Teacher Mental Health and Well-Being in a Global Pandemic

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Abstract

This paper explores the ways in which COVID-19 and the rapid shift to remote education has impacted teachers' mental health. Teachers play multiple roles in students' lives (Cross & Hong, 2012) and already face high levels of work stress. This study, which draws on interview data from a larger pool of interviews conducted with K-12 teachers nationally and internationally from 2020-2022, documents teachers' increased responsibilities for monitoring students' mental health and helping families cope with the consequences of the pandemic. This often-unacknowledged work was a source of stress and impacted teacher well-being. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) teachers and white teachers who explicitly resisted white supremacy particularly experienced more elevated stress and responsibilities because of the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 and the concurrent racial uprisings. Nevertheless, these teachers also demonstrated remarkable resilience in coping with their own and students'/families' needs.

Keywords: Teacher well-being, BIPOC teachers, teacher education

As COVID 19 struck in early 2020, physical school closures compelled significant changes to teachers' professional lives. Remote instruction required teachers to both learn and perform new instructional and technical skills simultaneously (Kaden, 2020). Lockdown,

working from home, and the need to separate work and personal life increased the already high

levels of stress and burnout among teachers (McLean et al., 2020).

Teachers also addressed the diverse wellness and basic needs of families to support

students emotionally and academically (Kaden, 2020; Trinidad, 2021). Educators were found

addressing issues such as family food insecurity, help accessing remote education, health

services, and mental health support—issues racially oppressed families faced disproportionately

during the pandemic (See et al., 2020). Amidst limited guidelines and resources, these factors

created compounding stressors for teachers (Trinidad, 2021). Therefore, a need has arisen to

examine the factors impacting teachers' mental health and well-being during the COVID-19

pandemic. Given their crucial role in providing support to families--and particularly to racially

and economically marginalized families--attention to teacher mental health is crucial to students'

learning and well-being, as well as community well-being, during the pandemic and beyond.

As former PK-12 teachers we, the authors, were particularly attuned to teacher mental health and

well-being. One of us (Mary) identifies as a white, genderfluid, femme-presenting, omnisexual,

middle-class, middle-aged Ph.D. candidate with personal experience with mental health issues.

Dana is an international Ph.D. candidate with a complex identity that exists at the intersection of

immigration status and cis-gender, middle-class, and able-bodied identities. Dr. Jerry Rosiek is a

full professor who identifies as a white, cis-gender male who is able-bodied, middle-class, and

heterosexual. Dr. Kevin Donley is a post-doctoral fellow who identifies as an able-bodied, cis-

het man with a middle-class, rural, white family background. Nicholette DeRosia is a Ph.D.

candidate who identifies as a fat, able-bodied, cis-bi woman with personal experience with

mental health from a working class rural white family. Among the five of us, we have 31 years'

experience teaching in PK-12 public schools in the U.S. (Mary, Jerry, Kevin, and Nicholette) and

Israel (Dana). Our positionalities and political commitments inform our choice not only of topic but also to center the stories of racially marginalized teachers during the pandemic. While none of us identify as Black or Latinx, we specifically center the stories of these teachers who took part in this study for reasons we detail in the literature review and methodology below. While we acknowledge that this puts us as authors in a rather complicated position that risks complicity in white saviorism, we were entrusted with these stories as we conducted interviews with teachers about their well-being. Our only other option would be silencing or ignoring narratives concerning the intersections of race and well-being with which these teachers entrusted us, and to us, that was not an acceptable option. Following Sarah Ahmed (2017, pp. 93-94), our political commitment is to reducing harm when and where possible while also assuming our own complicity because this work takes place within larger systems built on harm. Our political commitment, then, is to maximize harm reduction in a violent society. As such, we center standpoint theory (see below) and affirm the importance of these narratives.

Literature Review and Rationale

Considerable research has been done on teacher attention to student mental health (Mazzer & Rickwood, 2015; Reinke et al., 2011). Certainly, attention to this issue has increased dramatically since the COVID-19 pandemic began. As of late 2019, a systematic review of the literature concerning teacher training in K-12 student mental health (Ohrt et al., 2020) found that teacher trainings that focus on increasing teachers' knowledge of student mental health issues do impact both teachers' literacy with and de-stigmatization of mental health issues in students. However, Anderson et al. (2019) found that while mental health training for teachers improved teachers' knowledge and attitudes concerning mental health, it did not necessarily improve student outcomes or teacher mental health, and the quality of support for implementing such

trainings varied widely. Jones et al. (2022) found that 37.1% of students experienced poor mental health during the pandemic, but those who felt connected to people at school (virtually or in person) had significantly better mental health than those who did not. Training in mental health literacy is still not a required component of most teacher education programs (Ohrt et al., 2020). Atkins and Rodger (2016) also found that teacher training in mental health is necessary but is not a usual part of teacher education; but again, their focus was teachers' awareness of and support for *students'* mental health.

Until the pandemic, less research had been done concerning *teacher* mental health (Chang, 2009; Dicke et al., 2015), and the connection between teacher mental health and student academic and non-cognitive outcomes (Arens & Morin, 2016). That said, even before COVID-19 began, alarms were being raised concerning the national teacher shortage (García & Weiss, 2019) and the need to address teachers' "working conditions and other factors prompting teachers to quit" (p. 1). Furthermore, according to O'Toole, "school-based mental health interventions tend to obscure broader social and structural inequalities. Mental health problems are firmly located within the individual child rather than within structures and networks of power and privilege" (O'Toole, 2019, p. 16). It is not a far leap to apply the same logic to the mental health interventions aimed at teachers; problems with teacher mental health and well-being are also located within the individual and not within structures and networks of power and privilege.

Individualistic vs. Structural and Systemic Teacher Well-Being

Literature on teacher well-being has burgeoned after the onset of COVID-19, as teaching has come to be understood as of the most stressful professions, comparable in rates of high stress to only nurses and physicians (Bottiani et al., 2019); however, the vast majority of this new literature still focuses on interventions individual teachers can make (American College of

Education, 2021). Teachers developing better individual routines in terms of food, sleep, exercise, mindfulness, etc. is the topic of much teacher wellness "self-help" literature (Boogren, 2019; Kanold & Boogren, 2021). In the face of systemic under-payment, low societal respect and support, under-resourcing and under-staffing of schools (particularly schools in low socioeconomic and majority Black, Indigenous, and People of Color [BIPOC] locales), and the need to teach children whose lives are impacted by racism, trauma, childhood poverty, lack of access to medical and dental care, and more (Bottiani et al., 2019), such "self-help" recommendations ring hollow at best, and maliciously victim-blaming at worst. Individualized self-help/wellness discourses operate as part and parcel of neoliberal devolvement of responsibility (Apple, 2000) for "structures and networks of power and privilege" (O'Toole, 2019) to the individual level, eschewing any collective, societal, corporate, or governmental responsibility for the conditions that create teachers' ill-being.

Teachers' Roles

Prior to the pandemic teachers were already tasked with caring for students' needs beyond academic instruction (Cross & Hong, 2012). Cross and Hong (2012) discussed the ecological systems surrounding teachers' role and identity. They described how students' needs impact teachers' feelings and professional identities. In this inherently interactive model, teachers' roles go beyond academic instruction and outside the physical structure of the classroom. Similarly, Kim and Asbury (2020) described how teachers were tasked with caring for students' well-being, food security and mental and physical safety during lockdown without any preparation or official support in many cases, which made teachers feel compelled to take on roles beyond teachers' official ones. During the pandemic, teachers' roles expanded even more beyond instruction

(Cross & Hong, 2012), even as their modes of interaction with students appeared to constrict to the virtual (Kim & Asbury, 2020).

