(Dis)Covering Routes: Affective Turnover and Black American Teachers' Transnational Migration to the United Arab Emirates

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Tiffany Lachelle Smith

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"I go forth alone, and stand as ten thousand"

Maya Angelou, *Our Grandmothers*, 2015, p. 247

I begin this section with a timestamp, as I did in each of the interviews conducted for this study. The time is now 11:01 am on May 24, 2022. I sit at a wooden work desk placed in front of the window in my sunroom. From this view, I watch the leaves of the bald cypress tree vigorously blow back and forth. The birds sing and chirp loudly, and the gray clouds whisper about the potential of an incoming storm.

As I write this acknowledgement section, two years after conducting this research study, I finally realize the importance of going home. As Goldberg (2005) describes in her book *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*, if you want your work to be whole, going home is a necessary component of completing the circle. She vividly explains:

> You don't have to move in with your parents again and collect a weekly allowance, but you must claim where you come from and look deep into it. Come to honor and embrace it, or at the least, accept it. (Goldberg, 2005, p. 241)

Though I cannot fully admit that I have accepted my hometown of Alton, Illinois, looking more deeply into it has been a quest I've embarked upon for the past few years. I left home in 2011 when I moved to Morocco to begin my career as an international teacher. While living abroad, my returns home were brief and

sporadic occurrences that, at minimum, happened once a year. Therefore, when the University of Minnesota transitioned from in-person instruction to distance learning because of the wide spread of the virus COVID-19, I decided to move back home to complete this dissertation study. I returned home in 2020, and as Goldberg (2005) alludes to in her book, coming home has allowed me to embody the wholeness that makes me believe I have completed the circle.

Though not referenced in this dissertation, Maya Angelou was also an expatriate who spent several years of her life living in Ghana and Egypt. As I reflect on the year and a half that I have spent home, I receive inspiration from her words noted in the epigraph. *I go forth alone, and stand as ten thousand*. They poignantly describe the essence of the doctoral journey for which I have undertaken over the past six years. After having looked more deeply into the bonds that seal my relationships with my ancestors, family, and friends, I realize that though I stand *here* as Dr. Tiffany Lachelle Smith, my journey *here* has taken a village. I am on the receiving end of this doctoral degree, yet I stand as a compilation of history and present, dreams deferred, and dreams fulfilled, sweat and tears, and joy and laughter.

It is the word *here* that forces me to scan the room for which I sit and take notice of the empty tables and shelves that neatly positioned plants and books once occupied. They are empty because I am preparing, once again, to leave the country I call home. I recently accepted a position at the Sheik Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation in Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates (UAE). In

preparation for this move, and as the official closure of this dissertation, I want to acknowledge my village.

Though the pages of this section will not suffice writing the names of 10,000 people, my attempt is to name a few. First, I give glory to God for providing me with the strength, endurance, and discernment needed to complete this project. You provided me with the necessary tools, Lord, and your one requirement of me was to tap into my intuition and creativity and use each of the tools wisely. Thank you, and my hope is that this dissertation and this journey has made you proud.

Second, I acknowledge my ancestors, those mentioned in this dissertation— James Baldwin, Nina Simone, Earnest Dunbar, and John Dollard— and those not mentioned. I honor your legacies and the blueprints left behind for explorers like me. Your personal stories, and the stories shared about other Black Americans encountered in your lives provided a lantern to guide my path. It illuminated a pathway to amplify the voices and stories of the Black American teachers in this study.

In addition to the guidance received from my ancestors, I also acknowledge the guidance provided by my dissertation advisor, Dr. Frances Vavrus. During the third year of my program, switching my dissertation advisor was placed upon my heart. At that time, I read a few articles written by doctoral students. Though I do not remember the names of these articles, what captured my attention was the repeated phrase, “I am the student of…” In hindsight, the students were simply naming their advisors. Yet the sentence reminded me of

prophetic pairs like the Karate Kid and Mr. Miyagi and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Master Splinter. It was a powerful phrase to describe the transition of a protégé guiding a student on the process of *becoming*. A process that I felt every doctoral student should be privileged to this encounter, including me. As I addressed her critical feedback and suggested revisions, which was by far the most difficult intellectual experience I endured in life, I continued to carry the mantra, "when I'm done with this process, I will truly testify that I am a student of Dr. Vavrus." It warms my heart as I now share this testimony. *I am a student of Dr. Frances Vavrus*. I thank you for the countless hours you dedicated to helping me construct this dissertation study. In addition to her, I also acknowledge Drs. Christopher Johnstone, Roozbeh Shirazi, Gerald Fry, and Mohammed Khalifa. I thank each of you for serving on my committee and I am honored to have been shaped and molded by a group of amazing intellectuals.

Next, I acknowledge my family. Each of you have expressed ample support and love during this journey and I love and thank you. Being able to write this dissertation while home is exactly what was needed to complete this circle. Thank you, Richard Smith (grandfather), Rhonda Brown (mother), Keith Smith (father), Dorothy Howell (Grandmother), Tanekia Smith (sister). I also thank my nieces and nephews who continued giving me a reason to get out of the house!

In addition to my family, I want to acknowledge my *friend-leagues*, a term that I coined to describe the people I feel were more than friends and more than a colleague. We spent countless hours supporting each other in our professional lives through our study sessions, writing in community, and

reviewing each other's work. But, we also made time to support each other in our personal lives. We prayed together, cried together, and pushed each other to continue with this process. Here, I acknowledge Dr. Tasha Hart-Mreme, Dr. Sara Musaifer, Shakita Thomas-Kpetey, Simone Gbolo, Hannah Carney, and Dr. Emily Anderson.

Lastly, I acknowledge the financial sponsors in support of this research. I express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Natasha Ridge, Caitrin Ann Mullan, and the amazing team at the Sheik Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation. It was during that time I was collecting data in the UAE when the rapid widespread of the virus COVID-19 occurred. Each of us were expected to abide to the shifting demands implemented by the government. Yet, the leadership at the Foundation went above and beyond what they were expected to do. You assured me that I was safe, informed, and that my basic needs were met. The blessing that was provided was larger than financial support, and I am truly grateful to have built a relationship with you. I truly look forward to joining you soon.

I also acknowledge and express gratitude for the University of Minnesota–Social Science Research Council Interdisciplinary Dissertation Proposal Development Program. This funding provided financial support for the pilot of this research study.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the 13 Black American educators who lived in the UAE at the time of this study, and whose stories are central to this research.

ABSTRACT

The United States (U.S.) is facing what I describe as a *double teacher shortage*, meaning a national teacher shortage and a shortage of teachers of color. To address the issues of shortage and diversity, educational scholars and policymakers have turned their attention to courting Black teachers into the profession because they have been deemed as role models. Yet, even as a central component of recruitment efforts, the proportion of Black teachers in the PK-12 system has continued to decrease while the proportion of other minoritized teachers has steadily increased.

Attempts to understand how to effectively address the declining proportion of Black teachers has resulted in educational studies that focus on their attrition. Though these studies have presented a myriad of factors, they have provided domestic interpretations about Black teachers and have paid little attention to the role that Black teachers' identities, lived experiences, and affective dimensions play in their decisions to leave.

This qualitative dissertation study employed a narrative life history approach to understand the transnational migration decisions of 10 Black American teachers who left schools in the U.S. for schools in the UAE. The life histories of this under-researched population of teachers were significant sites for sense-making because widening the scope of domestic interpretations to a comparative and international one, allowed for a more thorough examination of attrition. The findings from this study were organized into three primary themes: (1) Emotional collisions; (2) Influencers and pain points; and (3) Transnational

emotions. To explain the interconnectedness of identities, lived experiences, and the affective dimensions that collectively shaped these Black American teachers' migration decisions, a new educational theory that I named *affective turnover* was employed. This theory emerged from this study and was a significant finding to help explain this phenomenon.

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Preface: (Dis)Covering Routes

It was 7 p.m. on September 29, 2019, when I boarded Delta flight 6230, departing St. Louis, Missouri, en route to Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). There were two layovers in Michigan and Amsterdam for a total flight time of nearly 24 hours. I approached my seat, 11A, and lifted my carry-on into the overhead bin. Slowly maneuvering myself from the aisle to my assigned spot near the window, I sat down and placed my large tote under the seat in front of me. I took my shoes off, put them next to my bag, and removed my neatly positioned journal between my laptop and agenda. Placing my journal on my lap, I used my free hands to fasten my seat belt. Perhaps it was the click of the two buckles that sparked a connection in my mind and excited me to capture it before it slipped away.

I opened my journal to a page with scribbled notes. They were thoughts that had stirred in my mind about the parallels between my life and the life of James Baldwin. He is widely known as a Black expatriate even though he kept an adamant stance that his move to Paris in 1941 was not an act of (ex)patriating America. The country was his research subject, and to do the work he felt compelled to do required that he create a type of distance from U.S. shores, and one vast and far enough for him to make comparisons. The notes in my journal, or more accurately the reflections, about James Baldwin centered my research query about Black Americans[1] abroad.

I remembered listening to a 1961 interview with radio host Studs Terkel when Baldwin explained that, for him, Paris was initially a refuge. After he left America, he had no intention of returning. Yet amongst the several things that happened to him in Paris, the most critical was his growing awareness of "the relationship between American Negroes, and Africans and Algerians in Paris, who belonged to France" (Terkel & Baldwin, 1961, p. 14). Baldwin explained:

> It didn't demand any spectacular degree of perception to realize that I was treated, insofar as I was noticed at all, differently from them because I had an American passport. I may not have liked this fact: but it was fact. And I could see very well that if I were an Algerian, I would not have been living as Jimmy Baldwin; or if I were African, it would have been a very different city to me. (Terkel & Baldwin, 1961, p. 14)

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[1] Throughout this dissertation, I have used the terms Black, Black American, African American, and Negro. However, they are not used interchangeably. I found it important to include each of these terms because they serve different purposes within this dissertation. There are three factors that I will expand upon to provide an explanation about the decision to incorporate each of them. The first factor was scholars' preference for a particular term. To respect their preferences, the term utilized in their original work is the same term I use in my discussions about their work. This primarily accounts for the terms African American and Black. The second factor was an acknowledgment of historical implications of one of these terms and the shifting political views regarding their appropriateness. The best example that explains what I mean by this is in Ernest Dunbar's (1968) book, *The Black Expatriates*. He stated, "Belonging to the group called American Negroes—or Afro-Americans, as many now feel to be the more correct description—bears with it the psychological, cultural and ritualistic trappings of membership in any other fraternal lodge" (p. 13). Dunbar (1968), and authors like him who used terms like Negro at a time when it was generally deemed appropriate but was also resisted, are significant. Their writings reveal the psychological trappings of the people who belong to what he referred to as this fraternal lodge, or sororal lodge in my case, with one trapping being the issue of self-selection. Rather than selecting which term is appropriate for me, a term is oftentimes ascribed to me. Therefore, the third factor that contributed to my decision to include each of these terms, and particularly the term Black American, was my own expertise. Deciding which term was most appropriate or easiest for the reader to understand, and whether to include all of them or simply one, proved to be a difficult task. Including all of them in this dissertation provides a glimpse, even if a small one, into the complexities of how it feels to embody this particular identity.

Baldwin's view of his American passport, and the stark difference in treatment he received because of it, helped me conceptualize the idea of *transnational identities*. I felt an affinity with his poignantly stated words because they helped explain the feelings and experiences I encountered during the years I spent teaching abroad. I felt the shifts in my own identity as I moved across various country borders; the feelings that travel evoked, in many ways, are what led me to this Delta flight in 2019. These feelings were also a large part of why I returned to the UAE to conduct research about whether other Black American teachers[2] felt similarly.

As the flight attendants began preparing for takeoff, my thoughts were interrupted by the announcement of the safety video. My attention deviated from ideas about my study to the screen on the headrest in front of me. I watched the safety video and began to think about Baldwin's frequent return trips home. Even though he lived much of his life outside of America, he found it necessary to return home to the U.S. to check his impressions and, as he put it, "to be stung again, bear it again, and to be reconciled to it again" (Terkel & Baldwin, 1961, p. 15). He was safe from *it* when he was abroad yet coming home reminded him that *it* continued to exist.

It is this nameless *it* that I wanted my professors and colleagues in the U.S. to understand in my initial failed attempts to explain this study. Expressing my

[2] The terms *teacher* and *educator* are used generally throughout this dissertation. Rather than delineating between specific roles such as teacher, administrator, educational coach, and counselor, the term *teacher* is used holistically to incorporate the various positions held by those reflected in this study. This project, though, is not primarily about the role that each person held but rather is about their migration decisions, identities, and lived experiences.

intent to examine the lives of Black American teachers who left the U.S. for positions in the UAE resulted in various responses. Some relied on their familiarity with programs such as the Peace Corps or the military, while others were perplexed by the phenomenon at its core. Still, some conveyed an awareness about historical Black intellectuals and artists who had lived abroad, and they knew the names of James Baldwin, Nina Simone, Richard Wright, and Josephine Baker. Nevertheless, they didn't know their life histories because their lives had been 'covered'—papered over—in the process of historical whitewashing. Moreover, with little understanding of the stories of well-known Black American migrants, they had no context in which to place the narratives of contemporary Black American migrants, particularly those who had migrated to a part of the world they did not consider alluring to Black teachers.

Shaken by the loud roaring sound omitted from the engines, my attention returned to my flight as the plane ascended into the air. This flight, my return to the UAE, inspired the title for this dissertation. *(Dis)covering Routes*[3] is not about uncovering historical roots, but it is about the route to a destination. Stressing the prefix *dis* alongside the root word *cover*, I seek to emphasize in the chapters that follow that (dis)covering routes is a theoretically-informed practice that seeks to discover the identities, affect, and other factors that are too often 'covered'—papered over—in stories about Black U.S. teachers.

Some readers might view Black American teachers abroad as a new phenomenon, but this is not the case (see Chapter Two). The newness is not in

[3] Pronounced as roots.

their mobility but instead as Collier (2019) points out, in the opportunity for them to *tell their own stories*. This dissertation is about how these teachers describe the forces that pushed them from American schools and pulled them toward teaching opportunities in the UAE. (Dis)covering routes is a process that Collins (2016) referred to as writing and rewriting the American story. In line with hooks, I contend that (dis)covering contemporary migration stories and linking them with historical narratives of Black American transnationals "makes us subjects in history" and reveals parallels, complexities, and contradictions within our individual and group narratives (Collins, 2016; hooks, 2014, p. 54). (Dis)covering routes is not about looking backward or even looking forwards; it is about what James Baldwin understood many years ago: It is about looking from a distance.

Chapter One: Situating the Study of Affect and Black American Teachers' Transnational Migration

Teaching is a profession and great teachers need to feel respected and empowered and if they don't, they will leave and should.

Nathan Gibbs-Bowling *PBS NewsHour*

Introduction

The migration decisions of James Baldwin and Nathan Gibbs-Bowling may have occurred nearly 70 years apart, but they both played a role in my decision to study the affective dimensions of Black American teachers who decided to teach abroad. Gibbs-Bowling, a Black American teacher from Tacoma, Washington, became well known because he was an award-winning teacher who chose to leave the U.S. and migrate abroad. His Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) interview resulted from a Twitter thread in which he wrote:

> In 2016, I was one of four finalists for the National Teacher of the Year (NTOY).[4] What has happened to each of us since then tells us a lot about what's happening in our profession. Dear reader: What does it say about the state of the U.S. that half of us felt drawn to DC to do policy work and the two of us that remained in the classroom both went on strike this year? (Twitter, 2019)

[4] The NTOY competition identifies expert teachers across the nation who exhibit effective teaching skills. At the national competition, the selected winner is provided an opportunity to spend the year traveling across the country to participate in policy discussions concerning education (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2019).

When his tweet went viral,[5] it caught the attention of *PBS NewsHour* host John Yang. In their interview, Gibbs-Bowling discussed teacher pay, school working conditions, and a lack of professional respect as critical issues that impacted American teachers' dissatisfaction with the profession (Yang & Gibbs-Bowling, 2019). As noted in the epigraph in the beginning of this chapter, Gibbs-Bowling's primary concern was teacher empowerment and that teachers who felt disempowered should leave the profession. Later in the interview with John Yang, he publicly announced his resignation and decision to leave his position as a government teacher in Washington for the same teaching position at the American Community School in Abu Dhabi. Teaching in the UAE, from his view, would allow him to "focus on *just* teaching" (Yang & Gibbs-Bowling, 2019).

I had the opportunity to further discuss Gibbs-Bowling's experience as a teacher in the U.S. when we met during the time I was in the field in Abu Dhabi. I invited him to be a guest interview on my podcast, *(A)Broad in Education*.[6] In 2018, I created this podcast to uncover and document some of the nuanced complexities of Black transnational teachers' migration. The mission is to (dis)cover routes of Black migrants through conscious conversations with EDPats, a term that I coined to describe expatriate educational professionals working in schools outside of their home countries. In our

[5] The thread was shared over 4000 times and liked over 7000 times.

