. I would like to talk with you about the possibility of presenting this information at one of or some of your upcoming CA LMI events. The findings contained within this dissertation could be very helpful for

those seeking to strengthen their labor management relationships, improve school site working conditions and climate, and to retain their teachers.

I am including a link to a policy brief entitled Improving Teacher Retention by Addressing Teachers' Compassion Fatigue that summarizes the research. Link: <https://goo.gl/ymbxp>.

I look forward to exploring this possibility with you. Please feel free to contact me at the information referenced below.

With Gratitude,

[insert signature block]

**Idea Number 4-Draft Language:** Embedding the link in a message that can be shared widely on social media sites

Improving Teacher Retention by Addressing Teacher's Compassion Fatigue  
New research explores the effects that working with traumatized students has on teachers' mental health and their perceptions of their schools' climate and working conditions. Impactful recommendations to address the teacher shortage are included.  
<https://goo.gl/ymbxp>  
Check it out!