Although such "role-comprehensiveness" is motivational for many teachers, it can also elevate work-related stress (Cross & Hong, 2012; McLean et al., 2020; Mérida-López et al., 2017). These stressors are compounded and complicated by institutionalized racism in schools. Teachers of students from racially oppressed groups are at risk for additional stress when they find it necessary to work against the grain of systemic bias, experiencing "marginalization by association" (Kim & Asbury, 2020; Stapleton, 2018). Since teachers of Color are often sought out by students of Color and other teachers of Color for mentorship and support, this stress burden can also fall disproportionately on them (Allen et al., 2016).

Emerging COVID-19 Research on Teacher Well-Being

Several themes emerge from research conducted as the pandemic unfolded. Teachers' well-being during the first wave of the pandemic (i.e., lockdown and school closures) yield several repeated themes. The first few weeks at the beginning of spring of 2020 were filled with the uncertainty of what was to come. Teachers' uncertainty revolved around what they would be expected to teach, the modality of teaching, and the support to transition to online learning during lock down. Lack of clarity in districts' and schools' expectations of teachers, and corresponding lack of systemic support was demonstrated by Chan et al.'s thematic analysis of open-ended questions on which teachers were asked to reflect. They were asked what could have supported their well-being during distance learning and teachers indicated needs for much greater clarity and support (Chan et al., 2021).

Along with uncertainty, the importance of relationships was also salient during distance learning (Simmons et al., 2019). Teachers' relationships with colleagues, with students, and with

families were abruptly disrupted and were a cause for teachers' negative stress. As the pandemic unfolded, the initial uncertainty abated, and teachers adjusted to distance teaching while navigating their own well-being (Kaden, 2020; Kim & Ausbry, 2020). Teachers had to balance professional and personal responsibilities now taking place in a single physical space (Jakubowski & Sitko-Dominik, 2021, 2020; Kaden, 2020; Kim & Ausbry, 2020).

Concerns for vulnerable students were also raised by teachers during the first COVID wave. Teachers were concerned about students in unsafe environments, students living in impoverished conditions (Kim& Ausbry, 2021), students with disabilities, English language learners (DeRosia et al., 2021), and students who identified as LGBTQIA living in hostile environments (Salerno et al., 2020). Students from historically marginalized groups especially at the intersection of low SES and disability were of special concern (J. M. Jones, 2021; Kim & Ausbry, 2020).

Connectedness of Teacher and Student Well-Being

For anyone who has worked in schools, the idea that teachers' and students' mental and emotional health and well-being are entangled should not be controversial. Harding et al. (2019) documented that better teacher well-being is associated with better student well-being, while higher levels of depression in teachers is associated with greater levels of psychological distress in students. The authors describe the complexity of teacher-student interactions and the bidirectional impacts on students' and teachers' well-being. Current literature examines teachers' well-being as a mediator for students' well-being and positive outcomes (Chan et al., 2021). Others (e.g., McLean & Connor, 2015; Freeman et al., 2011) have found that "teachers who report more depressive symptoms have been shown to have lower-quality classrooms, and to provide less frequent positive feedback to students" (McLean et al., 2020, p. 2).

Again, the move to remote instructional platforms in early 2020 altered relations between teachers, students, and families (Kim & Asbury, 2020). Based on the preceding literature it is reasonable to assume this would impact the dynamics between teacher mental health and well-being and student well-being (See et al., 2020). Preliminary literature that examined the impact of the sudden transition to online learning during COVID-19 revealed that teachers' concerns about vulnerable students also directly impacted teachers' well-being (Kim & Asbury, 2020). The current paper builds on the above literature to add to the complex portrait of the interaction of the pandemic lockdown, teacher mental health, and student well-being.

Anti-Racist Feminist Standpoint and Intersectionality Theory

This paper also builds on the work of anti-racist feminist standpoint theories in centering the narratives and experiences of BIPOC educators during the earlier phases of the pandemic. Standpoint theory holds that lived experience, particularly the lived experiences of marginalized peoples, are a valid and often more complete source of knowledge about how hegemonic power operates within societies (Collins, 1986; Harding, 1997; Harding, 2004; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Women of Color in particular, due to their intersectional (Crenshaw, 1991, 2019) and interlocking marginalized identities *must* understand the workings of white supremacist patriarchal power in order to *survive*, while those with more privileged identities (e.g.--but not only--cis-het able-bodied, thin, younger white men) are able to remain ignorant of these power dynamics. Therefore, as we discuss below, we purposefully over-represent the experiences of the BIPOC teachers we interviewed, understanding that their experiences added crucial knowledge of how processes of racialization intersected with general stressors on teachers during the pandemic.

Furthermore, feminists generally and anti-racist feminists specifically have continually drawn attention to the body and embodiment in education. BIPOC feminists in particular have provided incisive analysis of the ways in which bodies "tell histories" (Walters et al., 2011) including continuing histories of settler colonialism and plantation slavery (Davis, 1981). Sonya Renee Taylor describes the hierarchy of bodies valued in current society (with cis-het, white, thin, able-bodied younger males at the top; Taylor, 2021). She states, "Relationships with our bodies are social, political, and economic inheritances. The nature of these inheritances has changed over time, the default body morphing and transforming to suit the power structures of the day" (Taylor, 2021, p. 42). Relatedly, Tricia Hersey traces "grind culture" and the pressure to be "always working" directly to the mechanization of the human body under plantation slavery (Hersey, 2022). Melissa Harris-Perry examines the way that shame and stereotypes of Black women in the United States creates a "crooked room" in which Black women must metaphorically attempt to stand up straight (Harris-Perry, 2011). And, from Judith Butler's *Bodies that matter* (Butler, 2011) and *Gender trouble* (Butler, 2006) to Donna Haraway's *Cyborg manifesto* (Haraway, 1991) to the burgeoning literature on posthumanism (e.g., Braidotti, 2019), the materiality of the body has come to be understood as a political site in the largely feminized (and female/womxn-dominated) profession of teaching and teacher education.

Teachers' Well-Being and Teachers' Racialized Burnout

Burnout is defined as a "prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job" (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 397). Teachers' well-being is directly correlated with their feelings of burnout. Teachers who report higher levels of emotional exhaustion also report higher levels of burnout (Capone & Petrillo, 2020). It is also well-documented that "allostatic load" (or the biological impacts of stress on the body; Kelly-Irving, 2019) is

physiological, not merely psychological (although its origins can often be interpersonal and psychological); therefore, burnout is a thoroughly embodied phenomenon related to over-work and inability to complete the "stress cycle" in the body (Nagoski & Nagoski, 2020). The field of social epidemiology has also documented that, controlling for all other factors, the impacts of racialized stress on the body shorten BIPOC women's life expectancies as compared with the life expectancies of white women (Gravlee, 2009). Moreover, Isaac Prilleltensky's work in counseling psychology avers that justice and community well-being are essential to individual well-being, so much so that the two cannot be conceptually separated (Prilleltensky, 2005, 2012; Prilleltensky et al., 2016). Indeed, Prilleltensky asserts that "teacher stress not only impacts teacher health and job satisfaction negatively, but it also figures prominently in the nation's high teacher attrition rate" (Prilleltensky et al., 2016, p. 104).