[6] *(A)Broad in Education* is a long-form interview podcast that features transnational conversations with EDPats. Inspired by bell hooks' (1994) notion of decolonizing the imagination, the vision of (A)BE is to decolonize the imagination by centering stories from Black subjects within the African diaspora. In 2020, my efforts with (A)BE and my commitment to creating a community of EDPats and, furthermore, providing resources about international engagement through the collective experiences of Black American teachers, was rewarded through my selection for the Leadership in Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity (LEID) Fellowship. Each of the 55 episodes has been downloaded over 9,000 times from a listenership that spans over 80 countries.

interview,[7] Gibbs-Bowling pinpointed race and gender as being intersectional identities that placed additional demands on his role as a Black male teacher in Washington. He explained, "Schools like my school back in the States do not provide the support that is needed in order to stabilize students' lives and help students deal with meeting their basic needs, let alone dealing with trauma" (Smith & Gibbs-Bowing, 2020). One role that he played in his students' lives was a trauma-team assistant. Not all teachers were not expected to play this role, however, as he noted:

> **Certain teachers in certain buildings are expected to do it [play extra roles] more than other folks are**.[8] And so, the Secretary of Education [at that time]. . . John King talks a lot about the double taxation that Black male teachers go through. And so, **it is my job to be a teacher and do my full-time job but it's also my job to be *that* teacher for a bunch of kids who don't have *that* person in their lives**. **And like, that grinds you down.** How the hell are you gonna focus on the day-to-day... when your life isn't stabilized and you're in fear? And how can you focus on it if you're in mourning . . . the out-of-school factors have a bigger impact on student achievement. So, within a school, the biggest factor is teacher effectiveness, and I'm effective as hell, right. But out-of-school factors matter more. My students back in the States have so many out-of-school factors that society is not meeting their needs. (Smith & Gibbs-Bowling, 2020)

Gibbs-Bowling's words speak to the additional demands in terms of time and emotional labor that Black male teachers and teachers of color in the U.S. have placed

[7] *(A)Broad in Education*-Episode 33: *From Washington Teacher of the Year to Abu Dhabi, UAE*.

[8] As a qualitative study, this dissertation includes several short and long-form excerpts that have been extracted from contextual resources and interview data. Throughout these various excerpts, particular sentences have been offset in bold to indicate for the reader areas where close attention should be paid.

upon them because of social forces beyond the school that make their students' lives unstable. Instability, as Gibbs-Bowling put it, is like chaos. He said:

> Something that I think the average citizen does not understand is the amount of chaos in the lives of students at low-income schools. This chaos manifests itself as housing instability, as government repression through immigration raids, like food insecurity, not knowing where you're going to sleep, having a decent family member staying where you are, it just manifests itself in lots of different ways. (Smith & Gibbs-Bowling, 2020).

This chaos results in emotions such as trauma, grief, and mourning, which are common conditions for many students American educators teach. Yet, from Gibbs-Bowling's perspective, "certain" American teachers, meaning teachers of color, are expected to take on additional emotional demands to address the needs of such students.

As I thought about Gibbs-Bowling's reflection, that the additional demands of teaching "grind you down," the image of a pepper grinder came to my mind. These additional demands for Black teachers, who so often teach minoritized students, came up repeatedly in my interviews with those who are now teaching in the UAE (Ingersoll & May, 2011). The grinder that I envisioned works by forcing peppercorns through a metal gap that crushes each corn into small fragments, and this metaphorical image recurs in the pages that follow. Based on interviews from my podcast and for this dissertation, I argue that the pepper grinder is akin to the process of grinding Black American teachers down. These teachers enter the system as whole beings but, through many fractious moments, they feel ground down into a small fragment of the whole teacher they used to be and seek happier and more rewarding teaching positions abroad. These Black

American teachers' stories of their lives in the U.S. and the UAE illustrate what grinding down looks like and feels like when working with students for whom trauma is all too common.

Both interviews with Nathan Gibbs-Bowling—the one on *PBS NewsHour* and my podcast—were noteworthy in this study because they highlighted the affective dimensions of teacher turnover. Turnover is a concept developed by educational scholars to explain how teachers move from one school to another (teacher migration) and temporarily or permanently out of the profession (teacher attrition) (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2003). Turnover provides a useful framework for explaining the emotional sentiments of Black American teachers' transnational migration and their perceptions about why they chose to leave the U.S. PK-12 system. Bianca Williams (2018), whose work on emotional transnationalism is central to my analysis, argues that emotions "let you know when there is a longing for something, even if words do not allow you to describe the 'what' or 'why' you are longing for it" (p. 38). Gibbs-Bowling's longing to "just teach" without feeling ground down by the additional social-emotional demands of students and families with complex lives is a sentiment shared by many teachers in this study. As a finalist for a national teacher competition and with notable state and national accolades, Gibbs-Bowling was clearly outstanding. He was also an educational advocate addressing organizations about equity and the imperative need for teacher voice inclusion. He expressed his love for his students and colleagues in his interviews, yet he nonetheless left the U.S. to teach abroad.

This study explored the lives of teachers like Gibbs-Bowling, who are Black American teachers who did not leave the teaching profession altogether but rather left the

schools where they were teaching in the U.S. for teaching positions in the UAE. It explored a range of reasons that such teachers gave for migrating abroad, most centrally reasons that have to do with affect. Gibbs-Bowling's public resignation was a call for school leaders to realize that teachers' needs are not limited to their pay, as this was only one crucial issue that constituted the working conditions he noted. Even more central to his decision-making and to the teachers' decisions in my study is Black teachers' dissatisfaction with the affective demands placed on them. These are linked to pay in that they may not feel like they are professionals if not given a commensurate salary, and these affective issues also connect to teachers' sense of autonomy and the emotional demands of being Black teachers in the U.S. at this point.

Research Question

When I first designed the study, I had two sub-questions that focused on intersectionality, a concept developed by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) and used widely in education and the social sciences to describe the overlapping identities people embody that can create economic, social, and political advantages and disadvantages. First, I viewed intersectionality as an analytical tool because of my participants' "assertions of multiple identities and the ongoing necessity of group politics" (p. 1296). In this case, I was interested in the intersectional identities of Black American EDPats as a group and how those identities pushed and pulled them from the U.S. and other countries.[9] However, as I began my data analysis, I realized that I was less interested in *what* these identities were and more interested in *how*, throughout their lives,

[9] Even though I use the term *push and pull factors* at points in this dissertation owing to their prevalence in the transnational migration literature, it does not account sufficiently for the intersectional components that contribute to attrition for Black American EDPats.

the intersectional identities *and* emotions of these Black American teachers had affected their transnational migration decisions. While the unique aspects of each person's experiences are interesting, it is how race, first and foremost, articulates with other aspects of their experiences and identities in a patterned manner that became the focus of this research.

My experience as a Black American EDPat abroad who taught in the UAE for nearly three years was also relevant to this study, as I discuss in greater detail below. In addition, my interviews with numerous other Black Americans in this research and my podcast confirmed that race is a crucial aspect of identity that shapes teachers' experiences in U.S. schools and other countries. Thus, focusing on Black U.S. teachers who migrate to the UAE, I sought to answer the following question in this dissertation: *How do the intersectional identities and affective dimensions of Black American EDPats' lives influence their decisions to leave schools in the U.S. and teach in schools in the UAE?* The interviews with these teachers revealed that affect was not separate in their stories about the U.S. or the UAE.

Chapter Overview

To provide a more thorough introduction to this study, I have organized the remainder of this introductory chapter into four sections. In the next section, I will briefly present my personal background in relation to this study. In the second section, I will present the problem statement, followed by a brief discussion about the purpose of examining affect in this study. In the third section, I will discuss an overview of the study's design and the theory of affective turnover that emerged from my analysis.

Finally, in the fourth and last section, I offer a conclusion to this chapter, followed by a brief guide to the remainder of the dissertation.

Personal Background to the Study

Like Gibbs-Bowling, I also taught in the U.S. PK-12 system before I decided to teach abroad. I entered the profession in 2009, and though I did not teach in the U.S. for an entire decade as he did, I taught for two years before my migration to Casablanca, Morocco. After teaching for two years in Morocco, I migrated to a second teaching position in Abu Dhabi in 2013. I finally returned home to the U.S. in 2016, the point at which I began my doctoral studies program in Comparative and International Development Education (CIDE). While enrolled at the University of Minnesota, I began to think more deeply about Black American teachers' transnational migration and the allure of teaching abroad. I wondered about what impacted their decisions to internationalize their careers as educators and about their experiences in U.S. schools.

When I first started this dissertation project, I intended to understand the stories of other Black American teachers who left the U.S. as I had. Yet, to fully understand their stories, I felt it was imperative to first examine my own. Therefore, I considered what it was that I knew about the history of my life as a teacher. I knew that in our experiences as teachers we shared racialized, gendered, and classed experiences, perhaps in the U.S. and in the UAE. Yet, Black teachers are not a monolithic group and our experiences in addition to our perceptions about our experiences are not the same.

To understand my decision to teach abroad, I conducted a study that employed autoethnography, anthropoetry, and reflexive diary reading. I was inspired to use these methodologies while enrolled in a narrative inquiry course. It was important for me to

understand and pinpoint the impact of race, gender, class, and nationality on my personal decision to teach abroad because I planned to examine these same factors in the lives of other Black teachers in my study.

As I began reflecting on the dynamics of my childhood, I remembered growing up in the housing projects and playing double-dutch outside with friends. These memories were inspiration to use double-dutch as a metaphor to compare my lived experience as a teacher in the U.S. (the first rope) with my experiences in South Africa and Morocco (the second rope). South Africa was a significant component of this examination because it was the first country I visited outside of the U.S. when I studied abroad during my junior year of college. Having traveled there brought about complex contradictions in the way that I perceived myself in that my identity as an American (nationality) became more salient than my identity as Black (race). This identity shift made me think more deeply about how I had been conditioned to perceive myself in the U.S. and resulted in complex comparisons with how I was perceived in South Africa.

Analysis of these transnational experiences helped me understand the complexities of my life as a Black American woman, born and raised in Alton, Illinois, to a working-class family. Though my life had gone in a different direction from that of my family, these identities were still important to me and significantly impacted the perception I held of myself as a teacher. For instance, after encountering what I felt to be a racist incident with a student, I felt unsupported by my administrator. At that time, I was the only Black teacher at a predominantly White school and my expertise and capabilities, I felt, were constantly questioned by colleagues and student's parents. Instances such as these resulted in feeling as though I did not belong in the profession, or

furthermore, in the U.S. The treatment I experienced as a Black American in South Africa was significantly different from what I experienced at home. My trip to South Africa created an aspiration in me to travel the world more fully. Therefore, four years after that trip, when I decided to leave my position as a teacher in the U.S., I chose to accept a teaching position abroad.

In examining my experiences as a teacher, I realized how teaching in different countries made me think more deeply about race and affect. As I wrote in *Jumpin In, Stayin In, and Double-Dutchin' It: Teacher Attrition from an African American International Teacher*, "Morocco was an alternative to the predictability of teaching in the U.S." (Smith, 2021, p.14). It was an avenue, even though a bumpy and unpredictable one, to remaining in the teaching profession but doing so in another country. This is a similar avenue to the one along which the Black teachers in this study traveled.

The Problem Statement: Interpretations of Teacher Turnover in the U.S.

The number of teachers in the U.S. PK-12 profession has continued to increase in recent decades[10] while the proportion of Black teachers has continued to decrease (National Center of Education Statistics [NCES], 2017). For Black Americans, teaching has long been a respected and accessible career choice (Cole, 1986; Irvine, 1988); at one time, it was one of few occupations that provided them with upward social and economic mobility (Cole, 1986; Irvine, 1988). For example, in 1950, nearly half of all Black professionals in the U.S. were teachers compared to less than a quarter of White

[10] Between the 1987/88 and 2011/12 school years, the PK-12 profession increased from 2.5 million educators to 3.5 million educators (NCES, 2017).

professionals (Cole, 1986). Yet in 2017, Black teachers accounted for only 250,000 of the 3.8 million teachers in the profession in the U.S. (NCES, 2019).

Educational scholars tend to agree that turnover for Black American teachers is an issue of dissatisfaction with working conditions in schools, a lack of classroom autonomy, and a lack of involvement in policy decisions (Moore, 2012; Ingersoll & May, 2011). However, these studies have presented surface-level findings that do not include deep interrogations of teachers' perceptions of their roles and experiences. As a result, they have provided little understanding about turnover. For example, regarding school conditions and characteristics, Ingersoll and May (2011) described Black teachers' high turnover rates as an illusion because they only appear to be higher than the rates of White teachers. This is because Black teachers are employed at higher rates than White teachers at hard-to-staff schools, which are described by the authors as "less desirable workplaces" (Ingersoll & May, 2011, p. 64). In other words, Black teachers distributed to hard-to-staff schools turnover at higher rates than White teachers because they primarily work at schools that tend to be 'undesirable' by virtue of the challenges many of their students and families face as well as more limited funding in their schools.

Researchers who have looked more closely at Black teachers' turnover argue that more studies are needed to understand the history of this phenomenon. Moore (2012), for example, believes that more research into Black teachers' dissatisfaction is warranted because "it is unknown whether dissatisfaction for Black teachers is a new phenomenon or whether Black teachers have been dissatisfied with teaching as a profession over a long period of time" (p. 11). Examining the relationship among Black teachers' dissatisfaction, school environments, and intent for attrition, Moore (2012) noted that a

positive school environment may not be enough to prevent dissatisfaction. In her quantitative study, she found that even when teachers reported that their school environment was ideal, there was still a significant chance that Black teachers would be dissatisfied with their teaching experience. Moore (2012) did not explain why this is the case for Black teachers. However, it further alludes to the significance of my study.

Another component of turnover that some scholars have studied is teacher migration, finding that Black teachers are more likely to be *involuntarily moved* between schools than White teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Although teachers who migrate from one school to another have not been a factor in educational scholars' examinations of turnover, it is vital to understand it more fully. Migration from one school to another does not decrease the overall supply of teachers so long as they migrate within the U.S. educational system (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). However, if Black teachers are migrating at higher rates than White teachers, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, there is a need to understand why this is the case, including migrating from schools in the U.S. to schools abroad.

Studies looking at dissatisfaction as an issue for Black teachers have, to date, only provided a domestic, U.S. focused lens to understanding turnover. Examining the transnational migration decisions of Black American teachers who pursue teaching opportunities abroad, particularly those who do not leave the profession but instead migrate to other countries, provides additional factors to be considered in teachers' turnover decisions.

The Purpose of Examining Affect

The primary purpose of this study was to understand how the affective dimensions and intersectional identities of Black American teachers influenced their decisions to leave schools in the U.S. for schools in the UAE. In studies about turnover for Black teachers, educational researchers have overlooked the ways in which race, gender, class, and nationality intersect with their lived experiences and decisions to leave the profession. Therefore, to understand this phenomenon more fully, affective turnover, a theory that emerged from this study and will be further discussed later in this chapter, was employed.

As such, the second purpose of this research was to present the potential application of affective turnover as a theory to conceptualize emotions as "contradictory tugs, messages, and pushes and pulls" felt by those who face dissatisfaction in one place and feel the allure of another (Wolf, 2002, p. 473). Paying attention to the role of affect and how it influenced the transnational migration decision of these Black American teachers adds nuance to domestic interpretations and extends traditional examinations that primarily focus on teachers' migration from one school to another and out of the profession. These teachers remained in the profession but chose to migrate to schools in another country. Providing a transnational turnover analysis made an opportunity for comparative research and showed how the additional dimension of affect matters in Black teachers' lives.

Overview of the Research Design

To address the research question and analyze the intersectional identities, lived experiences, and affective dimensions of Black American EDPats' lives in the UAE, I developed a qualitative research design using narrative inquiry with a life history approach. I will discuss the methodological process in further detail in Chapter Three but suffice it to say that I have drawn primarily on the works of Clandinin (2006), Connelly and Clandinin (1990), Hagemaster (1992), Hatch and Wisneiwski (1995), Polkinghorne (1995) and Vavrus (2015) to develop my approach to life history interviews. It was imperative to employ this two-fold approach because the central component of life history is the story. As Polkinghorne (1995) suggests, stories "express a kind of knowledge that uniquely describes human experience in which actions and happenings contribute positively and negatively to attaining goals and fulfilling purposes" (p. 8). The life history method provided a holistic approach to the multiple in-depth interviews conducted with EDPats to understand the complexities of their lives and transnational migration decisions (Hagemaster, 1992).

In terms of analysis, these multiple interviews involved emotional and thematic coding (Saldaña, 2013). Emotional coding is a process that Saldaña (2013) describes as tracking the "emotional journey or storyline of the codes—the structural arc they follow as certain events unfold" (p. 107). In addition to tracking EDPats' journeys of how their transnational migration decisions unfolded, analysis of their emotions also entailed employing definitions from Brené Brown's (2021) book, *Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience.* This book presents eighty-seven emotions, and thoughts that lead to emotions, to capture the vastness of

human experience and provide new language for articulating emotions. These definitions helped to make meaning of the affective dimensions for which were described by the EDPats.

By thematic coding, I mean that I analyzed data by identifying unique and patterned discussions about instances that involved distinct relationships between emotions, intersectional identities, and lived experiences. I presented these data in the chapters that follow through turning points, which I refer to as *moments* (discussed further in the section below) in Black American teachers' lives from childhood to the time of our interviews. Their experiences as students in the PK-12 system and as teachers in the U.S. and abroad were all laden with affect and shaped their transnational migration decisions altogether.