Certainly, it is well-known by now that COVID-19 was an immense stressor on most, if not all, humans. Teachers experienced an intensification of stressors during COVID-19, many of which pre-existed the pandemic. BIPOC educators in the United States bore the brunt not only of the increased emotional labor of teaching during the pandemic, but also of experiencing particularly racialized stressors (Cormier et al., 2021), including those associated with bearing witness to and identifying with the 2020 murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd (Hill et al., 2020). Others (e.g., Berheide et al., 2022; Simien & Wallace, 2022) have found that college faculty of color experienced an intensification of already-disproportionate emotional labor during COVID-19, as many were asked to perform service labor on racial justice committees, committees for new and/or cluster hires, etc. While the contours of racialized emotional labor do not look exactly the same in K-12 education, K-12 faculty of color also experienced increased racialized emotional labor and "racial battle fatigue"

(Solomon et al., 2022) during COVID-19, including being asked to meet with children and families, problem-solve on behalf of white teachers and administrators, etc. while also bearing witness to the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on communities of Color and the U.S.'s racial reckoning (Souto-Manning & Melvin, 2022). Yet almost immediately, teachers were simultaneously told not to discuss issues of race or racism in K-12 classrooms (J. M. Jones, 2021), which has continued with Critical Race Theory bans from 2021to present. It is therefore also evident that BIPOC teachers experience increased allostatic loads/stress on the body in racially disproportionate ways. Indeed, the Southern Educational Foundation found that

> the proportion [of teachers reporting they planned to leave the profession] was significantly greater among Black teachers, many of whom experienced unique stress, anxiety, and racial fatigue… with nearly half reporting they were likely to leave their jobs by the end of the school year. This outsized impact on Black teachers affects all students as research has shown that while Black students particularly benefit from having Black teachers, all students benefit from the diverse perspectives teachers of color bring to the classroom. (S. Jones & Ali, 2021, pp. 4-5)

Teacher Practical Knowledge

Last--but certainly not least--we also ground this study in the teacher practical knowledge literature, which holds that teachers are important and unique sources of professional knowledge that cannot be generated by theory and/or generalizations alone. While we aver that teacher mental health and well-being are structural and systemic phenomena that are not reducible to individual teachers' psychology alone, research also affirms that teachers' practical and lived knowledge is irreplaceable (Clandinin et al., 2018; Clandinin, 2019; Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2010; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2015; Crag, 2018; Elbaz, 2018; Rosiek & Clandinin, 2016;

Rosiek & Gleason, 2017). In the context of teacher mental health and well-being, there is no better source than teachers themselves.

Methodology

This naturalistic study of teachers' experience of teaching remotely during the pandemic is located within a tradition of interpretivist research that describes what teaching actually is, not how it can be transformed into a preconceived ideal (Schwandt, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is also informed by the teacher practical knowledge literature, an area of scholarship that maintains important knowledge about educational processes can be gained by listening to teachers' practical experience of teaching (Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin, 1989; Rosiek & Gleason, 2017; Shulman, 1987).

Naturalistic studies of teaching, however, do not explicitly center the experiences of persons of Color, and as such they can be subject to the distortions of white supremacist ideologies that overlook or minimize the significance of racial difference in educational experience. This study, therefore, also draws on anti-racist feminist standpoint theory (Collins, 1986; Harding, 1997; see literature review) to provide a framework for over-representing and featuring experiences of both the BIPOC teachers in our study sample and BIPOC and white teachers' experiences serving BIPOC students and resisting white supremacy in schools. In this article we pay special attention to the impact of intersectional identities (Crenshaw, 2019)—particularly, though not exclusively, those of BIPOC teachers and white teachers who work with BIPOC students and resist white supremacy—on mental health and well-being during COVID-19. This is important both for the purpose of constructing an effective unit of analysis for this study, and as a move towards solidarity in the struggle for anti-racism. We seek to follow the leadership (axiologically and epistemologically) of women of Color, as anti-racist and anti-

colonial feminists (see above) and members and leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement have called for (Hagopian, 2020; Love, 2021).

We took a naturalistic approach to the study of these complex relations by listening closely to teachers' experiences of teaching during the pandemic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We took care to include and attend to the unique experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) teachers because of the "importance of intersectionality in research on social stratification and mental health" (Rosenfield, 2012).

During COVID-19, teachers in our study reported taking on the added role of supporting students' caregivers as they sought to facilitate distance/virtual education. This most often included instructional coaching, but also included offering emotional and material supports to families.

Data Sources

This paper draws on data collected for a larger project entitled Pedagogy of the Pandemic (POTP). The POTP project collected stories via semi-structured interviews from over 100 teachers from multiple states within the USA, Thailand, Israel, Mexico, Nicaragua, Brazil, Canada, and Spain. The research team included a full professor PI and over 30 graduate and undergraduate researchers who conducted, transcribed, and coded semi-structured interviews with teachers about their experiences teaching remotely during the pandemic. The study aimed at understanding teachers' experiences and pedagogy as the sudden transition to remote instruction in the spring of 2020 was underway (Chan et al., 2021; DeRosia et al., 2021; Kaden, 2020; Kim & Ausbry, 2020). We focused on teachers' resilience and ways that teachers' problem solved the challenges that emerged in the transition to distance teaching.

Interviews

Initial interview questions focused on issues of equity for multiple marginalized student populations such as students with disabilities, students in poverty, ESOL students, LGBTQIA+ students, Indigenous students, and more. After initial interviews, researchers on the project requested follow-up interviews to ask further questions about a variety of themes. Approximately 20 teachers were invited to such follow-up interviews and 15 accepted. Of these, four were conducted by the two lead authors for this paper, specifically focusing on impacts on teacher mental health and well-being during the pandemic. A total of eight interviews (four initial, four follow-ups) makes the data set for this paper (see Table 1).

We developed our follow-up interview protocol (see Appendix B) to focus specifically on teacher mental health. An example follow-up question included:

- What are your biggest concerns for teachers' well-being?

- Are you spending your own money on technology and supplies? If so, how much and on what?

- Do you know of teachers who are facing more general financial hardships due to the pandemic that affect their ability to work and their well-being? (Allow that respondent may not wish to discuss such things.)

- Are you facing childcare challenges?

- Our preliminary research suggests that the pandemic is increasing the emotional labor of teaching—caring for others, being concerned about their well-being, reassuring children, etc. (May need to explain emotional labor a little more.)

- Is that true for you?

- Do you have specific examples of this emotional labor?

All interviews were conducted via Zoom and lasted between 30 minutes and two hours. For teachers' demographics and years of experience please review Table 1.

Analysis

In our analysis of the interviews, we sought patterns that spoke to the meaning of teachers' lived experience in the full context of their lives. As Glesne put it: "Qualitative researchers often look for patterns, but they do not try to reduce the multiple interpretations to a norm" (Glesne, 2006, p. 9). Not reducing our data to 'norms' still allowed for reliability via thoroughness and honesty, and validity *because* we did not seek to reduce the irreducibility of human experiences and power relations (Smith, 2000).

Coding

Because stress of various types is widely recognized as correlated with depression and anxiety (Abós et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018), we listened for stories about teacher stress. We utilized open and selective coding to note accounts of the stress of balancing home and work life amidst the compression of both into a single space; stress related to the uprising against racist police violence and inequitable impacts of COVID due to systemic racial oppression; stress related to physical health challenges of self or loved ones during COVID; and financial stress on self/family and/or student populations. Importantly, we wished to avoid telling only "pain narratives" (Tuck & Yang, 2014), as these can reinscribe deficit theories about teachers generally or about communities of Color. Therefore, we also intentionally listened and coded for teachers' resiliency strategies, such as coordinating with other colleagues and creative teaching via remote instruction, joy found in the teaching, and relying on community strengths to support teaching practice.

Participants

In total, the interviews selected for inclusion in the data analysis for this paper were eight of the over 100 conducted. These eight were selected because the teachers' experiences were illustrative of the types of stressors teachers faced during the pandemic--stressors exacerbated by, but not necessarily instantiated by, the pandemic's conditions. We include here a table of those participants on whose interview data we draw later in the paper, utilizing pseudonyms generated by a random name generator online.

Table 1

Teacher Demographics

Name/Pseudonym	Race	Gender	Years teaching	Level	Subject
Rose	White	F	3	middle	ELA
Abbie	White	F	33	high	ELA
Imogen	White	F	13	elementary	Elementary reading intervention specialist
Francesca	Latinx	F	17	high	Spanish
Eden	Black	F	16	middle/high	ELA
Aisha	Black	F	20	high	math
Tiffany	White	F	16	elementary	First grade
Ellen	White	F	28	middle	AVID/Instructional coach
Totals:	5 White, 2 Black, 1 Latinx	8 F	Mean 18.25 Median 16.5 Mode 16	High: 4 Middle: 3 Elementary: 2	ELA: 3 Spanish: 1 Math: 1 Elementary: 2 Instructional coach: 1

Trustworthiness

Sampling was opportunistic and used snowball methods (Tracy, 2019) to expand the pool of respondents. As a consequence of this sampling approach, no claims can be made that the teachers interviewed are a representative sample. Smith (2000) states, "A trustworthy account is one 'worth paying attention to, worth taking account of'…. A trustworthy account is one that demonstrates 'the quality of goodness'" (Smith, 2000, p. 142). The stories included here of teachers' mental health and well-being highlight similarities in structure and narrative across teachers' experiences as the pandemic unfolded, even if these experiences were not universally shared by all teachers. As such, they also provide insights that are "transferable" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, 1994; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Results and Discussion

Our main findings include the ways in which teachers became aware of student mental health concerns and coordinated support, even in the absence of official guidance at the onset of the pandemic. However, finding themselves in this role certainly impacted educators' mental health and well-being as well. Further, educators experienced impacts on their personal lives, but found multiple means of enacting their resilience, particularly in resisting white supremacy.

Educators Interfacing with Student Mental Health and Coordinating Support

Seven of the eight teachers grieved the lack of in-person relationships with their students, struggled to find healthy work-life balance, and sometimes received mixed expectations from administration, yet found ways to ensure they monitored students' mental health and provided care by making themselves available to students and by coordinating with other teachers (Kaden, 2020). (One teacher [Aisha] who did not share these exact struggles was a small business owner

who had already run an online tutoring and educational company for some time). According to

Rose:

> Teachers are always on the front line of students' mental health, no matter how many
>
> resources we provide, just due to the relationships [we have with students]. And it's not
>
> because teachers don't refer kids to guidance counsellors… students have to have met so
>
> many criteria to be able to meet with that mental health counsellor.

For Rose, assisting students with mental health as the pandemic unfolds has

> been both a joy and a burden…. You feel so honored that a kid trusts and thinks that
>
> much of you…. But on the flip side of that… you become a mediator between kids and
>
> the mental health professionals, which sometimes can make you feel small because you
>
> want to invest in [the kids], and you feel like you should be able to help them. But you
>
> also want to make sure you're not getting caught up in the red tape of what if… they
>
> didn't get the help they needed, and it's because you fell down on the job? So that's an
>
> increased stress and strain, but also a huge honor.

Rose's experience highlights the fine line educators navigated between a commitment to

support students in extreme circumstances and the limits of their competence and capacity to

provide support. Such situations were often experienced as a moral trap (a concept we explore in

later work, under review) where teachers felt they had no good options. Teachers' training does

not include counseling skills; however, the nature of their relationships with students mandates

they engage in forms of crisis management and counseling. This is a form of emotional labor for

which teachers seldom receive training (Atkins & Rodger, 2016; Ohrt et al., 2020), and

furthermore, the impacts of such emotional labor on teachers are rarely accounted for.

Abbie, Rose, Francesca, Imogen, and Eden all described, in various ways, taking responsibility for student mental health during the pandemic regardless of whether schools were supporting students' mental health. Abbie stated:

I don't think we've responded to [student mental health needs at the school level]. I haven't had any emails… saying "if you're having students struggling with anxiety…" We've just kind of found out by saying, hey, you teach so-and-so, and I just want you to know, they're really hurting, and reach out to them. It's all been on a teacher level.

Abbie's comment points to another layer of the moral trap some teachers endured during the stay-home orders: knowing the boundaries of their skills and training while facing the systemic barriers that prevented students from accessing the support they needed in a timely manner.

Teachers not only played roles typical of other professions, but they also coordinated with other teachers to support students and each other. Imogen stated:

We have a network-wide meeting… And essentially, [these meetings] were for sharing ideas and maybe seeing, "Hey, can you plan this Language Arts lesson, and I'll plan this math lesson and then I'll plan this science lesson and then we'll just share, and you can modify it… for your class, but at least we're not all planning every single lesson every single day." …But it's kind of turned into that plus, "Hey, how are you doing today?"

As indicated by this teacher, collaboration was initially a platform to share knowledge and resources; however, this progressed to include deeper emotional student and peer support. While teachers' resiliency created peer support, we now have data to support that the limited official support from districts had a negative impact on teachers' well-being and may contribute to feelings of burnout and the corresponding higher percentage of teachers who reported that they would leave the profession by the end of 2020-2021 school year (S. Jones & Ali, 2021).

Impacts on Educators' Personal Lives

Teachers also continued to meet a multitude of new work-related challenges while also dealing with immense stress in their personal lives. Francesca stated:

I think if I get sick, it's fine. I think I'm strong enough… My husband, I worry about him… he has diabetes, too. And that's an underlying condition. So it's that stress you have on you… And you still have to have …a positive attitude with your students when you're looking at them through the camera, because you cannot make them feel more uncomfortable than what they might be already feeling. They… may have their own worries, their own situations at home.

Francesca's experience illustrates the conflicting responsibilities of keeping her own family safe while feeling obligated to support her students (See et al., 2020).

Educators who are also parents reported experiencing unique hardships during the pandemic. Eden, middle school administrator and mother of three stated:

I think the biggest impact that the pandemic has had has been forcing us to spend so much time at home, and when you are used to working outside of the home--and you feel like what you do makes a difference, and it's a pretty significant part of your identity--it makes it really difficult … And you have to figure out how to manage this work identity with your identity at home as a mom and as a wife… So that's been the most difficult thing during this pandemic.

The challenge of working from home with young children present has not been unique to the teaching profession during COVID-19 but has undoubtedly compounded all the other stressors on teacher mental health discussed in this paper. Furthermore, as a female/womxn-dominated profession, teachers have already been working in a patriarchal society in which womxn still

undertake a disproportionate amount of child-rearing, emotional, and domestic labor (Ciciolla & Luthar, 2019), and COVID-19 only intensified this burden.

Educators' Resilience

Despite all this, teachers continued to find ways to engage students creatively and compassionately via remote instruction, to check on students' physical and mental health, and to provide basic necessities to students and their families. Rose described the following:

Home visits have been a huge deal right now…. Just saying, "Are you alive over here? Are you okay?" …And, you know, we were able to make contact with every student in our district. So that was a really big deal…. [Students] got what they needed, which I think is a huge accomplishment. And a lot of that was on the part of the teachers.