Each moment that makes up this study is an extracted piece of history from Black American EDPats' lives. Therefore, I adopted the term *life historian* to describe the 13[11] Black American EDPats in the UAE who met with me on 30 occasions for interviews averaging about 60 hours in total (Bloom & Munro, 1995). Bloom and Munro (1995) utilized the term *life historian* as a preference over the terms *informant* and *participant* to describe the Black women administrators in their work and the tensions they negotiated. As it relates to this study, the term life historian challenges the notion that these Black American EDPats were passive participants in my research. On the contrary, they were active storytellers, and one way to amplify their voices is to describe them as the historians of their lives and experiences. This move is significant because I got to know each life historian very well through the social world of Black Americans we all

[11] There were 13 Black American EDPats interviewed for this study. However, as I will explain in Chapter Three, the data that I draw upon in this dissertation comes from 10 of these interviews.

inhabited during the 14 months—from September 2019 to December 2020— I spent in the UAE.

Three Moments within Life Historians' Transnational Migration Decisions

To explore the life historians' transnational migration decisions, I analyzed the many hours of interview data and divided these data into three vivid temporal periods. In this way, I presented their transnational migration decisions through a collective thematic analysis that showed how affect led to their migration. Three primary moments emerged as particularly important in the life historians' stories, and I have given each one its own title: 1) *Contemplating Leaving* explores how EDPats' aspirations for happier living and working conditions took shape; 2) *The Decision to Migrate* focuses on influencers, a term that I will explain further in Chapter Three, and their impact on historians' pain points which expanded domestic pursuits of happiness into transnational ones; and 3) *The Decision to Remain in the UAE* considers transnational emotions and the affective dimensions of historians' lives in the UAE after they had been there for a minimum of two years (one of the selection criteria I discuss in Chapter Three). Each of these three moments captured some portion of the life historians' stories that helped to illuminate why they left the U.S. for what they hoped might be happier living and working conditions in the UAE.

Affective Turnover: Emotional Collisions, Influencers and Pain Points, and Transnational Emotions

This study provides a new theoretical framework that I have named *affective turnover*. Intersectionality formed this framework's first pillar and emotional transnationalism formed the second (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 2018; May, 2015;

Williams, 2018; Wolf, 2002). Black American EDPats' transnational migration decisions were made at the nexus of emotion, and as a site for analysis, emotions weaved together each of the moments in this study. Affective turnover helped explain the interconnectedness of their identities, lived experiences, and affective dimensions, which collectively shaped their decisions to migrate from the U.S. to the UAE.

Affective turnover identified the significance of 'emotional collisions,' such as a strong sense of fatigue some of the life historians conveyed in the first moment, *Contemplating Leaving*. I argue that this fatigue cannot be explained or understood as being shaped by one axis of inequality alone; instead, it is their intersectional identities and the affective labor they needed to provide as Black American teachers that worked together and influenced each other (Collins & Bilge, 2016). For example, the near-constant demand for emotional support for students whose parents were absent or marginal in their lives created a sense of feeling *ground down* for many of these life historians. Feeling ground down is the first dimension of affective turnover and helps to describe the moment they began contemplating leaving the U.S., which is when their aspirations for happier living and working conditions began to take shape.

In the second moment, *The Decision to Migrate,* affective turnover helped explain the significance of 'influencers,' namely, the people within life historians' social networks who made provisions for their 'pain points,' — the real and perceived barriers restricting them from accessing their desires of happiness. I argue that teaching in the UAE was thought to be a solution to the life historians' pain points and that they were rooted in the emotional collisions that initially ground them down. For example, living on a "hamster wheel" was how some life historians described their lives as teachers in the

U.S. This routine led them to seek domestic positions and opportunities that might provide them with more fulfilling lives. However, these pursuits in the U.S. resulted in pain points, such as low profits from entrepreneurial endeavors they explored to make more money, working harder in their schools but then spending less time with family, and lacking required certifications for promotion from teachers to administrators.

Influencers played an important role in how life historians' domestic pursuits of happiness expanded to transnational ones because they helped those in my study to imagine future career possibilities beyond their present circumstances that would, ideally, land them on more financially stable ground and with careers that demanded less emotional labor. The photos that influencers posted on social media, the navigational tools they provided, and the emotional support they extended impacted the life historians' decisions to migrate to the UAE. These connections with influencers helped the life historians find a way to address their pain points by migrating to teaching positions in the UAE. Influencers and pain points are the second dimension of affective turnover.

In the last moment, *The Decision to Remain in the UAE, transnational emotions* described the third dimension of affective turnover and the strong sense of feeling relaxed and safe as factors conveyed by some life historians in our interviews. In their narratives, analysis revealed that their perceptions about themselves and the emotions they felt were formulated by two different geographical locations. Williams (2018) describes such comparisons as emotional transnationalism and argues that they are formulated in a transnational emotional social field that includes two countries that are geographically bounded but also constructed emotionally and culturally. The emotions the life historians described in the UAE were not new. On the contrary, they were transnational emotions

rooted in their lives as racialized, gendered, and classed teachers in the U.S. In the UAE, these emotions were (re)stored.

Transnational emotions weaved together each of the moments in this study and conveyed the potentiality of affective turnover as an educational theory. It helped to broaden the notion that turnover for Black teachers is an impulsive decision that can be explained by single factor analysis. Instead, it shined light on the idea that turnover is complex and impacted by emotional components that include teachers' affective responses toward their perceptions of their lives as teachers. Their lives are compounded by the implications of race, gender, class, and nationality, all of which are dimensions that influenced their decisions about turnover.

Though it is not addressed in this study, viewing turnover through this lens of affect makes space for more broader analysis of retention for Black teachers as well. Further investigations are warranted about *affective retention* and the relationship between affect, identity, and lived experience. A study such as this might help to explain why some Black teachers choose to remain in PK-12 schools in the U.S. which will help to address policy-related solutions for their retention. Teaching abroad, for Black American teachers, might be a tactic to remain in the teaching profession, demonstrating that they are not necessarily rejecting teaching as a career. This is important because even though Black teachers are at the center of recruitment, retention, and diversification efforts and are often viewed as role models in PK-12 schools (Gershenson, et. al., 2017; King, 2016; Siddle Walker, 2001), despite these efforts, some still choose to leave the U.S. but continue in the teaching force abroad.

In the case of this study, these life historians documented how under-researched emotions like feeling relaxed, feeling financially stable, feeling safe, and feeling ever accountable, for example, factor into Black American teachers' decisions not to return to the demanding, racially charged environment they left behind in U.S. schools. In the UAE, their emotions were (re)stored by feeling relieved of many of these pressures associated with their initial migration decisions. Some of these teachers have remained in the UAE for eight years at this point, and even though none of the life historians reported a perfect life abroad, they generally concluded that it provided both the financial and emotional stability they found missing in the U.S.

The Black American Experience 'Abroad' in the UAE

In addition to the three moments and themes that emerged from this study, it is also important to briefly discuss the 'abroad' experience these Black teachers expressed having in the UAE. In this introductory chapter, it is necessary to dispel the myth that in migrating to another country, these teachers were presented with a euphoric paradise. Depicting a portrait such as this one is not the intention of this study. Specifically, because the life historians in this study described their experiences in the UAE as complex and contradictory.

My thoughts about the push and pull factors that influenced the migration of these life historians was inspired by a 1971 interview with James Baldwin and Margaret Mead titled *A Rap on Race*. Though it is not a word utilized in the context or analysis of this study, they discussed the term exile and their perceptions about their voluntary and involuntary mobility out of the U.S. They said:

J. Baldwin: We're both exiles.

M. Mead: No, I'm not an exile because I'm an American who goes abroad. I'm not in exile.

J. Baldwin: Well, I'm an exile, but I was in exile long before I went away because the terms, this is the point, the terms of which my life was offered to me in my country were entirely intolerable and unacceptable. My country drove me out! The Americans drove me out of my country.

M. Mead: But you've never left in spirit.

The idea of never leaving in spirit, which Margaret Mead provocatively argues, helps to explain the abroad experience these Black American teachers had in the UAE. Though they were geographically located in a different country, their perceptions about their experiences were juxtaposed to those experienced in their home country. As Baldwin alludes to, the terms that their lives were offered to them in the U.S. was unacceptable, which was evidenced through their narratives about teaching and living in the U.S. Yet in the UAE, they spoke about the hierarchy associated with nationalities and how their American identities became much more salient than that of their racialized identities.

In retrospect, when compared to other Black people in the UAE, they felt as though their nationality, coupled by their race, carried more weight. They explained how they were perceived first by the color of their skin but felt that their treatment was determined by their nationality and language. In groups that discuss Black Americans abroad, this treatment is referred to as *blue passport privilege*, meaning preferential

treatment based on the color of your passport rather than the color of your skin. This was contradictory to the life historians because in comparison to Black people from Ghana, Nigeria, or South Africa, for example, Black Americans were treated much different.

Another contradiction that the life historians spoke about was the shifting dynamics of gender and how it impacted their perceived treatment in the UAE. It is important to keep in mind that the UAE is a Muslim country. Though expatriates are not expected to cover their hair or dress in the traditional clothing of the abaya and kandora, they are overtly and covertly impacted by the tradition of gender roles. For example, the women life historians spoke about instances of being in car accidents they felt they were not at fault for, but they were unable to express their innocence because of male police officer's refusal to speak with them. Other women life historians spoke about the constant battles of being approached and viewed as prostitutes. They felt these instances occurred as a direct response toward their gender and race but were diluted at the instance of exuding their American accent and name of the country they were born.

Discussing these contradictory instances and encounters is an attempt to convey the complex experiences faced by the life historians in this study. Their experiences in the UAE are not free of difficulty. However, because of the vast shift they experience in terms of emotional restoration, they are able to perceive these encounters more complexly and address them through a different lens of sense-making.

Conclusion and Organization of Dissertation

The remaining chapters of this dissertation develop these areas in the following way. Chapter Two provides a review of relevant literature that examines teacher turnover and illuminates a gap that supports the need to explore the affective dimensions of

teachers' lives. Chapter Three lays out the design of this study through a discussion of its aims, rationale for the research site, qualitative design, and data analysis process. Chapter Four presents the findings in the three vivid moments outlined in this chapter. They help to explain the transnational migration decision process and how affective turnover helps to illuminate the intersections of teachers' identities, lived experiences, and emotional collisions. Finally, Chapter Five concludes the dissertation with a collective narrative about Black teachers' migration decisions, interventions, implications of this study for comparative and international development education (CIDE) and teacher education, and recommendations for future research.

Interlude to Chapter Two: The Politics of Leaving and Staying

"Why would a slave want to escape slavery"? I heard him say it, but I continued to sit quietly without interrupting him. I had never heard anyone pose such a question or have the audacity to say something that I believed to be so appalling out loud. I noticed Professor Robinson in the distance while on my afternoon walk. He was sitting on a bench, positioned in front of a camera, while another man sat on the ground beside him. As I got closer to them, I heard their conversation more clearly and realized that the two of them were in the middle of an interview.

Professor Robinson is a Black man who organizes the Underground Railroad tour in my hometown of Alton, Illinois. I noticed him on several occasions as he guided groups of students and adults on a walking tour passing the windows of my front porch. Always with enthusiasm, he talked about the history of slavery on our small town. I planned to connect with him eventually, so the day I saw him being interviewed on the bench, I decided to take a seat in the distance and listen in quietly.

"Before the Civil War, Illinois was considered a free state," Professor Robinson explained. He was speaking directly into the camera rather than at me or the man sitting on the ground near him. "Slaves could not be purchased or sold, but it was perfectly legal for someone to own one. See the building over there," he pointed his finger in the direction of the building located on the corner of the street, "That's the Old Rock House building. Slaves who tried to escape were hidden there," he explained. "Now, why would a slave want to escape slavery?"

It was obvious that the question was rhetorical. He spoke about women escaping to save their children and men escaping because of the fear of being killed. Yet, I couldn't hear him clearly anymore. I was stuck on the question. The fact that such a question warranted an answer. Didn't he know that every slave wanted to escape slavery? Didn't he know about the harsh and brutal conditions? I didn't understand the purpose of the question. I couldn't understand why a slave *wouldn't* want to escape slavery. I felt my body temperature increasing in that moment. I was ruffled, but I said nothing.

After the interview finished, I introduced myself to Professor Robinson. He asked me about my family name and who I was kin to in Alton. I explained to him that I was a student at the University of Minnesota and that I had lived there for three years after teaching abroad. After briefly talking about our family relations, I explained to him how intrigued I was by his question. "You said, why would a slave want to escape slavery," I reminded him. "I've never heard anybody ask that question before," I said. Completely unbothered and unmoved by my comment, he looked at me and asked, "Well, why did you move to Minnesota? Why didn't you just stay here in Alton?" Without pausing and waiting for my response, he continued, "People escape to places all the time when it comes to their livelihood, but a better question for me might be, why do I stay here in Alton?"

I was confused. I had never put *staying* in conversation with *leaving*, especially regarding slavery. I accepted as fact, or perhaps conjured in my mind the fact that slaves did not choose to remain enslaved. Yet Professor Robinson's

response implied that choosing to stay in Alton was a form of choosing not to escape. The politics of staying and leaving, which Professor Robinson was alluding to, I had never thought about before. It forced me to consider, what about the slaves who didn't attempt to escape slavery?

As we were talking, I thought about an article I stumbled upon when I started this dissertation project. It was written by James Dollard in 1957 and entitled *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*. It talked about how political behaviors like organized protests and large group resistance were enacted by Black people during the Civil Rights Movement. These acts were normal across the nation and were one of few ways in which Black people expressed their desires for upward economic and social mobility. Yet, in a small southern town, perhaps one like my hometown, Dollard noticed how group organized hostility was seldomly evoked by Black people. Therefore, referring to what he described as Negro aggressions, he discussed in his article the subtle ways in which Black people expressed their discontents.

Amongst his list of aggressions, there was one act that caught my attention. Plantation owners were experiencing high rates of labor turnover and for the Black plantation workers who were discontent with their working environments, Dollard (1957) explained, "There is an alternative available now which was available only with great difficulty in slavery days—physical mobility or escape toward the North" (p. 291). He wrote:

> Moving away is a form of retaliation that exasperates planters who want an efficient but stationary labor force. It is troublesome and expensive to

> have a constant shifting of tenant families. But one of few things made absolutely secure to Negroes by emancipation was freedom of geographic mobility, and this they use in part to express their discontent with the conditions under which they work. (Dollard, 1957, p. 302)

Moving away as an expression of discontent toward working conditions was different from slaves escaping slavery, I thought. But it was very similar to how I conceptualized Black teachers leaving the teaching profession. Like the plantations in the South, the teacher workforce also relies on a stationary labor force, and, when teachers leave, there are severe economic, academic, and policy implications. Yet whether plantation workers or Black teachers, the implications of their decisions to move away did not get to the emotional sentiments that I wanted to share with Professor Robinson. However, I mentioned the article to him anyway.

"Some scholars have described leaving as a form of aggression," I said, yet before I could continue my sentence, Professor Robinson interrupted me. "Aggression? Sometimes it's more aggressive to stay"! I had to admit that I agreed with him, and that I was also lost for words. My study was about those who left; I hadn't stopped to think about those who stayed. As much I wanted to continue our conversation, the temperature continued dropping, and Professor Robinson had a long walk home.

I began thinking more deeply about my encounter with Professor Robinson while writing this dissertation. At the crux of this study about affect and Black American teachers' transnational migration are the political implications of

staying and leaving. What does it mean to *feel* like leaving, or *feel* like staying for that matter? What both of us—Professor Robinson and I—failed to mention in our conversation was the role of affect and how emotions influence our decisions. Whether escaping slavery, plantations in the South, or even the teaching profession, it important to understand the political influence of emotions.

Chapter Two: A Review of Literature on Turnover, Intersectionality, and Emotional Transnationalism

Introduction

As I mentioned in the preface of this dissertation, (dis)covering routes is a theoretically informed praxis that seeks to (dis)cover factors that are too often 'covered'—papered over— in stories about Black American teachers. To engage this praxis, the purpose of this chapter is to review relevant empirical, unconventional, and theoretical literature to understand how turnover has been conceptualized to explain attrition for Black teachers. It aims to identify a gap in the literature in which this study about affect and transnational teacher migration can be placed. The question guiding this review is *how does relevant literature conceptualize why Black teachers leave schools in the U.S. and why they might migrate to other countries?*

I have divided this chapter into four sections that engages three relevant bodies of literature. The first section, *Teacher Shortage as Crisis*, situates teacher attrition in a larger discourse of teacher shortage and explains why educational scholars and policymakers have turned their attention to studies that examine high teacher attrition. The second section, *The Declining Proportion of Black Teachers,* reviews literature situated in two schools of thought including the involuntary and voluntary mobility of Black teachers. In the third section, *Intersectionality and Attrition*, I review a body of studies that analyze the influence of race and gender on Black teachers' attrition decisions, which is followed by the last section, *Emotional Transnationalism*, which discusses the need for widening the scope of domestic interpretations of turnover. I

conclude the chapter with a brief summary and discussion about how this study will advance knowledge in the field of comparative and international education.

Teacher Shortage as Crisis

The public teaching profession has significantly increased between the 20th and 21st centuries. Namely, between the school years of 1987/88 and 2017/18, it has increased from 2.5 million teachers to 3.5 million teachers (NCES, 2019). Despite this increase, there is still an insufficient supply of qualified teachers to staff U.S. classrooms (NCES, 2019; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Educational researchers describe this crisis as a teacher shortage, which occurs when there is an insufficient supply of teachers to fill vacancies in a particular grade level, subject area, or geographical location (Lindsay et al., 2016; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). In their report titled, *A Coming Crisis in Teaching*, Sutcher et al. (2016) predicted a need for an estimated 316,000 teachers to fill all teacher vacancies in states across the nation by the year 2025, in addition to retaining those currently in the profession.

Teacher shortages are a major concern for schools across the nation and one of the four factors that policymakers attribute to causing them is high teacher attrition (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). As I mentioned in Chapter One, attrition is one of two pillars that make up teacher turnover. *Attrition* defines teachers who leave the profession temporarily or permanently and *migration* defines those who migrate from one school to another (Carver-Thomas & Darling Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll, 2003). More attention has been paid to teacher attrition because teacher migration has little impact on the supply of teachers. This means that teachers who migrate between schools do not

impact the overall supply of teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling Hammond, 2017).

In the case of attrition, researchers have described the U.S. teacher workforce as a "bucket rapidly losing water because of holes in the bottom" and further contended that "pouring more water into the bucket will not do any good if we do not patch the holes first" (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003, p. 33). One hole in need of rapid patching is the high attrition rates of Black teachers and to plug this hole, more thorough examinations about their attrition is needed.

A Double Teacher Shortage

The U.S. is facing what I describe as a *double teacher shortage*, meaning a national teacher shortage and a shortage of qualified teachers of color. Even though the teaching profession has significantly increased, in terms of the racial characteristics of U.S. teachers, it has remained extremely homogenous (NCES, 2019). For this reason, diversifying the teacher workforce was central to the campaign of John B. King, the former U.S. Education Secretary of State. In his 2016 report, the *State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce*, he said:

> [W]hen the majority of students in public schools are students of color and only 18 percent of our teachers are teachers of color, we have an urgent need to act. We've got to understand that all students benefit from teacher diversity. We have strong evidence that students of color benefit from having teachers and leaders who look like them as role models and also benefit from the classroom dynamics that diversity creates. But it is also important for our white students to see teachers of color in leadership roles in their classrooms and communities. The question for the nation is how do we address this quickly and thoughtfully? (King,

2016, p. 1)

This question of how to thoughtfully address the issue of teacher diversity in public schools is noteworthy to this review because regarding the recruitment, retention, and diversification efforts initiated by U.S. school districts, it has been Black teachers who have been courted. For instance, scholars have found Black teachers to be role models for Black students, and having one African American teacher, particularly in elementary school, potentially reduces the male dropout rate in high school (Gershenson et. al, 2018). Yet, the disparity between the number of Black teachers relative to the number of Black students remains (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; King, 1993; Madkins, 2011). For instance, during the 2017/18 school year, of the nearly 3.5 million teachers in the public workforce, approximately 250,000 of them were Black (NCES, 2019). This statistic is problematic because Black people make up 12% of the U.S. population (nearly five million of 41 million) while Black teachers make up nearly seven percent of the teacher workforce and Black students make up nearly 15% of the students enrolled in U.S. public schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Census.gov, 2021; NCES, 2019). This is problematic because Black teachers are small in number in terms of their proportion in the U.S. teaching profession, and yet, their numbers continue to decline.

The Declining Proportion of Black Teachers

The racial characteristics of U.S. teachers has vastly shifted between the school years of 1987/88 to 2017/18 (see Table 1). The proportion of Hispanic and Asian teachers have increased, while the proportions of American Indian/Alaska Native and Black teachers have decreased. The proportion of White teachers has decreased as well, and

perhaps their decrease is owed to the success of diversification programs. This means that as White teachers reach retirement and exit the profession, more diverse educators are entering the profession. In this vein, their decline is a positive symbol indicating the effectiveness of diversification efforts.

Table 1

Percentage distribution of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools by selected teacher characteristics: Selected years, 1987-88 through 2017-18.

Race Ethnicity	1987/88 School Year	2017/18 School Year
White Teachers	86.9	79.3
Black Teachers	**8.2**	**6.7**
Hispanic Teachers	3.0	9.3
Asian Teachers	.9	2.1
Pacific Islander Teachers	--	.2
American Indian/ Alaska Native	1	.5
Two or More Races	--	1.8

Note: This table is a modified version of Table 209.10. from NCES.

The inconsistency between the proportions of minoritized teachers points to the significance of this study, that factors impacting teachers' attrition cannot be understood as generalizable for all minoritized teachers. In the case of Black teachers, they are proportionately decreasing in the profession while the proportion of other minoritized

teachers are increasing, and the question deserving of an answer is, why? Understanding the factors for which are causing the rapid decline of Black teachers is imperative.

Attrition for Black Teachers

The high attrition of Black teachers has been an issue since the 20th century. Yet to understand factors causing their attrition, examinations have relied primarily on large quantitative datasets such as the School and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) (i.e. Carver-Thomas & Darling Hammond, 2017; Farinde, Allen, & Lewis, 2016; Farinde-Wu & Fitchett, 2016; Ingersoll, 2001; Moore, 2012). These datasets are provided by NCES and are vastly limited with one limitation being that they capture statistical data beginning with the 1986/87 school year. Regarding Black teachers, these data eliminate a timeframe for which some educational scholars describe as the wholesale dismissal of thousands of Black teachers and administrators (Ethridge, 1979; Foster, 1997; Hudson & Holmes, 1994; King, 1993; Tillman, 2004). Though these studies are dated, they are important to review because they shed light on the detrimental impact of educational reform and policy on Black educators.

Educational Policy and the Dismissal of Black Teachers

Teaching has long been respected as an accessible occupation for the upward social and economic mobility of college educated and lower-classed Black Americans—particularly women (Cole, 1986; Irvine, 1988). Evidently, in 1950, nearly half of all Black professionals were teachers, compared to a quarter of White professionals (Cole, 1986). During that time, Black teachers were primarily concentrated in schools in the segregated South where "few other occupations were open to Blacks" (Ibid, 1986, p. 326). Hawkins (1994) reported that before the Supreme Court handed down its

desegregation ruling, the *1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court Decision,* there were approximately "82,000 African Americans responsible for teaching more than two million Black children enrolled in segregated schools across the nation" (p. 26). These statistics from census data from the middle of the 20th century confirm that before *Brown,* Black teachers were proportionately represented in U.S. schools. Yet, after desegregation, several Black schools closed which required Black students to integrate into White schools, resulting in thousands of Black teachers and administrators being displaced and dismissed from the U.S. education system (Ethridge, 1979; Hawkins, 1994; Tillman, 1994).

***Brown* and Black Teacher Dismissal.** The unintended consequence of *Brown* was the hiring and termination polices that caused the wholesale dismissal of thousands Black teachers (Tillman, 2004). According to Ethridge (1979) the "employment opportunities lost during the first twenty-five years was devastating" (p. 230-231). Yet he further contended, "The lack of effective data collection throughout the first fourteen years of desegregation prevents the true impact of the *Brown* decision on Black educators to ever be known" (Ethridge, 1979, p. 222). By the year 1970, less than 20 years after *Brown,* nearly 32,000 Black educators and administrators had lost their jobs in 17 southern states because of desegregation (Ibid, 1979). Furthermore, based on the average salary in each of those states, the economic loss to the Black community "between 1970-71 alone was $240,564,911.00, nearly a quarter of a billion dollars" (pp. 223-224). Two years after that, the number of displaced educators rose to nearly 40,000 lost jobs, resulting in more than 45% of African American educators being forced out of the profession (Ethridge, 1979; Foster, 1997; Hudson & Holmes, 1994). The detrimental

impact that education reform has placed on Black teachers is not a concern of the past, an on the contrary, it has continued to impact the decline of Black of Black teachers.

Post-*Brown* and its Lingering Effects. Fifty years after *Brown*, its lingering effects were still prevalent and particularly in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina. The charter school system that developed after the storm in 2005 is another example of educational reform and its detrimental impact on the dismissal of Black educators. In their study about attrition for Black women teachers, Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) found that many Black veteran teachers in New Orleans had been fired in masse post-Katrina. They wrote:

> In New Orleans, more than 7,000 teachers—most of whom were Black—were fired en masse after Hurricane Katrina. They were replaced by predominantly young, White teachers brought into charter schools that replaced the district schools. When the courts found the move illegal years later, the new teachers stayed on, and the former teachers were not rehired. As a result, the number of Black teachers declined there by more than 62%. (p. 169)

The dismissal of these veteran Black teachers was discussed further in an article published in *Education Week* titled *What happened to New Orleans' Veteran Black Teachers.* In the article, Mitchell (2015) reported, "The decision to lay off educators was a financial blow and a deep insult to one of the pillars of the city's Black middle class" (p. 4). Moreover, as Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) discussed, a class action lawsuit was filed by the Louisiana Teachers Federation claiming that teachers impacted were not given due process and top priority for hiring in the new education system (Dreilinger, 2014a). The original appeal intended for impacted teachers to receive

back pay for two to three years and benefits amounting to approximately $1.5 billion (Dreilinger, 2014a). Yet when the case reached the Supreme Court, it was dismissed on the principal of *res judicata*, meaning "a case cannot be argued if it covers the same people and arguments as a previous case" (Dreilinger, 2014b). Several of the plaintiffs in the new case were also involved in a previous suit against the School Board that resulted in a $7 million settlement—each union member received $1000 (Ibid, 2014b).

The previous studies have illustrated how educational policy has impacted the declining proportion of Black teachers in the U.S. education system. These studies present a viewpoint that points to the *involuntary attrition/dismissal* of Black teachers and how they are pushed out of the school systems in this country through educational reform. In more recent discussions about attrition for Black teachers, a different viewpoint has emerged. Here, I turn to more contemporary and empirical studies that help to conceptualize the *voluntarily attrition* of Black teachers.

Black Teachers and Dissatisfaction

Researchers tend to agree that Black teachers' high attrition rates is an issue of dissatisfaction (i.e. Farinde, et al., 2016; Farinde-Wu & Fitchett, 2016; Ingersoll & May, 2011). I mentioned earlier in this section that several of these studies have relied on quantitative datasets from the SASS and TFS, both of which are described as the largest and most comprehensive data sources available on teachers and staffing (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Nonetheless, these scholars argue that attrition for Black teachers is influenced by factors such as a lack of classroom autonomy, a lack of involvement in school decision-making, and a lack of administrative support (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Some have found that the likelihood for Black teachers to remain in the classroom

increases when such factors are addressed, such as administrative support, salary increases over time, and professional advancement (Farinde et al., 2016).

Other scholars have presented findings that contrast with literature on dissatisfaction for Black teachers. For example, in her examination of the data from the 2007-08 SASS, Moore (2012) found that teacher attrition for Black teachers could not be explained solely through dissatisfaction. In her examination of the relationship between the school environment and teacher dissatisfaction, Moore (2012) found that factors such as teaching in a middle school (32%) and teaching in a rural school (12%) significantly increased the odds for dissatisfaction. Yet most relevant from her study was that even when the school environment was ideal, there was a large chance that African American teachers would still be dissatisfied with their jobs. She argued that it is "unknown whether the dissatisfaction of Black teachers is a new phenomenon or whether Black teachers have been dissatisfied with teaching as a profession over a long period of time" (Moore, 2012, p. 11).

Intersectionality

Collins and Bilge (2016) interpose intersectionality as an examination tool to address experiences that can seldom be understood by one single axis of social division and instead by many axes that work together and influence each other. The analytical turn that intersectionality takes to address the overlap of multiple social dynamics, differ from other teacher attrition studies. For example, studies have often relied on single axis investigations such as dissatisfaction (Moore 2012) and retention (Farinde et al. 2016). While such factors are important to understanding teacher attrition, intersectionality

conveys how lived identity, sites of marginalization, and modes of resistance intersect in dynamic and shifting ways (Mays 2015).

As such, research shows that Black teachers face racial discrimination in the workforce (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; D'amico et al., 2017; Kohli, 2016). In their examination of teacher demand and hiring practices, D'amico, et. al (2017) found blackness was negatively associated with receiving a job offer. When comparing Black candidates to their identically qualified White counterparts, they found that Black applicants were half as likely to receive a job offer solely based on the different of their racial identity (Ibid, 2017). Not only are Black applicants less likely to receive job offers, but they are also more likely to be placed in schools with higher rates of poverty and within schools characterized as 'struggling' (D'amico et al., 2017).

In their analysis of the 2011-2012 NCES, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-up Surveys (TFS), Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond (2017) found that Black teachers were more than twice as likely as their White counterparts to teach in high-poverty, high-minority schools that face additional challenges. Kohli (2016) claims that even though Black teachers in urban areas are teaching a higher percentage of Black students, they are still inundated in what is referred to as a 'hostile racial environment' in which they are on the receiving end of racial micro-aggressions.

The issues that Black teachers face in the workforce are also influenced by their gender. While the impact of being a Black male teacher has not yet been siphoned from the Black teacher experience, Smith et al., (2020) did analyze the experience of Black male students in the education system. Through their phone interviews with 661 men, the researchers found a trend that suggested that Black men in the education system

experienced what they referred to as ‘racial battle-fatigue’; black men were on the receiving end of higher levels of racial micro-aggressions the more educated they became.

The authors do not specifically discuss how the treatment of Black males in the education system differs from Black females, but they did propose that all marginalized groups, regardless of gender or race are forced to operate in a social environment that carries the ‘psycho-pollutants’ of racism, and racial microaggressions. While not specifically discussed by Smith et al., (2020) it is possible that black men in the teaching workforce would also suffer from this so-called ‘battle-fatigue’ and would have to operate in the same ‘psycho-pollutants’ as their student counterparts.

Black female teachers have been the focus of more attention in the literature, and therefore the current narrative of their experiences is more multifaceted. Counter to expectations, Farinde-Wu & Fitchett’s (2016) examination of the 2007-2008 SASS showed that Black female teachers actually experience higher job satisfaction and report higher job commitment when working in higher-poverty urban areas. Not surprisingly, it was also found that Black female teachers report more job satisfaction when receiving higher levels of administrative support. However, Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) found that although first-year Black female teachers received the same amount of administrative support and mentoring as their White counterparts, they found this support to be less helpful.

Qualitative interviews with 218 urban teachers of color (78% female) revealed a theme in which teachers viewed their racial identity as a positive quality for their job, with one participant expressing that her bilingualism was an asset to her students (Carver-

Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). In contrast, she also reported that she was told by a colleague that her bilingualism was actually detrimental to students learning. This is one of many reported racial microaggressions that were reported by Black teachers (Kohli, 2016).

These findings paint an incomplete picture of both the Black female and male teacher experience; Black men in the education system receive higher levels of racial micro-aggressions the more educated they become, but it is not clear if this experience differs for Black females. Black teachers are more likely to work in schools that are characterized as 'struggling', yet they report higher job satisfaction when working there. Black female teachers receive the same amount of administrative support and mentoring as White teachers, yet they find this support to be less helpful, and Black teachers find pride in being able to teach racial minorities, yet they are still subjected to racial microaggressions in urban workplaces. While some researchers do touch upon the intersectional identities of Black teachers, it is not often used as a focal point for the discussion, nor has it been directly applied to teacher attrition.

Emotional Transnationalism

Transnationalism has been described as an attractive yet deceptive experience, in which the migrant imagines a possibility "of living with two hearts rather than with one divided…" (Falicov, 2005, p.399). Emotional transnationalism extends transnationalism and globalization theories, which theorize the ways in which goods, ideas, and people cross borders. It refers to the psychological impact of living within or having ties to more than one country, and it is a concept that is often excluded from the literature on attrition

(Wolf, 1997). Yet, examining the role of emotional transnationalism in the migrant experience is key to gaining a thorough and accurate insight into their lived realities.

The research on second-generation migrant Filipino students provides a telling example. Through their exploration of the experiences of 22 Filipino university students and graduates, Wolf (1997) uncovered themes in their experience that juxtaposed the previous literature that depicted migrant Filipinos as traditionally successful, especially in regard to assimilating into U.S culture. From the student accounts, behind the image of 'success' is an immense amount of pressure from the family to perform well in school. Filipino students reported that their desire to make their parents proud resulted in mental health issues, such as depression and suicidal thoughts; an even more pronounced effect in females. Additionally, even though Filipino students cited the family as being key to their identities, they also expressed feelings of alienation from them.

Emotional transnationalism points to how emotions are evoked based on competing discourses within transnational spaces (Wolf, 1997). The transnational struggle for Filipino youth "situates them between different generational and locational points of reference—their parents,' sometimes also their grandparents,' and their own—both the real and the imagined" (p. 459). By considering the role of emotional transnationalism, a more accurate image of the Filipino experience has been created through Wolf's analysis. It does this by conceptualizing emotions as "contradictory tugs, messages, and pushes and pulls" felt by those who face dissatisfaction in one place and feel the allure of another (Ibid, 1997, p. 473).