Teachers showed up for their students in multiple ways while sometimes lacking administrators' guidance and support; they found ways to "make it work" (Kim & Ausbry, 2020). Rose felt empowered and was conscious of the opportunity to put the focus back on her knowledge, skills, and abilities gained through experience:

As a teacher, I think that—honestly—I think classroom teachers, [are] better equipped to handle this than the administrators …. Because every day you have to monitor and adjust; you figure out a way to make it work…. We're used to differentiating; if you're a good teacher, you're used to not having all the supplies and having to figure out how to make it work…. Now, the good thing is, if… this is truly your passion, and your calling, you did that. You found ways to reach your kids.

Complimentarily, for some teachers, resilience also focused on having more time for self-care. Imogen also stated:

> In terms of our family, we actually have been healthier; we're getting more physical activity and we're getting more sleep.... It's like summer rejuvenation. I feel guilty saying that, but it's true.

However, in many ways, Imogen's experience reflects the high level of work-related fatigue experienced by teachers pre-pandemic and the need to create more time for sleep, exercise, and general self and family care than teachers usually get. Indeed, according to the Southern Education Foundation, "teaching is ranked as one of the worst professions for physical health, psychological well-being, and job satisfaction, which leads to high turnover rates" (S. Jones & Ali, 2021, p. 2). Thus, while the pandemic created many stressors, it also--for some--created a much-needed space for respite from the general state of over-work educators endure.

Impacts on Educators Working against White Supremacy

We chose to center the narratives of teachers of Color and white teachers who resisted white supremacy. We found that these teachers faced increased stressors due to fear of discrimination and disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on communities of Color. Although the racial uprisings were impossible to ignore, coping with the pandemic made it less likely that schools would acknowledge or address these significant political and cultural events. This silence could leave BIPOC teachers feeling doubly isolated. To illustrate: Aisha, who identifies as African American/Black stated:

> We have a federal administration that is making light of the pandemic. And we're currently at over 120,000 deaths [as of the time of the interview]. And so when you look at the psyche, and there are a disproportionate number of deaths of those who are African

Americans, and then I watch on television, a Black man who's been killed by the

policeman, but then you expect me to be normal. Right? And so, where is the empathy?

Where's the empathy?

Aisha's story elucidates a long-standing problem in the recruitment and retention of teachers of

Color: that of white-dominated schools not only not valuing or centering the experiences of

teachers and students of Color, but actively silencing, erasing, or otherwise ignoring both their

joys and pains. As Jason Baez stated, "safe space for critical conversations, our history, and

identity and voice" are crucial to BIPOC teachers' (in Baez's study, male teachers of color)

retention and well-being in schools (Baez, 2021, p. 111). It should come as no surprise, then, that

after COVID began, BIPOC teachers, and Black teachers in particular, reported in the Rand

Corporation's 2021 State of the U.S. Teacher Survey that no less than half of Black teacher

respondents expected to leave the profession by the end of the school year in which they were

surveyed (S. Jones & Ali, 2021, p. 5).

Other BIPOC teachers, especially those who identified as immigrants, also experienced

stress due to travel restrictions and inability to see family and friends. Francesca, who identifies

as Latinx, stated:

Well, [the pandemic] has had a really strong effect on me personally because

my family, my friends, everybody's back in Colombia…. The summer is the time that I

look forward to going to see them every year…. But beyond that point, it's more the

uncertainty of what's happening and what may happen to them. What happens if they get

sick and I don't get to see--[emotional pause]. Yeah, it's really stressful.

The unpredictable nature of the pandemic was exacerbated for Francesca by the additional stress

of not being able to visit her family and friends if they faced imminent health risks. Francesca's

case illustrates the disproportionate stress impacts COVID created for educators with family

and/or close friends in other countries, but again, COVID created a more extreme case of a worry

those educators likely already experienced.

Because of her embodied positionality as an African American woman, Eden described

the impact of school de- and re-segregation (Hagopian, 2020; Rosiek & Kinslow, 2016)--also

exacerbated by, but not created by the pandemic. She stated:

> I remember making some phone calls to parents during [the beginning of the pandemic],
>
> and parents were like… this really makes me feel like y'all care. Like--we've got parents
>
> who don't feel like we care…. And that is one thing I'll say--I'm not saying that schools
>
> need to be segregated by any means, but… my mom went to [school name], which was
>
> an all-Black school in [town name]; she graduated valedictorian from this little tiny
>
> school where all the teachers were African American, and all the students were African
>
> American, and every teacher knew your mom and your daddy and they went to church
>
> together… it was a village, right? Everybody was a part of getting this kid to the next
>
> level. We don't have that anymore.

This comment illustrates a point made by Vanessa Siddle Walker and others (Hagopian, 2020;

Walker, 2009): that the racial integration of schools often disempowered Black communities in

unanticipated ways. This administrator connected her own family's experience of the support

Black children got in all-Black schools pre-desegregation to the disconnection and distrust of

white-dominated schools post-integration (Hagopian, 2020, pp. 30-31). In many cases, racial

integration resulted in Black students having a far lower percentage of Black teachers and

ultimately being put into the care of white teachers who often did not have connections to or

understandings of their communities. In Eden's case, the 1:1 contact made by administrators

during COVID both illustrated that families of color had doubted schools' care and that schools run by predominantly white teachers and administrators did not offer families of Color the connections, care, and community that segregated all-Black schools had (due to anti-Black racism and Black teacher pushout post-integration).

Further, the work of disrupting systemic oppression was objected to by administrations even when white teachers took a stance for social justice. For example, Tiffany (a white anti-racist teacher) reported that her administrators cited the COVID-19 pandemic as a reason to omit addressing the history of racism in social studies curricula:

I'm just starting this unit, and [administration] wrote back and said, don't do it. I was like, excuse me? The school board said not to do anything, the wording they used was "stressful." … They were like, the school board doesn't want us to do slavery, internment, anything that might cause students stress during this time. And I talked to my team—I didn't talk to my principal; [my principal] attacks my team. And we decided to do it anyway. Even though we have been directly told not to do it. Oh really? We can't not do it. That is white supremacy, when we try to avoid subjects because we think they're going to be difficult for kids. And we did [the unit] anyway.

This incident illustrates how the pandemic intensified inequity in schools, not just by having disproportionate impacts on communities of Color, but also by amplifying the influence of institutionalized white supremacy on curricula. In this case it made it necessary for teachers to resist administrative directives at the risk of trouble. Such professional stressors only added to the general stress caused by the pandemic. The burden of resisting white supremacy while risking her job is an example that could explain why BIPOC teachers reported higher level of stress and related feelings to leave the profession (S. Jones & Ali, 2021).

Importantly, teachers found ways to support BIPOC students during COVID and the racial uprisings even considering the empathy and support they did not receive themselves. Ellen (who was white but taught many BIPOC students) shared:

This summer [2020] was horrible for me because I knew that a lot of my AVID students were in the heartbeat of the riots; I mean, that was like their daily life…. we called for extra prep time for the teachers, (but)… it was for the kids. We wanted them to be ready for school. So I really appreciate that we stepped into that decision. I would have been more impressed with our district had they called it what it was… If they had said… we're doing this for our kids of Color.

These reflections highlight the ongoing systemic negligence of the lived experiences of students and teachers of Color, and BIPOC and anti-racist white teachers' resistance and resilience in the face of terrible events. Indeed, in not calling the schools' actions what they were (support for students of Color who may have needed more time between participating in the racial uprisings of summer 2020 and being ready to come back to school for the fall), the school partook in discourses of colorblind racism (Leonardo & Dixon-Román, 2018; Sondel et al., 2019) even as they attempted to do something positive to support students of Color.