While teacher attrition has not been specifically examined through emotional transnationalism, it has been employed as a theory to understand the intersectional lives

of Black American women. In her ethnographic study about Black women and diasporic dreams, Williams (2018) employed emotional transnationalism to understand the affective dimensions of their lived experiences. Through life narratives and the use of a web discussion board, she examined stories and how they "symbolize the complex webs of contradictory images, destructive stereotypes, and misrecognitions Black women experience as they live at the intersection of racism and sexism" (Ibid, 2018, p. 3). Like goods, Williams (2108) found that these women carried emotions that were experienced individually and collectively as they mobilized across time and space.

The emotional dimensions described in Williams' (2018) study is particularly useful for my research on affect and Black American teachers' transnational migration because of her analysis of push and pull factors that led the African American women in her study to leave the U.S. with some regularity and go to Jamaica in the hopes of accessing their desires and sentiments of happiness. It is these emotional struggles that I believe to be similar to the Black American EDPats in the UAE.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I have reviewed relevant literature to understand how educational scholars have conceptualized and discussed attrition for Black teachers. In alignment with the purpose of this chapter, I inquired into relevant sources to provide a solid grounding for analyzing the views and lives of Black American EDPats in the UAE. As such, the studies reviewed in this chapter have revealed that in addition to the crisis of a national teacher shortage, the shortage of qualified teachers of color is a pressing issue that has caught the attention of educational scholars and policymakers. Black teachers have been viewed to be role models for Black students and therefore have been courted in efforts to

diversify the teaching profession. Yet when comparing the proportion of Black teachers in the workforce with that of other minoritized teachers, they are proportionally declining at higher rates.

Scholars who have attempted to understand this decline have presented two different viewpoints. The first being that Black teachers have been involuntarily dismissed from the school systems of this country. This is evidenced through the detrimental impact that educational reform has placed on the dismissal of Black teachers. The second viewpoint is that Black teachers voluntarily leave the profession because they are dissatisfied with their lack in autonomy, administrative support, and involvement in school decision-making. Scholars have also presented analysis of attrition for Black teachers through examinations of the ways in which race and gender impact their experiences in the workforce. Yet missing from such analysis are studies that employ the theory of intersectionality to examine the role that Black teachers' intersectional identities, lived experiences, and affect play in their decisions about whether to remain or leave the profession.

As revealed in this chapter, Black American EDPats have yet to be examined through empirical research and an investigation attempting to understand their transnational migration is warranted. By widening the scope of domestic interpretations of attrition to transnational ones, we can better understand the conditions that influenced these teachers to leave. There is a pronounced gap in migration and mobility studies and studies in teacher education. This gap overlooks a distinct link between U.S. teachers who migrated from U.S. PK-12 schools to schools in other countries like the UAE. My exploration into this curious situation is an attempt to expand and advance knowledge in

these field. Therefore, the question that I sought to answer in this dissertation was: *How do the intersectional identities and affective dimensions of Black American EDPats' lives influence their decisions to leave schools in the U.S. and teach in schools in the UAE?* In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodological approach that was used to explore this question.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research and methodological design employed for this study. First, it begins with a discussion about the qualitative design and the decision to utilize a life history approach to narrative inquiry. In this section I also discuss the recruitment process and selection criteria for those involved. The next section explains the interview protocol and procedures, which provides detail about the data collection, interview protocol, and data analysis. After that, the rationale for the research site is presented and is followed by a brief discussion about the ethical considerations of this study. The chapter ends with a brief discussion about the limitations and a summary.

Qualitative Research Design

To understand Black American teachers' perceptions about their transnational migration decisions, I employed a qualitative research design for this study (Creswell, 2014). As Ravtich and Carl describe it, "Qualitative research involves systematic and contextualized research processes to interpret the ways that humans view, approach, and make meaning of their experiences, contexts, and the world" (2021, p. 4). A qualitative research design was appropriate for this study because it allowed me to engage in a systematic process to understand how these life historians made meaning of their experiences in the U.S. and the UAE and, furthermore, how these experiences led to their transnational migration decisions. With an intention to gain full and deep accounts about their lives, as

part of this design, I utilized a narrative inquiry methodology, an approach that focuses particularly on stories.

Adopting the term Life Historian to Describe Research Subjects

Before I discuss the design of this study, it is important to begin by explaining my decision to adopt the term *life historian* to describe the research subjects. As noted in Chapter One, this term was conceptualized by Bloom and Munro (1995) in their study about Black women administrators. While reading their chapter about life history methodology, I stumbled upon a footnote in which they expressed their intention of not utilizing terms like *participant* or *informant* within their study. Rather than viewing the Black women administrators as mere participants, they acknowledged the depth and extent of their participation by referring to them as life historians.

Acknowledging the sentiments of empowerment embedded in such a phrase, I was reminded of an article written by Andrea Collier (2019) titled *The Importance for Black People to Tell Our Own Stories*. In this article, she explained that "Black folk," as she described us, come from a long lineage of storytellers and "storytelling is our roots and wings" (Collier, 2019, para 1). In a beautiful illustration about how important storytelling is for Black people, Collier reflected on a time when it was illegal for slaves to read and write. She said:

> But story is as essential to the human spirit as breathing. Slaves knew that telling story was the only way they could bear witness to what they'd been through. They knew that they didn't dare write their story down, or read

> someone's story, but the only freedom they had was to speak it. (Collier, 2019, para 12)

It was this excerpt that pushed me to think more deeply about the storytellers in this study. I wanted these Black American teachers to feel as though they could "breathe," and that they had the freedom to share their stories as a way to "bear witness to what they'd been through," as Collier (2019) noted. Adopting the term life historian was crucial, specifically because it provided a sense of permission and ownership for the storytellers to be the historians of their own lives.

Life Historian Recruitment and Selection

After securing approval from the University of Minnesota Internal Review Board (IRB), life historians were recruited through community nomination, which is a recruitment process created by Michelle Foster (1991) and discussed in her book *Black Teachers on Teaching*. Her book is an examination of Black U.S. teachers, some of whom were the first to teach in desegregated southern schools, and their political and philosophical views about educating Black children during the second half of the 20th century. Community nomination allowed her to procure new and potential participants through recommendations and nominations deployed by community stakeholders such as Black churches, periodicals, and individuals (Foster, 1991). I piloted this recruitment process in 2018 after receiving funds to conduct a pilot study in the UAE. During my one-month study, it proved to be effective because it allowed me to conduct 10 interviews with Black American teachers and, therefore, I found it to be a sufficient recruitment

strategy for this study.

In 2019, when I returned to the UAE to conduct this dissertation research, I realized that having carried out a pilot study and having worked as a teacher in the UAE was beneficial to my recruitment process because it enabled me to lean on my established relationships to procure community nominators. I will discuss my pilot study in more detail when I explain the rationale for the research site later in this section. However, I mention it here to clarify that recruitment for this study involved three community nominators, all of whom formerly participated in my pilot study. They provided me with the names and contact information of teachers who they believed might be interested in participating in this study.

The process of community nomination was primarily word of mouth. When a nominator suggested the name of the nominee, I asked the nominator to initiate the conversation by telling the nominee about my study. Asking the nominator to be the first to initiate contact with the nominee was significant in the recruitment process because they could vouch for my research, character, and trust. By vouching for me, they could gauge and determine if the nominee was interested before sharing their contact information with me. For those who were interested, our initial communication took place on a digital phone application called WhatsApp. This application is widely used in the UAE because of its texting and voice messaging capabilities. Therefore, in my initial communication with each nominee, I introduced myself through a short text message accompanied by a pdf version of the IRB exempt form and a brief explanation about the study, which included the selection criteria.

Selection Criteria

The selection criteria for this study were aligned with information gathered from the UAE government portal that explains the basic requirements for expatriate teachers' employment in schools across the UAE. According to the portal, to apply for a teacher position, the candidate must:

- Have a minimum qualification of a bachelor's degree or a 4-year university degree or higher in the required field. This rule applies for public/government schools as well as private schools in the UAE.
- A criminal clearance record.
- A medical fitness report from the UAE.
- Original education certificates.
- Attested certificates in case the educator has graduated from a university outside the UAE; the certificate must be attested by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the country's embassy in the UAE.

In alignment with these basic qualifications, the nominees selected to be part of this study (see Table 2) possessed state-certified teaching credentials, taught in the U.S. for a minimum of two years, and taught in the UAE for at least one year. They also self-identified as Black American. The ages of nominees varied, as did their years of teaching experience in the U.S. and the UAE. The average number of years spent teaching in the U.S. was nine years, whereas the average number of years spent teaching in the UAE was five. Their ages ranged from mid-thirties to mid-fifties.

Table 2

Profile of Life Historians During the 2019/2020 School Year

Name	Gender	Position Held in UAE	Type of School Employment in UAE	Number of Years Taught in the U.S.	Number of Years Teaching in UAE
David Jr.	M	Vice Principal	Ministry of Education	12	5
Madison	F	Vice Principal	Private	15	6
Sunset	F	Teacher	Private	10	8
Lee	F	Teacher	Private	6	5
Camille	F	Educator Coordinator	Private	8	6
Nicole	F	Teacher	Private	3.5	6
Reign	F	Teacher	Private	18	2
Dick	M	Teacher	Private	8	5
Melanie	F	Teacher	Ministry of Education Charter	2	3.5
Eltee	M	Teacher	Ministry of Education	10	6

Protocol and Procedures

Procedures for this study involved three phases: (1) data collection; (2) data analysis; and (3) narrative construction. These phases were not completed linearly; instead, at the point at which I began analyzing the data, it required going back and forth between making sense of it and attempting to organize it in a storied format.

Data Collection

The first phase of this study was gathering data through life history interviews. The interviews were conducted between October 2019 and December 2020. As I noted in Chapter One, there were 13 life historians interviewed for this study. However, the study draws upon data from 10 of these interviews. As I will discuss in further detail later in this chapter, it was during the narrative construction process that I made the decision to include the accounts of 10 life historians rather than all 13. It was imperative that the selected data fit within each of the three moments that were constructed for this study and for three of the life historian accounts, this was not the case. As such, in the remainder of this discussion about the methodological approaches of this study, I will refer to 10 life historians hence forward rather than the original 13.

The life historians interviewed in this study resided across three emirates in the UAE. Five resided in Ras Al Khaimah, four resided in Abu Dhabi, and one resided in Dubai. To conduct these interviews, understanding the needs of the life historians was most imperative because each of them were full-time teachers and administrators, and their availability was limited to weekends and after-school

hours (Hagemaster, 1992). The living accommodations that were provided as part of my doctoral research grant were in Ras Al Khaimah and, therefore, required that I commute to Dubai and Abu Dhabi multiple times a month.

Table 3

Dates of Interviews with Life Historians

Name	1st Interview	2nd Interview	3rd Interview	Total Hours
		Ras Al Khaimah		
Nichole	1.13.20	2.4.20	3.27.20	6 hours
Dick	2.2.20	4.9.20	5.13.20	5 hours
Reign	1.29.20	3.11.20		2 hours
Sunset	1.30.20	2.27.20	3.31.20	4 hours
Lee	10.16.19	2.26.20		3 hours
		Abu Dhabi		
Madison	1.20.20	3.11.20	5.16.20	6 hours
Melonie	1.25.20	2.21.20	2.22.20	9 hours
David Jr.	1.23.20	3.8.20		3 hours
El Tee	12.29.19	1.1.19		3 hours
		Dubai		
Camille	12.20.19	2.8.20		3H, 30 m

As displayed above in Table 3, each of the life historians in this study were interviewed two to three times with full interviews ranging from a total of four to eight hours. After meeting with me on 30 different occasions, collectively,

these interviews totaled about 60 hours. Initial interviews were conducted in person and in various locations, such as life historians' homes, coffee shops, restaurants, and even sitting on the beach. In March 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, I shifted from in-person interviews to virtual interviews on Zoom because of the mandated curfews and social precautions implementing new quarantine protocols.

For instance, on March 4, 2020, Jarallah and Reynolds (2020) announced in *The National* [12] the decision of the Ministry of Education to close schools and universities across the country for a month. This was to contain the spread of COVID-19 and begin sterilization procedures for educational institutions. Teachers and administrators remained home and were asked not to return to schools until further notice. By March 23, 2020, *Gulf News* [13] reported that the nation was being urged to refrain from visiting public places, to maintain social distancing protocols, and to "use their own family cars with a maximum of three individuals per vehicle" (2020, para 2). The Ministry of Interior and the National Emergency and Crisis and Disasters Management Authority were urging for compliance with the new instructions and guidelines, which were "primarily limiting social contact and avoiding crowded places to ensure safety and well-

[12] According to their website, *The National* is a private English-language daily newspaper published in Abu Dhabi, UAE. It publishes articles about news, business, arts, culture, lifestyle, and sports. It was originally launched in 2008 under Abu Dhabi Media and was later acquired by International Media Investments and relaunched as a private entity in 2017. https://www.thenationalnews.com/about-us/.

[13] According to Wikipedia, *Gulf News* is a daily English newspaper published from Dubai, UAE. It was originally launched in 1978 with its first online edition launched in 1996. According to their website, *Gulf News* is the "biggest selling English newspaper in the UAE" and also " the most visited news website in the UAE" (https://gulfnews.com/about-gulf-news).

being" (Gulf News, 2020, para 1). I was able to conduct few virtual interviews during this time because the many changes and uncertainties happening simultaneously made life historians less available for interviews.

In April 2020, I conducted a focus group interview with five of the 13 life historians to gain additional insight about the impact of COVID-19 on their personal and professional lives in the UAE. The additional interview lasted approximately two hours.

Interview Protocol

Each life history interview was semi-structured and included three key components: (1) the creation of a linear life timeline (LLT); (2) the creation of an identity map (IM); and (3) interview questions. I began analyzing the data at the point at which the first interview was conducted, and data analysis continued throughout the entire duration of data collection and the process of narrative construction. I will discuss data analysis in further detail in the following section. In the initial interview, the LLT and IM were completed. Interview questions were not discussed until the second interview or after both activities had been completed in full. In the initial interview, the primary focus was on creating the LLT and IM, which took about an hour on average to complete.

Linear Life Timeline. In the first interview, life historians created a LLT, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Before completing the activity, I explained its purpose by providing the life historians with an example that had been completed by the researcher. The LLT is a systematic process of reflection that allowed life historians to identify significant turning points within specific periods within their

lives (Hagemaster, 1992). The time periods that were important to this study were divided into four categories—childhood, pre-teacher, teaching in the U.S., and teaching in the UAE.

Figure 1

Example of Linear Life Timeline

K-12 Personal Schooling Experience	Try to remember particular *turning points* within your life history. Who were the people and experiences that impacted your decision to enter into education? Who were the people who were influential during your experience in K-12 education? Are there any meaningful experiences that impacted your decision to stay in or leave a position during your time in the US, UAE, or other countries?
Higher Education Experience	
Experience in US K-12 schools.	
Experience in UAE K-12 schools or other countries	

After completing this activity in the initial interview, I redesigned it to better fit the narrative nature of this study. In the first interview, with Lee, I followed its initial design and asked her to complete the LLT by silently reflecting on her life and writing her turning points in each category on the paper. I explained to her that the activity should take about 10 minutes. After the time passed, I explained further that we would discuss her responses and elaborate on what she had written. After 10 minutes had gone by, Lee had not completed the activity. Therefore, I realized that the time that had been allotted for the activity

was insufficient because it did not allow for deep reflection, which Lee had done. Furthermore, it requested of life historians to write their turning points, then read them out loud, which took double the time.

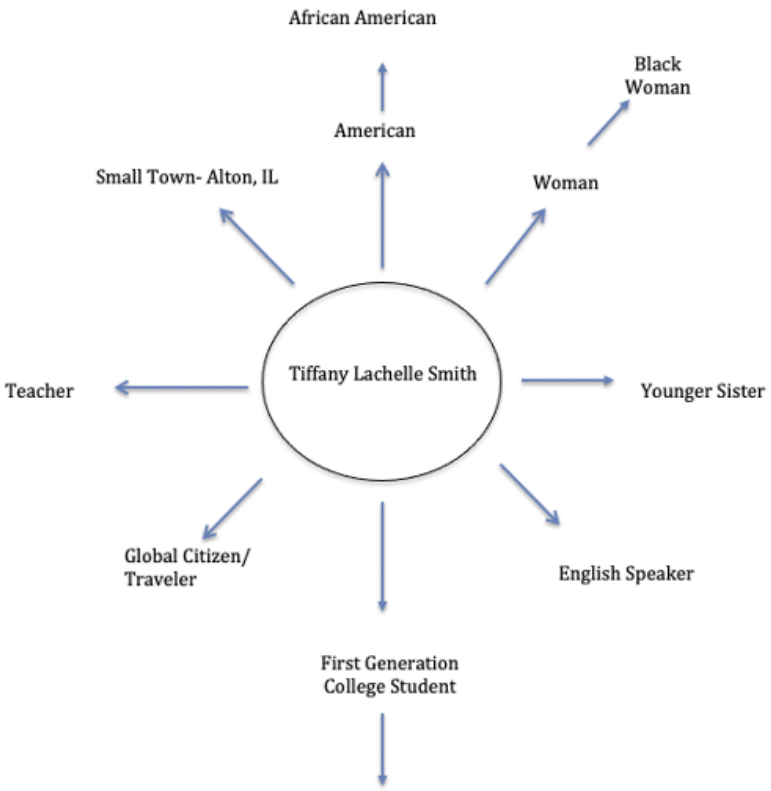
In the remaining interviews, I changed the format by asking them to share their turning points out loud while I wrote them down. This format allowed me to simultaneous make preliminary jottings and notes to be discussed in later interviews. This redesign of the LLT was more conducive to the interview and allowed life historians to remain focused on their thoughts rather than translating their ideas into writing. Additionally, life historians were not asked to reflect on their lives in a linear manner. Instead, I allowed them to reflect from the present back to their childhood, reflect on their childhood toward the present, or begin in the middle of their lives and reflect toward childhood or toward the present. The purpose of the activity was not about how they reflected on their lives and instead was about encouraging them to deeply reflect on their lives as they completed the LLT.

Identity Map. After the LLT was completed, the second activity was creating an identity map (Facing History and Ourselves, 2019). Inspiration for this activity derived from a collaborative research project which was previously conducted with colleagues (Johnstone, Smith, & Malmgren, 2020). The study involved students historically underrepresented in study abroad and asked of them to identify their unique identities. After they selected and named their identities, they were later analyzed based on the influence they had on their group and host country experiences (ibid, 2020). Since a primary component of this current study

was to understand how the intersectional identities of the life historians impacted their transnational migration decisions, this activity provided an avenue for them to identify the identities for which they deemed as essential and salient to their lives. Therefore, I asked each of them, "What are the important facets of yourself that are important to you but that no one can see"? Figure 2 is an example of an identity map that I completed for myself. This activity allowed the life historians to identify their intersectional identities and particularly those that that lay beyond the surface but are still pertinent to whom they believe themselves to be as educators.

Figure 2

Example of Identity Map



Interview Questions. The initial interview primarily focused on creating the linear life timeline and identity map, which, on average, took about an hour to complete. After the LLT and IM were completed, life historians were asked semi-structured interview questions, which was guided by a list of questions (Maxwell, 2013). They were divided into five sections:

- Life history
- Details of experience in the U.S.
- Details of migration
- Details of experience in the UAE
- Reflection on meaning

The purpose of the interview questions was to allow life historians to delve more deeply into the turning points that were identified in the LLT and to discuss the role that their intersectional identities played in their transnational migration decisions. Interview questions (see full list in Appendix A) were intended to elicit responses that highlighted the roles that their lived experiences (i.e., linear life timeline), intersectional identities (i.e., identity chart), and aspirations played in their transnational migration decisions. A few examples of interview questions from the life history portion of the interview questions are as follows:

1. What year were you born?
2. What is your place of birth?
3. Is your birthplace the same place you grew up?
    a. If not, where did you grow up?

4. Describe details about the climate of your childhood household.
5. How does your childhood household compare with your current household?
    a. Children/ relationship status/etc.
6. Describe the schooling and occupational experiences of your grandparents.
7. Describe the schooling and occupational experiences of your parents.
8. List the locations and names of schools you attended.
    a. K-12, Higher Education, schools worked in, etc.
    b. Other training
    c. Past/Current/Future occupation
9. Describe how you became interested in education/teaching/administration.
10. Name three important influences on your career choice.
11. Describe how you became a teacher/admin/counselor.

Data Analysis

I began data analysis through pre-coding and assigning short phrases and words to "salient" and "essence capturing" data during the initial interview and the interviews that followed (Saldaña, 2013, p. 3). In addition, I created preliminary jottings and analytic memos, which allowed me to pay close attention to significant quotes and life experiences mentioned by each of the life historians (Hagemaster, 1992; Saldaña, 2013). Preliminary jottings were created by circling,

highlighting, bolding, and underlining significant quotes and striking passages shared by the life historians (Hagemaster, 1992; Saldaña, 2013). The process of creating preliminary jottings and codes was imperative because before the second interview was conducted, which was designed to delve more deeply into interview questions, I was able to listen to the first interview and reflect on my notes to discuss them further. After each interview, I also journaled about my personal thoughts and connections, which was also pertinent to data analysis (Saldaña, 2013).

With such a robust amount of data collected, I began transcribing the interviews before the data collection phase was completed. In other words, I did not delay the transcription process until all the life history interviews were completed. Instead, after a full interview with one life historian was complete, the interview was then transcribed. The transcription process began by purchasing a pedal foot which is a device that allows the transcriptionist to control the audio with the foot. The purpose of the device is to improve the speed of transcription by freeing the hands and using the foot to play, fast forward, and rewind through the audio. Even with this device, I quickly realized that transcribing each interview took a vast amount of time. Therefore, after the first interview was transcribed by the researcher, I hired two transcriptionists to transcribe the remaining interviews. Pseudonyms were selected by the life historians and used throughout the interview process and therefore, identifying markers about the life historians' identities were not an issue.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the data was stored on my password protected computer, external drive, and uploaded into NVivo, which is a software used for managing and organizing qualitative and mixed method data. I will discuss my analysis process in further detail in the paragraphs below, however, it is important to mention here my difficulty with using this software. After purchasing the student subscription, I attended a NVivo webinar training for guidance about how to utilize the software to its full potential.

Even after the training, I was unable to gain a full understanding about how to utilize many of its functions which included the creation of word clouds and word trees. The issue that I faced with this software was that my analysis required identifying nuances and common patterns rather than common themes or repeated words. Therefore, I used the software at its basic level by reading though each of the interviews and creating codes and subcodes, many of which had already been jotted during the interviews. This software provided a systematic approach to data analysis in that it allowed me to highlight throughout the data and create tabs that clustered together the primary and secondary codes emerging in each of the interviews. However, the software was not used in any other capacity.

In my initial design for data analysis, I planned to focus primarily on the data collected from the interview portion of the protocol. Life historians spoke in great depth about their lives and turning points in the U.S. and in the UAE, which I thought would be most beneficial for data analysis. The LLT and IM were intended to be supporting documents rather than data utilized for analysis.

However, as I began reflecting on the themes and subthemes that were jotted throughout the data collection process, I found myself constantly drawn to the LLT and the IM. Though I didn't realize it at the time, the LLT was crucial to my analysis because the historians' lives had been systematically synthesized in a linear fashion. Though it was not completed linearly, the result was a conceptualization of all the turning points, which were discussed more deeply in the follow-up interviews. This helped with my analysis because it enabled me to reflect on the narratives and turning points noted during the LLT activity and connect them with the more in-depth narratives that were expressed in the second and third interviews. The IM was crucial for analysis because it provided a list of the identities noted by life historians that were salient to how they viewed themselves.

Narrative Analysis

After reflecting on the primary and secondary codes that were created in NVivo, I engaged in a process of narrative analysis to search for pieces within the data that explicitly answered my research question (Polkinghorne, 1995). The purpose of narrative analysis is to "produce stories as the outcome of the research" (Ibid, 1995, p. 15). It allows for researchers to collect descriptions of events and happenings and configure them by means of a plot into stories that reveal uniqueness of an individual case and provide an understanding of its complexity (Ibid, 1995). Therefore, each of the pieces of data selected were intended to contribute to the construction of a story that would provide an explanatory answer to understand the transnational migration decision of Black

American EDPats and, specifically, life historians' interpersonal experiences in the U.S. and in the UAE.

An unexpected outcome of conducting these life history interviews was the extensive amount of data that was garnered from each of the interviews. Each transcription ranged between 55 to 187 single-spaced pages, which was much more data than could be included in this dissertation. Therefore, the most effective way that I found to present these findings, and convey some sense of similarity and nuance, was to focus on particular chunks of the data. The three big slices that have been carved from all my data, and what I offer through this dissertation, are the three turning points, or what I refer to as *moments,* within life historians' transnational migration decisions. I divided these moments into three temporal periods and named them *Contemplating Leaving*, *The Decision to Migrate,* and *The Decision to Remain in the UAE*.

After these moments were developed and categorized, I was able to look more closely at the data to present a story about their transnational migration decisions. It was necessary to include data about life historians' experiences in the U.S., how their transnational migration decision began to take shape, and what factors impacted their decisions to remain in the UAE. It was at this point when I decided to include 10 life history interviews rather than all 13 interviews. The purpose of this move was to ensure that the selected narrative data fit within each of the moments.

The three life history accounts that were excluded were from educators whose turning points did not add any additional information to the story that was

being constructed. For instance, one of the excluded life history accounts was from a school counselor. She began her career in the U.S. working at a government organization before going into the PK-12 system. Much of the information that she shared about her life in the U.S. was about students in the foster care system rather than her experiences with students in PK-12 schools. These turning points were interesting in that they influenced her decision to become a school counselor in the UAE, but they did not add any additional layers to the story about teaching in the U.S.

Another excluded life history account was from a historian who spent years working in business management before he entered the PK-12 system in the U.S. His life in the UAE was the most significant contribution to this study, however, like the other excluded accounts, it did not add any additional depth to the transnational migration story of these EDPats. After the data had been coded and sub-coded, they were condensed into excerpts and placed into each of the three moments (see Chapter Four).

Narrative Construction

The last phase of this study's procedure was narrative construction. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe this process as a reflexive relationship between living a story, telling a story, retelling a story, and reliving a story. To fully present the life historians' transnational migration decisions, it was important that I include narratives from my experience in the field and during my analysis of the research. As Clandinin (2016) notes, I had to find a way to "inquire into [life historians'] experiences, [my] own experiences, as well as the

co-constructed experiences developed through the relational inquiry process" (p. 47). I did this by including interludes between the chapters in this dissertation. These interludes were opportunities to harmonize my voice and the voices of the life historians. Furthermore, the interludes helped to contextual the information gathered from my analytic memos and journal entries. Whether gathered during my time in the field or during the process of narrative construction, the information discussed in each of the interludes allowed me to express this research process more clearly to the reader.

Each excerpt from the life historians' interviews was placed into a category that eventually coalesced into the three moments. To construct a narrative in each of the moments, I engaged in a process that I describe as "writing around" each of the excerpts. As an attempt to explain what I mean by this, it entailed beginning with a single excerpt and adding additional context from the data around it to provide a thick description of the theme being analyzed. This was necessary because as I mentioned earlier, each of the life historians were interviewed on multiple occasions. This meant that some excerpts were selected from the first interview while others were selected from the second and third interviews. Writing around them meant piecing together individual excerpts to construct a linear story line. Each of the selected excerpts from the 10 interviews were used to construct a long narrative that illustrated the crux of the moments. The most pertinent sentences and words were boldened and emphasized for the reader.

Summary of the Research Process

The most challenging components of the research process was data analysis and constructing the data into the three moments. These challenges were not anticipated. Therefore, they had a significant impact on the research process. For this reason, I will center these challenges as I discuss the process. I'll begin by discussing the implications of the software, which is followed by a discussion about the challenge of finding themes and nuances throughout the data. Lastly, I'll then discuss the challenge of presenting the data.

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, the first complication of the research process was using the NVivo software. NVivo is marketed as being specifically designed for qualitative and mix-method data. I assumed that by making word clouds or searching for frequently used words, I would be able to gain some sense of understanding about what the data was saying from this research. However, this was not the case, and primarily because there was so much data. Even after attending an NVivo webinar training, to gain additional understanding about the features of the software, I realized that a different approach for analysis was needed. Therefore, the software was used at its basic level, which was organizing the data by creating codes and tabs to group together common themes.

The second factor that complicated the research process was analysis of the data. Though life history is intended to garner deep examinations of individuals lives, having interviewed over ten people for this study made sensemaking of their lives more complicated than anticipated. I discussed before that each of the transcripts were between 55 to 187 pages single spaced. Having conducted multiple interviews, with multiple life historians, finding the themes

and nuances throughout the data required listening to the interviews several times, reading through the transcripts several times, and relying heavily on the jottings and memos that were created during interviews. With interviews being long, deep, detailed accounts, the process was time consuming and at several points, very confusing.

Providing a candid account about the analysis process is necessary because in utilizing life history methods, interviewing less than ten people, from my perspective, is ideal. I designed this study in a way that would provide full accounts of the historians' lives. Therefore, discussing their childhoods up to their adulthoods aligned with the intention of the study. However, having 10 life history accounts made presenting the data based on their individual lives beyond the bounds of possibility, and moreover, outside of the scope of this research. This study was not about the individual lives of these historians. Instead, it was about the common nuances and similar themes mentioned throughout their lives that might help explain their transnational migration decisions. This meant that I was not only attempting to make sense of their lives individually, but also how their lives connected with the lives of the other life historians.

The last point that I will mention regarding data analysis is the structure of these interviews. They were structured in a way that allowed life historians to discuss their turning points early in the first interview, which is when the LLT and IM activities took place. These activities were intended to allow them to "touch on" the turning points and discuss them in further detail later in the follow-up interviews. As I began extracting the excerpts from the transcripts to create a story

and present them in one of the three moments, I quickly realized how details about a particular turning point was located in different sections of the interviews. This required condensing both sections into one excerpt. For example, I interviewed Camille two times for this study. In our first interview she mentioned factors about why she chose to remain the UAE. Yet in our second interview, she discussed these same factors in more detail. To present this data, I had to merge what was discussed in both interviews.

The third and last factor that impacted the research process was presenting the data in a way that not only made sense to me, but also answered my research question. Constructing a story about the life historians' transnational migration decisions was depended upon how the data was presented. Therefore, in my initial thoughts about how to present the data, I took inspiration from the few other studies that have utilized life history in CIDE (i.e., Vavrus, 2015; Willemsen, 2016). For example, Vavrus (2015) employed life history in her study about cleverness and the implications it has on increasing the likelihood of school success. She presented 12 life history accounts from youth in Tanzania. In her presentation of the data, she utilized long quotes and excerpts to provide evidence as to how cleverness weaved through each of their lives.

Willemsen (2016) employed life history in her ethnographic dissertation about the relationship between education and empowerment in girl's schooling in Tanzania. Unlike Vavrus' study though, Willemsen (2016) dedicated entire chapters to the individual life stories of the seven young Tanzanian women. Both studies were significant to this research in that they provided examples about how

to present life history data. However, the best way that I saw fit to present the data from this study was by organizing it into three individual moments.

The Rationale for the Research Site

The rationale for selecting the UAE as a research site was primarily due to my existing relationship with the region and financial support in the form of a grant to conduct my research there. As I mentioned earlier in the section about my personal background to the study, I taught at an American international school in Abu Dhabi between the years of 2013 to 2015. It was during that time that I personally witnessed Black American EDPats working at various schools throughout the region.

I initially established connections with Black American EDPats in the UAE in 2018. Funds[14] were secured to conduct a one-month pilot study to interview ten Black American EDPats in Abu Dhabi and Ras Al Khaimah. The purpose of the pilot was to test the potential of this research study and to gain a preliminary understanding about factors that people expressed influenced their decision to migrate to the UAE. At that time, I had not conceptualized these factors as transnational migration decision as my focus remained on the push and pull factors.

For these interviews, I leaned on my previously established network and kinship circles, including EDPats, parents of my former students, and colleagues

[14] Funds were awarded through the University of Minnesota-Social Science Research Council Interdisciplinary Dissertation Proposal Development Program and provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

from my former school. During that time, I also began developing a relationship with the Sheik Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy and Research in Ras Al Khaimah. After the completion of my pilot study, I was awarded a doctoral research grant from the Foundation allowing me to complete this dissertation study in 2019.

One of the reasons why there are a significant number of Black American teachers in the UAE is the national agenda entitled *Vision 2021*. The following section explains it and some of the main features of the educational system in the UAE.

Vision 2021 Educational Reform in the UAE

One of the most interesting features of the educational system in the UAE, and conceivably the primary pull factor that attracts large numbers of Western teachers, is its extensive system of English-medium international schools (EMIS).[15] In 2010, *Vision 2021*[16] was implemented by Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. It included six pillars with one being an educational reform of all government K-12 schools in the region. The aim was a complete transformation of the existing educational system to enhance Emirate students' rankings to be the

[15] International Schools Consultancy (ISC) defines English-medium international schools in three categories: (1) Schools teaching solely in English (non-bilingual); (2) Bilingual schools with English as one language of learning; and (3) accredited international schools. There is no discernment between private and public schools in the data.

[16] UAE Vision 2021 aims to make the UAE among the best countries in the world by the Golden Jubilee of the Union. There were six key sectors identified as national priorities for the government: (1) Sustainable environment and infrastructure; (2) First rated education system; (3) Health care; (4) Competitive knowledge economy; (5) Safe public and fair judiciary; and (6) Cohesive society and preserved identity. https://www.vision2021.ae/en

best in the world in reading, mathematics, and science exams, all while sustaining a solid knowledge of the Arabic language (Vision 2021 website, 2018).

Vision 2021 primarily impacted local government schools attended by Emirate students and students from other countries within the Gulf Cooperation Council because it shifted classroom instruction from Arabic to English as the medium of instruction. As I began thinking more deeply about the implications of this shift, I realized stark similarities between the educational reform in the U.S. and that of the UAE.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, an unintended consequence of school desegregation was the wholesale dismissal of thousands of Black teachers because they were not hired into White schools as Black segregated schools closed (Ethridge, 1978; Tillman, 2004). Similarly, an unintended consequence of *Vision 2021* was the wholesale dismissal of thousands of Arab expatriate teachers because it was them who taught in Arabic-medium instruction (Gallagher, 2019). This shift from Arabic to English medium instruction shifted recruitment toward teachers from Western countries.