Implications and Significance for Teacher Education

Results from this study support the idea that we need to shift from an individual approach to well-being to a systemic approach to supporting teachers' well-being. This study also contributes our understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on teachers' mental health and how it mediates students' well-being and outcomes. These teachers' stories illustrate the connection between teachers' well-being and teachers' burnout. The pandemic has provided a window through which we can see the significance of teacher mental health as a policy issue, especially

as it impacts student mental health and achievement. This study contributes the following insights to literature on teacher well-being and mental health: 1. There is a need for ongoing structural support of the embodied emotional labor of teaching; 2. There is a need for financial, policy, and structural support for both student and teacher mental health, which are connected.

This study confirms that teachers often find themselves compelled to care for student mental health and well-being (Cross & Hong, 2012). Indeed, they often serve as society's first responders to both student emotional needs and mental health crises. Therefore, there is a need to examine what professional skills related to this work should be included in teachers' training. The Southern Education Foundation found that "only 13 percent of university preparation programs included at least one course that focused on relationship skills, six percent included a course on self-management, and one percent included a course on self-awareness" (S. Jones & Ali, 2021, p. 9), even as the teaching profession is, if nothing else, fundamentally relational. Furthermore, teachers could benefit from understanding the challenge of the emotional labor involved in teaching ahead of time and learning to identify when they may need individual or systematic support.

Rose described her role as a mediator between children's needs and mental health supports. Teachers need to know how to identify students' needs and be knowledgeable of community partners when referrals are in need. However, the time lag from identification to provision of services can be detrimental to both students' and teachers' well-being. Thus, teachers may need to provide some level of counsel, which indicates a need for explicit training. In addition, teachers need to learn to assess for life-threatening mental health risks thus requiring suicide prevention first responder and intervention training. These skills are not only significant to provide the necessary support to students, they are extremely significant to teachers' self-

efficacy; providing these supports can therefore also protect teachers' well-being. The need for teacher training on these issues is another indicator of the need for systemic approaches and policy initiatives to promote and protect teachers' well-being.

Emotional labor is a salient aspect of the level of stress teachers experience. The stories teachers shared in this study demonstrate how emotional labor plays a significant role in teachers' experiences as they navigated the new modality of teaching at the beginning of the pandemic. Teachers reported on the challenge of work-life balance and caring for their students while supporting their families' and their own needs. This imbalance is not unique to the pandemic, and it explains a portion of overall emotional labor. Teachers could benefit from more explicitly understanding--via teacher preparation programs--the challenge of the emotional labor involved in teaching ahead of time and learning to identify when they may need individual or systematic support. Furthermore, this study indicates that much more robust systemic support for mental health (e.g., counselors available at schools for teachers in addition to students) would benefit both teachers and students. Having such counselors on site and explicitly available to teachers would decrease the burden of emotional and invisible labor involved in having to seek out and vet counseling on one's own.

Narratives from this study reveal teachers' resiliency. Teachers' ability to show up for students despite districts' lack of support suggests the need to provide teachers with both increased autonomy and increased support to perform their roles. One means of accomplishing this would be for administrators to facilitate and support professional learning communities (PLCs) and promote teachers' leadership in addressing their students' well-being. While teachers in our study created their own opportunities, their efforts emphasize the pervasively individualized approach to teachers' well-being rather than the systemic one that is needed.

Implications for Retention of BIPOC Teachers

This study set out to understand teacher mental health at the outset of the pandemic. Some of our findings concerned the impact of systemic racism on student well-being and teacher mental health. Although institutionalized white supremacy is a mental health hazard in all contexts, and not only for BIPOC but for all persons, it is nonetheless important to consider the implications of these impacts in the context of this study. These include a need for personnel in schools to be trained in practices of not only being accountable for supporting BIPOC teachers but also for creating environments in which BIPOC teachers can thrive. This can include teacher education that prepares all educators to be advocates and/or allies working against the arguably permanent state of institutionalized racism in schools and society (Bell, 2018). The creation of "rejuvenation spaces" (Mosely, 2018) specifically for Black teachers (and all BIPOC educators) is another avenue that could be explored much more systematically to support BIPOC teachers' well-being in schools.

This study contributes to literature on the inequitable emotional labor teachers of Color inevitably take on in school systems permeated by structural white supremacy. In response to such concerns, Rios and Longoria (2021) have advocated for policies that help sustain BIPOC teachers' identities and full selves in schools as an asset-based approach to BIPOC teacher retention. Furthermore, our findings indicate that any counseling staff hired to be on-site for teachers should hold anti-racist commitments. While anti-racism is a fairly universal aspect of psychological training at this point, it would be especially paramount in counselors available for BIPOC teachers.

As more anti-Critical Race Theory (CRT) bills are passed across the United States, it is incumbent upon administrators and white colleagues to ensure that BIPOC teachers stop bearing

an inequitable burden of emotional, mental, and physical labor in advocating for solutions to these problems while honoring the unique standpoints and knowledge BIPOC teachers inevitably have. As this paper is being edited on January 20, 2023, Florida governor Ron DeSantis has banned the Advanced Placement African American studies course from high school curricula (Migdon & Daniels, 2023). While the impacts of this particular ban are still developing, our findings indicate that there will likely be a larger emotional toll on BIPOC educators, who will continue to need empathy, material support, and spaces of rejuvenation. Anti-racist white educators will also need support—while continuing to support their BIPOC colleagues.

Teacher education has increasingly paid attention to culturally relevant and culturally sustaining pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 2014). In the recruitment and retention of teachers, practices that help BIPOC teachers sustain their identities (Rios & Longoria, 2021) matter immensely for well-being and retention. As Addy et al. state, "Empathy is an attribute that has been considered as necessary for culturally responsive pedagogy to be effective" (Addy et. al, 2021, p. 37). Further, they state that "teaching holistically is a strategy that supports student persistence and ultimately retention in higher education" (Addy et. al, 2021, p. 39). In the words of educator Aisha, "Where's the empathy?" Our findings indicate a need for empathetic engagement with and listening to the needs of BIPOC teachers (by administrators, colleagues, and policy makers) that is not yet taking place on a systematic scale. While "empathy" is not necessarily a "measurable" intervention, it is a necessary one, we believe, as it is a crucial underpinning for any additional interventions made in specific contexts. Further, empathy cannot be engaged in such a way as to frame BIPOC teachers as having merely "individual" problems with or reactions to systemic racism and white supremacy. In some media, systemic problems are represented in ways intended to evoke only empathy for individuals instead of empathy for the

experience of the impacts of systemic ills (Varma, 2019). This is not the type of empathy our findings indicate. They indicate a kind of empathy that not only understands systemic conditions but also engages solidarity (Varma, 2019).

Implications for Teacher Education Amidst "Aftershocks" of COVID-19

We contend that as the "aftershocks" of COVID continue (teacher shortages, anti-CRT bills, the deficit discourses of "learning loss" that continue to circulate and blame the victims of structural neglect instead of the failure of societal institutions [The editors of Rethinking Schools, 2023]), it is more paramount than ever that teachers experience the empathy of solidarity. It is equally paramount that districts, states, and the federal government continue to increase substantial resourcing and funding for mental health priorities for *both* teachers and students, as well as communities. Indeed, human well-being, particularly in our local and immediate communities, cannot be disaggregated to the individual level alone (Prilleltensky, 2005).