The educational reform required government schools to have "exceptional leadership and an internationally accredited teaching staff" to elevate Emirate students' graduation rates to international standards (Vision 2021 website, 2018, para 2). This meant, in addition to teaching positions at private American and international schools in the region—schools that most often recruit Western teachers—*Vision 2021* resulted in thousands of other vacancies attracting Western

teachers to government schools (Gallagher, 2019). According to Gallagher (2019), primarily countries recognized for having effective educational systems.

Leading Country for English-medium International Schools

The globalization of education in the 21st century has resulted in a significant increase in international schools globally (Hayden & Thompson, 2000). According to International School Consultancy (ISC), in 2018, the UAE ranked second after China as the top 10 leading countries with the largest number of EMIS. Dubai ranked number one for having the largest number of students enrolled in EMIS (ISC, 2018). These schools experienced a significant increase between the years of 2000 to 2018 and grew from 2,600 schools to 9,500 schools; projections indicate EMIS will increase to 12,700 schools by 2023 (ISC, 2018). These established projections occurred before the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is imperative to note that, like many schools globally, when I conducted this study, the UAE experienced decreases in student enrollments due to distance learning and border closures.

At that time of these rankings, there were approximately 620 EMIS in the UAE (ISC, 2018). According to a 2016 press release from the *Khaleej Times* titled *UAE Employs Most Number of Western Teachers*, the demographics of teachers working at these schools are majority British (49%), North American (15%), European (7%), and Australian/New Zealander (5%); Emirate and other Arab expatriate teachers made up less than 1% of the teaching staff (Debusmann, 2016). This press release, like several others, did not indicate if these numbers reflected staffing at private schools, government schools, or both types of schools.

Without this distinction, it becomes difficult to assess statistical data concerning the demographics of teachers in the UAE. For example, in government/public schools, Buckner (2017) and Ridge (2014) found expatriate teachers were distributed mainly to Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, and the Western Region and were predominantly males from other Arab nations such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Tunisia. During the 2014-15 school year, Ridge et al. (2015) found that the number of Emirate (11,813) and expatriate teachers (11,965) in public schools were almost equal. Despite this, most significant about this information is the indication of strong the demand for expatriate teachers.

While these data are not directly relevant for this study, they are essential to understanding the educational context within the UAE. Expatriate teachers are hired from various countries to work in private and government schools across the UAE. However, not all expatriates are Black American teachers nor Western teachers.

Validity Concerns and Study Limitations

There were two ways that I sought to enhance the validity of this study. The first was the recognition of my long-term involvement in the country and my familiarity with the EDPat community in the UAE. In addition to having previously taught in the region, I spent 14 months in the country during my fieldwork, which resulted in a lengthy period of contact with life historians and other EDPats (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2013). This time allowed me to observe the life historians outside of their school settings, such as in their homes and at social gatherings across the region. These engagements allowed me to build

a stronger rapport with each of them. Moreover, prolonging my time in the country due to COVID-19 enabled me to leisurely conduct interviews rather than rushing through them.

The second way I addressed validity was respondent validation, or what is also described as member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2013). It assisted with avoiding misrepresentation and constructing ideas that differed from the meanings and intentions of life historians. This was particularly useful during data analysis because there were several parts in the interviews where I needed further clarification. For this reason, I either called the life historian or sent a text message. For instance, one of the life historians, whose account was not included in this study, spoke about sentiments of nationality when discussing his decision to remain in the UAE. In several of our discussions, he refrained from identifying himself as a Black man and solely referred to himself as American. I wanted to be sure not to misinterpret his perspective, or project my own understanding on him, so I decided to call him. I told him that I had noticed this pattern and asked if there was an explanation behind it. His answer was complex and led to concerns about how to reconstruct his story in this dissertation. Therefore, feeling as though his story was better suited for an individual research article, I decided not to include his account within the three moments.

Limitations of the Study

There are three limitations that I will briefly discuss in this section. The first is data analysis; the second is the research site; and the last is the research subjects, the life historians themselves.

What I found to be the most difficult part of this study, which I consider to be a limitation of sorts, was analyzing the extensive amount of data in the form of the life history narratives. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, transcriptions of 13 life historians resulted in each full interview ranging between 55 to 187 pages. With such a large amount of data, finding a way to do justice to the depth of the stories and to pinpoint examples of key moments in them was difficult. This might be the reason why many scholars who examine teacher turnover rely on quantitative datasets for their analysis.

However, while I may not have been able to identify discrete factors or variables as some turnover scholars have done, my qualitative approach reveals much more fully the complex lives of teachers and how their lives before they become teachers mold and shape their experiences. In my attempt to make an impact on policy interventions, and particularly policies that impact teacher recruitment and retention, I contend that life history and other narrative approaches are necessary because, as this study revealed, teachers' transnational migration decisions were comprised of various affective moments that intersected with their identities, and this complexity cannot be captured easily.

As this study unfolded, I quickly realized that with the vast amount of data I was gathering, it would be a very long dissertation if I presented each life historians' story as a separate chapter. Moreover, I wanted to highlight some of the commonalities of experiences and affect that affected their transnational migration decisions. For this reason, I opted to organize the data in the next

chapter as *moments*. I will leave it to readers to decide whether this way of presenting my analysis was a limitation or not.

In addition to the potential limitation posed by the extensive amount of data I collected, a second possible limitation of this study is the research site itself. The UAE served as a type of case study, although the term case study was not used in this dissertation because I was not focused on the country but rather on the EDPats teaching in it. My reason for restricting the study to the UAE had to do with my personal experience and familiarity with Black American EDPats in the country and financial constraints that allowed for data collection in the UAE but did not permit me to conduct research in multiple countries.

The third limitation of this study was that it solely focused on the perspectives of Black American EDPats. It did not include U.S. EDPats who do not identify as Black American. However, the central purpose of this dissertation was to examine the transnational migration of Black American teachers to understand factors that contributed to their turnover in U.S. PK-12 schools. This does not mean to suggest that they were the only U.S. teachers who chose the UAE for teaching opportunities, nor was it meant to indicate that only the views of Black American teachers were worth exploring. Instead, my interest was to understand the ways in which Black American teachers talked about their intersectional identities and their lived experiences in relation to their migration decisions.

Summary of the Chapter

To summarize, this chapter has provided an overview of the methodological and analytical considerations of this study. It presented the qualitative design and explanation about my decision to employ narrative life history. The selection criteria and significance of the phrase life historian was presented as a description about those involved in this study. The chapter discussed the protocols and procedures, detailing each of the methods utilized for data collection, recruitment, and conducting the life history interviews. It also provided an overview of data analysis procedures. Finally, the rationale for conducting this research in the UAE was discussed as well as concerns of validity and the limitations of this study were addressed. The following chapter is a presentation of the findings which is a life history analysis of Black American teachers' transnational migration decisions.

Interlude to Chapter Four: Affective Tensions between the Researcher and the Researched

"Hey girly, just finished brunch. I'm heading back to the hotel. Meet me there."

This was the text message I sent to Danielle, a young Black American woman from California. She lived in Abu Dhabi for almost three years and was the only Black American I knew who had transitioned from being a math teacher to an adjunct professor. She worked at the first federal and nationally accredited university in the UAE.

When she sent me a text message earlier that day, she asked me if I was interested in going to a party that was hosted by the Middle East chapter of Omega Psi Phi (ΩΨΦ).[17] She told me that many of the bruhs[18] were flying in from Bahrain, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia and thought it would be a an excellent opportunity to connect with other teachers to possibly interview for my study. She was sure that several would be there, along with the chance to have a little fun.

When I arrived back to my hotel after brunch, I quickly got dressed in my black and gold swimsuit. I covered it with a large flowy Ankara-printed sundress that I purchased a few years before in Tanzania. I reached for my phone to text Danielle that I was ready, but when I picked it up, I quickly noticed the message that I had missed from her minutes before. It read: "I'm outside."

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[17] Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. is a Black Greek letter organization founded in 1911 at Howard University. It is one of nine Black Greek letter organizations within the collective of the Divine Nine. On December 9, 2019, the Omega Psi Phi chartered the Delta Nu Nu chapter, a middle east regional chapter, in Dubai, UAE.

[18] *Bruh* is a term that is used to describe members of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

The party was on a private island, and to get to it we had to take a speedboat from the port. As Danielle and I boarded the boat, I noticed Melanie, another Black American teacher. She and I met previously at a mutual friend's house a few weeks before. The moment that she and I met, I was instantly captivated by her vibrance. She had a glow that drew me to wanting to know more about her. In our short encounter, she told me about working at a charter school in Texas for Teach for America before migrating to the UAE. Charter schools were also being started in the region and she worked at one in Abu Dhabi. We exchanged phone numbers and agreed to discuss the possibility of our interview later. However, I hadn't planned on seeing her at this party, especially since I hadn't followed up with her after our initial meeting.

En route to the party, an unexpected emotional tension arose. I was worried about seeing Melanie at the party because I began to fear certain things that might happen in the future (Brown, 2021). I felt a new form of tension stemming from viewing myself as a researcher and viewing myself as a regular person attending a party. As much as I wanted to be connected and included within this Black social community, I worried about risking my reputation as a researcher if I were seen as having too much fun at this gathering.

Although I didn't have the language to describe these feelings, emotional transnationalism is the term I now use to describe them. It points to the modification of "identity formations Black women construct and problematize as they create their transnational networks" (Williams, 2018, p. 6). Seeing Melanie on her way to this party revealed a problematic construction of my identity as a

teacher, and now as a researcher. Even though I was not a teacher at the time, I was still ‘in school’ as a doctoral student and researcher. This experience called into question the identity I had carefully constructed in the U.S., which did not include attending lavish parties on private islands. This other side of my identity was now visible in this transnational space, and it impacted my experience as a researcher in the UAE.

The politics of appropriateness and the notion of being a good teacher were central to the teacher identity I had constructed (Berry, 2001). Being a good teacher had less to do with my teaching credentials than it did about my behavior. After entering the teaching profession, I took extra care about my behavior, especially at parties. For example, teachers never took photos holding red cups because they suggested the consumption of alcohol, and they were associated with termination among the teachers I knew. Even without knowing what was in the cup, stories were passed down about school leaders terminating teachers for posting pictures of themselves holding red cups in public; such tales kept most of us abiding by these unwritten rules. In the same vein, one of my colleagues in the U.S. was a bodybuilder. She posted images of herself in what resembled a swimsuit and noted the high rankings from judges at her competitions for flexing her broadly defined muscles. Yet she also received criticism from parents and administrators for not behaving like a good teacher. According to the unwritten rules about appropriate dress and behavior for teachers, her photos were inappropriate.

The politics of appropriateness is central in the lives of teachers because it forms a line between teachers' personal and professional lives. So, naturally, there is fear in blurring this line, and it fear that was evoked when I saw Melanie on the speedboat. I was wearing a swimsuit and planning on holding the red cup. With worries about my integrity as a researcher on my mind, the speedboat approached the dock and long rows of neatly positioned white villas came to view. "Alrighty, girly. I'll see you in there," I said to Melanie as Danielle and I stepped off the boat. We walked inside an enclosed room and toward a table where a young Black man sat. He was wearing army fatigue shorts with a purple shirt that read ΩΨΦ in bold Greek letters. Holding a clipboard with a long list of names, he looked at us and said, "What's ya name"? After highlighting our names, he placed a colored lei around Danielle's neck, then mine, and directed us to two double doors.

The doors led to an outside terrace and as we exited them, we were greeted by the most beautiful image. There was about fifty people, in various hues and shades of brown, glistening from the rays illuminating from the golden sunset. Some folks were in the infinity pool, which was situated off the Arabian Gulf. Other folks were holding long shisha pipes and dark brown cigars sitting in small groups laughing and conversing. The feeling lingering in my chest was something that I couldn't describe in the moment but now reminds me of a 1970 interview with Nina Simone. After explaining to a reporter how being on stage made her feel free, the reporter asked her to describe what freedom meant to her. She struggled to find words and after pausing for a brief moment, she explained

“It's just a feeling” (Rodis, 1970). As she attempted to describe this feeling, it was as if she experienced an epiphany because she passionately shouted out, “I’ll tell you what freedom is to me, NO FEAR! I mean really, no fear. It is truly something to feel. Like a new way of seeing. A new way of seeing something" (Rodis, 1970).

What I witnessed at the party was only a glimpse of the freedom that Nina Simone attempted to describe in her interview. It was, in fact, a new way of seeing the thing I had feared. The only words I had to explain it, perhaps to translate it, was a feeling of *Black joy*. Joy was not part of my imagination when I thought about encountering Melanie at the party. However, this freedom among Black expats and EDPats made me feel safe to be seen, even as a researcher.

As sunset came upon us, I eventually bumped into Melanie. Rather than assuming judgment about the appropriateness of my presence at the party as a researcher, I hugged her. “Hey girly, you know I still need to interview you for my study,” I told her. She said, “I know, and if we’re gonna do it, we better hurry up because I’m not planning to be here much longer”. I worried about the issues that she might be facing, and, in an attempt to advise her not to leave her position, I confessed to her that I had also quit my job while teaching in Abu Dhabi. I had decided to return home to the States in the middle of a school year. I told her that it wasn’t a good decision for me though: “Look at me now, I’m right back here.”

Before we could dig deeper into the conversation, an Ω approached us. He was a young Black American man in the military and had flown in from Qatar that afternoon. From afar, he must have noticed the seriousness of our

conversation because he disciplined us with a subtle reminder that we were at a party. He said we were supposed to be having fun, not having a deep conversation. In agreement, Melanie and I arranged to finish our conversation later, specifically, during our interview. I followed right behind her after she insisted, “C’mon, girl, let’s go to the bar!”

Chapter Four: Three Moments within the Life Historians' Transnational Migration Decisions

Introduction

This chapter presents the principal findings from ten interviews with the life historians in this study. I did not include three of the life historians because, as I noted in Chapter Three, their stories did not add any significant or new information to these selected stories. The chapter has been organized into three moments that most, if not all, the life historians identified as critical turning points in their decision to leave the teaching force in the U.S. and assume teaching positions in the UAE. These three moments are: (1) *Contemplating Leaving*; (2) *The Decision to Migrate*; and (3) *The Decision to Remain in the UAE*. As noted in Chapter Three, I found that the most effective way to present these findings and convey some sense of similarity without ignoring individual differences was to focus on particular periods where the life historians described everyday experiences related to the broader theme of turnover. My analysis of the three moments described in this chapter resulted in the theory of affective turnover that I developed, which helps to explain how their intersectional identities and emotions as Black American teachers were connected and identifies the emotional thread that runs through all these moments.

In the rest of this chapter, I begin by providing more details about affective turnover and about the three significant moments and concepts I developed to explain them. I then turn to each of these moments and illustrate them by using selected portions of the life history interviews. I chose those that

most clearly conveyed the affective impact of the moment of their decision-making, and I use affective turnover to explain their migration decisions. Finally, after presenting each of these findings, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the results.

Affective Turnover: An Overview

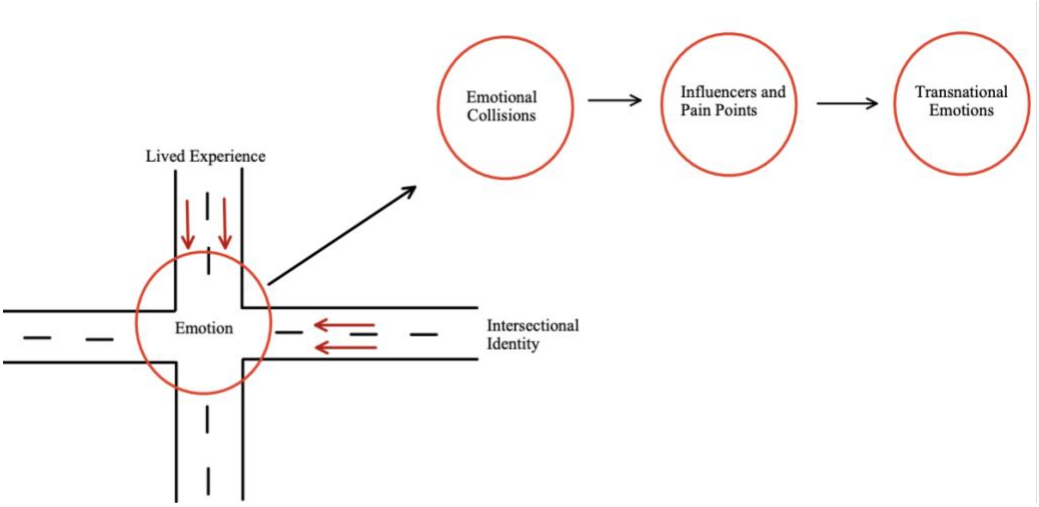
Affective turnover emerged as a theory to help me explain life historians' transnational migration decisions through some of the common narratives that emerged in this study. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the original design was supported by a dual theoretical framework of intersectionality (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, & Tomlinson, 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 2017) and emotional transnationalism (Williams, 2018; Wolf, 2002). Intersectionality helped explain the intersections between life historians' identities, lived experiences, and lives in U.S. schools and society. However, it did not capture the affective dimensions that continued to arise in the interviews, particularly in the third moment. Therefore, I employed emotional transnationalism to help capture the emotional sentiments of the life historians' ideologies and locational points of reference as they discussed their identities and emotions throughout their experiences in the UAE.