Students returning to full-time in-person instruction in the wake of the (still ongoing) COVID-19 pandemic are struggling with mental health concerns, increased anxiety and depression, suicidality, and self-harm at higher rates than before (Meherali et al., 2021), which is predictive of long-term impacts on students' mental health. Teacher well-being impacts both student well-being and academic achievement. It is clear that, in the words of the Abolitionist Teaching Network, "If the teachers are not well, how can we expect the students to be well?" (Abolitionist Teaching Network, 2022). We need a workforce of well teachers fully equipped to handle students' needs.

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Appendix A: Initial Interview Protocol, Spring 2020:

Pedagogy of the Pandemic

Interview Protocol

Prior to the interview:

·   The participant should have received the informed consent form.

·   They should have replied with an email providing their consent.

·   Any questions asked by email should have been answered by email (unless last minute.)

Prior to the recording:

·   Make greetings, and express thanks for participation. Perhaps chat about how person is coping with the social distancing. Be human.

·   Summarize research using a version of the following:

As you know I am part of a research team at the University of Oregon conducting research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on k-12 teaching. We want to know what you are seeing and feeling as a [teacher, aid, principal, district administrator, state policy maker, etc.] Our goal is to learn how school systems are adapting to these extraordinary circumstances. We will be looking at the effects of the pandemic on the teaching of specific subjects, on educational equity issues, on teacher professional development, on conversations about education reform, assessment, teacher autonomy, and other things that we cannot anticipate but people like you will tell us about.

We do not anticipate this research being controversial in any way, however, as a standard procedure we will keep your responses to us anonymous. As explained in the consent form, I sent you, once this interview is transcribed, your name will be taken off of it, and the video will be deleted. You also have the right to opt out of questions and to stop participation in the research at any time.

Do you have any questions about our research you would like to ask before we begin?

Notify participant: I am turning the recording on now.

1.   Researcher: state your own name, date, and "pedagogy of the pandemic interview."

2.   Would you state your name and where you work for our records.

- ·   If teacher—you may have to prompt for grade level and subject area.
- ·   How long have you worked in this position? As a teacher?

3. Your professional work as a teacher takes place in the context of your full life as a human being. Therefore, before we begin talking about your professional work, I'd like to ask about the impact of these times on you more generally. How are you doing? How is the Covid-19 pandemic affecting you, your family, and those your care for? You may respond to that question in any way that makes sense to you, or you are welcome to pass.

- - In case the question seems confusing, you may further explain that:
- - Teachers' lives are often ignored or erased in public discussions of the work of teaching. We don't want to be a part of that general pattern.
- - The pandemic has now forced the practice of teaching into teachers' homes. So the overlap between professional and personal spaces has expanded. We want to acknowledge that and talk about how this is part of the new work teachers are being asked to do.

4. I will start with an open-ended question: How has the epidemic affected your work as a teacher?

- ·   What educational experiences, if any, are you being asked to provide?
- ·   What are you actually doing, whether it is mandated or not?
- ·   What are your biggest concerns for students?
- ·   Which students are you most concerned about and why?
- ·   What are your biggest concerns for teachers?
- ·   What equity issues are affecting teachers? For example…
- ·   Such as access to technology,
- ·   Teachers' dis/abilities,
- ·   Teachers' financial hardships,
- ·   Teachers who share identities or have special connections with students having increased emotional labor?
- ·   Are there any supports in place to respond to these needs?

5. Has your district or school organized any alternative form of educational service for students? If so, what? [Be prepared to explain that while you may know some of the things happening it is better to hear it in their words.]

- ·   How is it going? How are these changes affecting you and your students?
- ·   What supports for these alternatives have the district put in place? Time, expert advice, mew materials.
- ·   How does this differ from the supports always offered to teachers?
- ·   What supports are still needed?
- ·   What professional development or training as been provided?
- ·   Has the teachers' union been involved in decision making about these alternatives or resource development?

6. Are you in conversation with other teachers about how to respond to student educational needs during this pandemic?

·   Who are these conversations with?
·   What are you talking about?
·   Who organized the conversations?
·   Have they led to any specific actions or preparations?
·   To what degree have teachers had to rely on one another?
·   If a great deal, ask if this is preferable to receiving more direction?
·   How are or could the district assist with this teacher-to-teacher collaboration?

7. Do you see differences of opinions emerging in your school, district, or state about how to handle the educational challenges of the pandemic?

·   What are these differences?
·   Who are the parties in these discussions and what stances are they taking?
·   Why do you see them taking that stance?
·   To what extent are practicing teachers being included in the development of a response?

8. What equity considerations do you see being raised by alternative approaches to teaching being used?

·   Are there particular students or groups of students you are worried about?
·   Let's think about different a variety of different student demographic groups and see if you have thoughts about how students in those groups are being affected by the changes in schooling happening.
·   How are economic and income differences influencing (likely to influence) student experience of the changes happening?
·   How is linguistic difference influencing student experience of the changes happening?
·   How is dis/ability influencing student experience of the changes happening?
·   How is racial identity influencing student experience of the changes happening?
·   How are Indigenous students uniquely experiencing the changes happening?
·   How is gender identity influencing student experience of the changes happening?
·   How is sexuality identity influencing student experience of the changes happening?
·   How is parent education level influencing student experience of the changes happening?
·   Any others we might ask or think about?
·   Are there particular students or types of students you are worried about, not adequately described by those broad categories?

9. What do you wish you or the district were able to do for students in this pandemic? What would have been an ideal response? What is preventing that response?

10. What do you think the impacts of the pandemic will be for students

·   of your grade level specifically?
·   What could be done to lessen these effects?
·   of your subject matter area specifically?
·   What could be done to lessen these effects?

11. What do you think will be the challenges when students and teachers eventually return to in-person classes?

12. What questions have we not asked that we should be asking?

·   Ask the question they recommend.
·   Tell them this reply will be taken back to the research group and may be incorporated into future interviews.

13. Do you have any questions for us?

14. Is there anyone actively involved in these kinds of conversations that you would recommend we interview? Educators who are particularly active in conversations about developing an educational response to the pandemic?

·   Would you be willing to be interviewed again if we wanted to follow up with you as we learn more?

Appendix B: Follow-up/New Interview Protocol, Winter 2021

Pedagogy of the Pandemic

Winter 2021 Interview Protocol

Prior to the interview:

The participant should have received the informed consent form.

They should have replied with an email providing their consent.

Any questions asked by email should have been answered by email (unless last minute.)

Go to https://zoom.us/signin. Use Duck ID. Go to Settings-->Recordings and make sure website settings are enabled as follows:

Record active speaker with shared screen

Add a timestamp to the recording

Display participants' names in the recording

Optimize the recording for 3rd party video editor

Audio transcript

Push SAVE for the above.

Allow cloud recording sharing

Automatic recording-- Record in the cloud

Push SAVE for the above.

Viewers can see the transcript

Prior to the recording:

- Pause recording
- Make greetings, and express thanks for participation. Perhaps chat about how person is doing, coping with the social distancing, health of their family, etc. Be human.
- Summarize research using a version of the following:

As you know I am part of a research team at the University of Oregon conducting research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on k-12 teaching. We want to know what you are seeing and feeling as a [teacher, aid, principal, district administrator, state policy maker, etc.] Our goal is to learn how school systems are adapting to these extraordinary circumstances. We will be looking at the effects of the pandemic on the teaching of specific subjects, on educational equity issues, on teacher professional development, on conversations about education reform, assessment, teacher autonomy, and other things that we cannot anticipate but professionals like yourself will tell us about.

- We do not anticipate this research being controversial in any way, however, as a standard procedure we will keep your responses to us anonymous. As explained in the consent form, I sent you, once this interview is transcribed and analyzed, your name will be removed from it, and the video will be deleted. You also have the right to opt out of questions and to stop participation in the research at any time.

Do you have any questions about our research you would like to ask before we begin?

Begin recording – DO NOT FORGET.

Notify participant: I am turning the recording on now.

1.   Researcher states their name, the date, and "pedagogy of the pandemic interview."

2.   Would you state your name and where you work for our records?

·   If teacher—you may have to prompt for grade level and subject area.
·   How long have you worked in this position? As a teacher?

3. Your professional work as a teacher takes place in the context of your full life as a human being. Therefore, before we begin talking about your professional work, I'd like to ask about the impact of these times on you more generally. How are you doing? How is the Covid-19 pandemic affecting you, your family, and those your care for? You may respond to that question in any way that makes sense to you, or you are welcome to pass.

·   In case the question seems confusing, you may further explain that:
·   Teachers' lives are often ignored or erased in public discussions of the work of teaching. We don't want to be a part of that general pattern.
·   The pandemic has now forced the practice of teaching into teachers' homes. So the overlap between professional and personal spaces has expanded. We want to acknowledge that and talk about how this is part of the new work teachers are being asked to do.

4. I will start with an open-ended question: How is the pandemic affecting your work as a teacher this year?

Possible follow ups...

·   What educational experiences are you being asked to provide?
·   In person, by remote, hybrid?
·   If remote, from home?
·   Full curriculum or modified?
·   What changes do you see occurring to your course content, whether it was mandated or not?
·   Can you give a specific example of topics or lessons that will be or have been significantly transformed by the shift to remote teaching?
·   What are your biggest concerns for students?
·   Which students are you most concerned about and why?
·   Can you give specific examples, without revealing identifying information about a student?
·   Have you set up alternative means of communication with students to support them? (Ex: emails, phone calls, online office hours)

5. What supports are being provided to teachers by the state, district, or school administration?   [Be prepared to explain that while you may know some of the things happening it is better to hear it in their words.]

·   What material supports have been provided?
·   What professional development support for remote teaching have the district put in place?

·   Time to collaborate? expert advice? new materials?
·   How does this differ from the supports always offered to teachers?
·   What supports are still needed?
·   Have teachers been involved in decision making about identifying necessary supports or resource development?
·   If yes, can you give specific examples of teachers' inclusion in these decision-making processes?
·   Have the teachers' union played a role in these decisions?

6. What kind of conversations and collaborations have you had with other teachers about how to respond to student educational needs during this pandemic?

·   Who are these conversations with?
·   What do you find yourself talking about the most with other teachers?
·   Do you offer one another general emotional support? If so, how?
·   Do you share curricula or teaching ideas?
·   Can you give specific examples of ideas you have gotten from other teachers that you have used?
·   How organized are these conversations?
·   Are they spur of the moment conversations?
·   Weekly vent and debrief?
·   Organized conversations focused on teaching techniques?
·   Organized by teachers themselves? Can you provide examples?
·   Organized by administrators or other organizations?
·   Have any of these conversations led to any specific actions or preparations? Ask for examples.
·   To what degree have teachers had to rely on one another for figuring out the transition to remote instruction?
·   If this is happening, ask for examples.
·   Try to encourage a full story of the collaborations—ask how it started, who initiated, how long it lasted. What they like most about it? If it ended, why?
·   How could districts assist with this teacher-to-teacher collaboration? What would such assistance look like?

7. What does family engagement and connection look like in your school/district/classroom?

·   What have you done to build relationships with vulnerable students' families during the pandemic? How have you engaged students' families?
·   Is there time allotted in your daily schedule specifically for relationship and rapport building with families and students? Some districts are calling this "care and connection."
·   What message is being communicated from the district level about the importance of relationships and family engagement?

8. Equity related questions

·   How is the transition to remote teaching affecting ESL students?
·   Ask for stories about particular students or instances, if they have any.
·   Has there been any discussion or effort at your school to identify unique impacts of the pandemic on immigrant communities and ESL students?

- How is the transition to remote teaching affecting students with IEPs?
- What specific challenges are students with IEPs faced with during remote learning that are not present when in person?
- Ask for stories about particular students or instances, if they have any.
- How is the transition to remote teaching affecting LGBTQ students?
- Has there been any discussion or effort at your school to identify unique impacts of the pandemic on LGBTQ students?
- Has there been any discussion of the impact of remote teaching on Trans students?
- § Are students able to control how their name is displayed in the virtual classrooms?
- § Are there conversations about, and efforts around preventing outing students in unsupportive contexts (parents who are unsupportive, peers who do not yet know, etc.)?
- Ask for stories about particular students or collaborations with teachers, if they have any.

- How is the transition to remote teaching affecting low-income students?
- Do your students have access to technology that enables remote teaching?
- How are you and your school responding to the economic insecurity influencing your students' lives? Housing? Food?
- Ask for stories about particular students or collaborations with teachers, if they have any.
- How is the transition to remote teaching affecting Indigenous students?
- Has there been any discussion or effort at your school to identify unique impacts of the pandemic on Indigenous communities and students?
- Ask for stories about particular students or collaborations with teachers, if they have any.
- How is the transition to remote teaching affecting Black students?
- Has there been any discussion or effort at your school to identify unique impacts of the pandemic on Black communities and students?
- How do you see the protests about and public focus on police violence against Black people affecting your Black students? Is this discussed with students as a part of your curricula? In what way?
- Ask for stories about particular students or moments in class, if they have any.
- Has there been any discussion or effort at your school to identify unique impacts of the pandemic on Latino communities and students?
- How is the transition to remote teaching affecting Latino/a/x students?
- How do you see the protests about and public focus on police violence against people of color affecting your Latino students? Is this discussed with students as a part of your curricula? In what way?
- Ask for stories about particular students or moments in class, if they have any.
- Are there particular groups of students or personality types that you are concerned about who are not adequately described by those broad categories?
- What are your concerns?
- Ask for stories about particular students or moments in class, if they have any.

9. What are your biggest concerns for teachers' well-being?

·   Are you spending your own money on technology and supplies? If so, how much and on what?
·   Do you know of teachers who are facing more general financial hardships due to the pandemic that affect their ability to work and their well-being? (Allow that respondent may not wish to discuss such things.)
·   Are you facing childcare challenges?
·   Our preliminary research suggests that the pandemic is increasing the emotional labor of teaching—caring for others, being concerned about their well-being, reassuring children, etc. (May need to explain emotional labor a little more.)
·   Is that true for you?
·   Do you have specific examples of this emotional labor?

10. What opportunities for connection, care, and love have arisen during the move to remote teaching that are different than the in-person teaching?

·   What gestures of kindness, support, care, have you seen since the move to remote/hybrid teaching?
·   Have you seen an increase in conversations educational equity, dealing with children as whole human beings?
·   Are there book clubs, work groups, community conversation opportunities coming out of this time at your school?
·   Who is organizing these groups?
·   Who is participating?

11. What questions have we not asked that we should be asking?

·   Ask the question they recommend.
·   Tell them this reply will be taken back to the research group and may be incorporated into future interviews.

12. Do you have any questions for us?

13. Is there anyone actively involved in these kinds of conversations that you would recommend we interview? Educators who are particularly active in conversations about developing an educational response to the pandemic?

·   Would you be willing to be interviewed again if we wanted to follow up with you as we learn more?