Coupling the theories of intersectionality and emotional transnationalism helped explain the emotional sentiments that arose in life historians' accounts of life in the UAE. Yet, after taking a deeper dive into the data and re-analyzing their life stories, I realized that emotions were also a distinct component of the ways they described their lives in the U.S. Rather than remaining on the periphery of

their experiences, emotions were central, and they threaded through the entire life stories of these historians and helped to explain their transnational migration decisions more fully. Affective turnover makes emotions a visible and transnational component of the life historians' transnational migration decisions.

Figure 3

Overview of Affective Turnover



As displayed in Figure 3, the primary component of affective turnover is emotion, and it is emphasized by a red circle located at the intersection of two roads. The road is a metaphor for Black American teachers' lives, and intersectionality helps to explain that emotion, at the center, is not caused by one factor, such as race alone, but is instead the result of mutually intersecting factors, namely, teachers' lived experiences and their racialized, gender, and class identities (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991).

At the point at which these two roads collide, they produce not a harmful physical collision but instead an emotional one. Affective turnover helps to explain this emotion in three dimensions: emotional collisions, affective

influence, and transnational emotions. These dimensions will be explained further in the paragraphs that follow; however, it is imperative to mention that each of these circles are red to denote that they derive from a similar set of emotion. These emotions arise from the collision between Black teachers' lived experiences and identities, and, as this study reveals, are transnational and rooted in the life historians' perception about their lives as teachers in the U.S. These dimensions were conceptualized during my second and more profound round of data analysis. These different dimensions of affect help convey that life historians' transnational migration decisions occurred at the nexus of lived experience and intersectional identity, and those emotions were woven through each of the moments discussed in this chapter.

The findings from this study illustrate, to varying degrees, the explanatory potential of affective turnover and help to more fully explain my argument that life historians' transnational migration decisions in each of the three moments were based on their pursuits of happiness shaped in the context of their racialized, gendered, and classed lives as teachers. In the first moment, *Contemplating Leaving*, I discuss the concept of *emotional collisions* to explain the collisions of teachers' lives and identities in the U.S. Intersectionality scholars (Crenshaw, 2017) use collision as a metaphor to describe the intersection of identities such as race and gender. However, in this study, collision conveys the point at which teachers' lives and identities, as Black American women, and men, collided with their lived experiences in U.S. schools and society. At the point at which these factors collided, one finds the sentiment of feeling ground down. As illustrated

below, the life historians discussed emotions like exhaustion and feeling fatigued, making them feel ground down and leading to their aspirations for happier living and working conditions.

In the second moment, *The Decision to Migrate*, I use the concepts of *influencers and pain points* to describe how the life historians' domestic pursuits of happiness were expanded into the transnational sphere by significant people—influencers—within their social networks. Some of these influencers were preparing to migrate to the UAE, while others had already migrated. However, most distinct in this moment is the navigational tools and resources provided to the life historians that influenced their lives and impacted their decisions to leave their positions in the U.S. for jobs in the UAE.

In the third moment, *The Decision to Remain in the UAE*, I use the concept of *transnational emotions* to explain how the emotions discussed by the life historians were rooted in their comparisons of their lives as teachers racialized, gendered, and classed in the U.S. and in the UAE, and how this comparison affected their decisions to remain in the UAE. The theory of emotional transnationalism helps explain affective turnover as these emotions were situated in two different geographical locations—in the U.S. and the UAE. Through various experiences in the UAE, the life historians expressed sentiments of their happiness through emotions like feeling safe, relaxed, and relieved of pressure in this moment.

Altogether, the findings in these three moments illustrate the utility of the theory of affective turnover, which is grounded in Black American EDPats'

emotions (See Figure 4). It is also a critical social science theory that can be employed not only by educational scholars but also by scholars who examine turnover and migration in other contexts.

Figure 4

Overview of the Findings within the Three Moments

Contemplating Leaving: The First Moment

The first moment that helps to explain life historians' transnational migration decisions focuses on how their initial decisions to leave took shape during their lives as teachers in the U.S. In this moment, I use the metaphor of

emotional collisions to help convey my argument that these teachers were ground down by the affective dimensions of their identities and lives as Black female or male teachers. This metaphor is an apt description of how these factors resulted in multiple emotional collisions that intensified a feeling that perhaps White teachers in the U.S. may feel as well but are intensified by being Black teachers. Rather than continuing to teach in this fraught emotional state, they imagined happier lives and better working conditions elsewhere. Most prominent were the emotional collisions that resulted in feeling fatigued and exhausted, which stemmed from othermothering and the additional emotional demands of caretaking.

I Had to Stop Myself from Adopting Those Kids: Camille

Camille's career as a teacher began at a school she described as Title 1 and lower income. When she started teaching, the student demographics were "about 75% African American and 25% Hispanic," but after five years, when she decided to leave the school, the demographics had shifted and were "more so 50/50 Hispanic and African American." When Camille and I discussed her teaching experience at this school, the most striking concern that came up for her was the increasing number of single fathers she encountered in her classrooms. In our interview, she explained:

> I had never seen or even heard about them [single fathers]. You rarely hear about single fathers but there were a lot. My second and third year, there were so many dads. At that time, I was just a little young teacher, and I assumed the student's parents and I were all about the same age.

> Oftentimes, I would just ask, 'Where's Mom?' The responses from the children and the fathers ranged from mom's on drugs, mom walked out, mom's in a mental hospital, or some would just say, 'I don't know, we haven't talked to her.'

There was one single father, in particular, who caught Camille's attention. She was excited about him because he showed up consistently for all the classroom field trips. As she noted, "His child wasn't even a bad child." From what she could see, "He was just a boy and was the youngest boy under his five-year-old and six-year-old brothers." On the bus during one of these field trips, Camille had the opportunity to thank the father for consistently supporting their class on such trips. It was then that the father expressed to her that he was a "single father." According to Camille, he explained that after his third son was born, "the mom was tired, so she left and never came back," according to Camille.

As a Black woman, born to a middle-class family and growing up in a two-parent household, Camille explained that it was challenging to learn that many of her students were being raised primarily by their fathers. It impacted the affective dimensions of her life because she worried about children who didn't have a mother in their lives. She confessed, "**It was my reality [as a teacher], but I never understood it and probably because I had both my parents."** In many ways, her intersectional identities, being Black, middle-class, and female, prevented her from accepting, or even understanding, the idea of single fathers raising their children alone. Being raised by two middle-class parents was a salient part of Camille's identity, yet she couldn't understand how a mother could

be absent from her child's life. In describing her students' lives, she noted that this absence was often the case "whether a parent left or a single parent had to work because there was nobody else". At this moment, othermothering became part of her practice.

Black feminist scholars coined the term othermother to distinguish biological mothers from other women who care for their children (Collins, 2000). As Collins (2000) argues, "Vetting one person with full responsibility for mothering a child may not be wise or possible" (p. 192). Othermothering refers to the family members, community members, and even teachers who take on the role of a mother who assists in the rearing of children. Camille's story illustrates a vivid depiction of how taking on the role of an othermother, in addition to her role as a teacher, eventually ground her down.

Camille's father, whom she described as being "really passionate about working with youth," shaped her understanding of care and mentorship as a child. There were two men, "to this day," that she refers to as her brothers because her father moved these young men into her home when she was younger. Camille explained that her father wanted "to be a proper mentor" for them and guide them on the right path. The care she witnessed from her dad's encounters with these young men and others shaped Camille's identity as a teacher, and particularly towards the students raised by single fathers.

Camille mentioned that she spent time with one young male student and his siblings outside of the traditional school hours. She assumed his father was

"busy working to provide a stable household" and most likely "had little extra time to spend with his children." She explained:

> I started picking the kids up from their house. It wasn't every weekend, and I knew I had to keep a safe distance. Maybe once a month, or maybe twice. I took them to the zoo or a museum, to get pizza, you know. We would just go do something. Their dad couldn't do it.

As Camille continued to reflect on the amount of time she spent with the kids, she confessed, "**Thank God this family left the school at the end of the year because I just got too attached.**" Her perception that she was too attached, as an othermother, provides a vivid example of an emotional collision.

In another story about her students, Camille described a "beautiful chocolate brown little boy," as she recalled the day he went missing at school. When she realized he was missing, she didn't panic because this young boy frequently ran out of the classroom and sometimes out of the school building. However, this day was different from the others.

> **That day I was tired. I was tired and I just couldn't find him. I freaked out and I called admin. They shut down the school building because everybody was looking for him. I heard a noise and I looked down underneath the table. The table was blocked by a shelf, and he was under the shelf between all the wires. I called out his name and he ran to me. I just started crying. I hugged him and he hugged me back so tight.**

The theory of affective turnover helps to explain Camille's relationship with these young boys and how it was an emotional collision for her. She described feeling tired even before this particular boy went missing, but her emotional fatigue was even more evident by her tears when she found him. As a Black woman from a family where both parents were present and were very involved in their children's lives, Camille may have felt an even greater responsibility to serve as an othermother to her students whose mothers were not present in the home. Camille's fatigue, she reported, came from trying to care for students whose life experiences were different from her own, but her attempts could not fill in the void of care in their lives. Affective turnover helps explain how this feeling of fatigue, which cannot be described as caused by one factor alone, was the result of intersecting forces, such as her gender, race, and her lived experiences in a two-parent, middle-class family.

There were many ways in which Camille drew upon these intersecting identities in her attempts to fill the void she felt due to the absence of mothers for her students raised by single fathers. She had a strong belief that "kids want to be seen and want someone to care for them." However, as she described it, the issue was that there were "so many children in that school that didn't have that [othermother figure]." As a result, she confessed in one of our interviews, "**I actually had to stop myself from going through the process of starting to adopt these kids.**"

Camille's attempts to provide maternal care resulted in numerous fractious moments that eventually ground her down and led to her turnover. She couldn't be

an othermother for all her students whom she felt needed a mother figure in their lives, so she decided to leave. Camille eventually left her position and became a teacher coach in the U.S. before she decided to migrate to the UAE, and we will see more of her story later in the third moment.

I Went to About Three Funerals, but There Were About Six: Dick

Dick was 22 years old when he entered the teaching profession in New Orleans, where he was born and raised. In his first year, he taught ninth and 10th-grade students, and with being in such proximity to age with them, he perceived that many of his students viewed him like "an older brother." However, age wasn't the only common factor between Dick and his students. He was also a Black man who grew up in New Orleans and understood his students' social and economic challenges and violent tragedies. In our interview, he recalled memories of the messages passed down to him in his former years as a student.

> [New Orleans] was a murder capital for a while. When I was younger, it was a murder capital, and that kind of affected me too. I grew up without having been shot at or anything of that nature, but at the same time, I knew the siren sound in the night. Over time, we eventually did as they tell you when you're in high school. You get to eighth grade, and they say, 'look to the left, look to the right, one of these people won't be here.' That happens slowly for various reasons.

Messages like this one, which acknowledge the violence that many young Black men in the U.S. confront, echoed throughout Dick's life. He spoke about the many ways his identity, being Black and male, was shaped by an

understanding that some of his peers "won't be here." Yet he did not perceive death as a natural occurrence; instead, he realized it was inflicted much earlier and often upon young Black boys and men in the U.S.

I got to know Dick well during the 14 months I conducted this research in the UAE and was struck by the similar message that he and I heard in school. Yet one critical difference led my peers and me to look to the left and look to the right. It was not due to messages about death; instead, it was because of graduation rates. At my school, a public school located in a small town of about 27,000 people with predominantly White students, we too were warned that many of us would not graduate and therefore would not see each other walking across the stage within the next four years. Despite the difference in these messages, their predictions were both accurate. Many of the students on the right and the left of me did not graduate four years later, and many of the students at Dick's sides did not either. In my case, though, those who did not graduate were labeled as "school dropouts," and from my high school understanding, this meant that they would face difficulty finding a "good" stable job, which I assumed graduating from high school provided. Yet in Dick's case, his peers that did not graduate were those who fell victim to the prevalent violence within his city.

As Dick got older, he witnessed several of his school peers die and face other tragedies. In our interview, he explained:

> You know cats got in trouble. We had a homeboy, a lover man type of dude, writing poetry in high school. Got infatuated with a chick; I think she cheated on him. He goes into the French Quarter, enters a bar, shoots

> her, winds up in prison. Another cat gets arrested in college. He was a pretty good athlete, but 'hood',[19] for no reason. He was up there slangin' drugs; I forget what they got [redacted] for. [Redacted] wound up shooting somebody too eventually. So, we have those stories.

The most prominent effect of "those stories" was their impact on Dick's classroom experience as a teacher. His reflections about teaching in the U.S. showed that he didn't want his students to face the same violence he observed as a young man. Dick tried to protect them and prevent them from simply surviving in what he described as "a murder capital." Yet as he began witnessing more and more of his students experiencing profound hardships, he began to feel ground down. He had escaped some of these challenges, and others he found hard to relate to, given his middle-class upbringing (see below). The result was an emotional collision:

> **Even after the storm [Hurricane Katrina], I lost probably six kids to various circumstances, whether it'd be somebody got sent to prison, or we had a kid commit suicide.** I found out later his family might have been involved in a murder, which led us to believe he might have actually been a key point in it. And then with depression and guilt, killed himself.

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[19] As an attempt to provide a definition to describe Dick's usage of the term 'hood,' I was drawn to Urban dictionary (https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=hood), which defines it as "someone who is from an inner city and expresses the essence of urban culture." While this definition provides a surface explanation to Dick's perspective, it is also important to mention that Black language, or Black Vernacular English, is often an expression of culture that is heard and not read (Smitherman, 1977). Therefore, my ability to sufficiently translate this term for some readers is difficult because its understanding is most inherent by those who consider themselves to be part of this culture.

> We lost a beautiful little girl, like a beautiful spirit too. She died in child labor. [Redacted], right? She died. Rest her soul, but she died in childbirth. **So, I think I went to about three funerals, but there were about six. It was sobering from time to time. It was kind of part of the path. It was stuff that my father would sit me down and be like, 'you work out here, this comes with the package, and you gone lose some of them.' And, you get tired of that, too.**

Affective turnover helps explain how Dick's intersectional identities as a Black male, born and raised in New Orleans, led to some of the collisions he experienced when he confronted the hardships of others. Dick was tired, he told me, and, in particular, he was tired of the intergenerational cycle of violence inflicted upon Black children, in particular. As an eighth-grader, Dick was conditioned to believe that either he or his peers would die prematurely, and he didn't want that experience for his students. Yet, as he recalled in our interviews, he had many students who were heading in the wrong direction and found he could not deter all of them:

> Sometimes you get into the school system, and you find a kid who you can point to and be like, 'If you don't fix what you doing, I'm telling you, you gone be in jail.' It's only a matter of the dice rolling, 'You playin' the game to lose.'

There was a young boy to whom Dick was referring in this excerpt.[20] He described him as a "little boy who could have used therapy, medication, and

[20] See full excerpt in Appendix B.

counseling." Instead, the boy eventually became a "big story in the city without these forms of support. He jumped somebody's fence trying to break in their car," and a White man gunned him down, Dick explained. Experiences such as these instances he referred to as "sobering wake-up calls" because they revealed that kids were "falling through the cracks and some things you can't do as a school." These were things that Dick confessed, "pissed me off about that school because it was again, a mismanagement of resources, and no good plans of how to deal with these kids."

However, it wasn't only the cases featured on the five o'clock news that ground Dick down. It was, even more so, the normalization of student tragedy. Dick's father, who was also a teacher and coach, confirmed for Dick that students' deaths were inevitable and, in so many words, "this comes with the package," so get used to the fact that "you gone lose some of them."

I wanted to gain additional insight into the particular difficulties that Dick faced every day as a teacher because he eventually left New Orleans to teach in the UAE. I asked him to share some experiences that challenged him. The following excerpt [21] vividly describes how he understood the issues his students faced and the affective impact they had on him:

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[21] Whether listening to the original interview or reading the transcription, this excerpt evokes an indescribable feeling in me that I am unable to put it into words. The feeling sits directly in my chest, and it takes me back to the moment I sat on the couch across from Dick in his apartment in Ras Al Khaimah. I jokingly expressed my surprise to know that he was from New Orleans because he didn't speak with the accent I was accustomed to hearing among New Orleanians. In agreement, he mentioned that in several of his trips back home, he encountered folks even from New Orleans who told him that he didn't sound like he came from the city. What was most significant about the excerpt is that it was the only time throughout the entirety of our interview that Dick spoke in what I would describe as a New Orleans accent. In his reflection about the challenges faced by his students, it was as if *home* had crept into the apartment walls, took a seat beside him, and took hold of his spirit.

Tiffany: What about things that may have challenged you? What were some of those experiences?

Dick: Bad ass kids[22] that didn't have a plan... or wasn't interested in going that [academic] route. They just didn't even see it or just was dealing with life and really ain't have time for you [teacher]. It was that mixed bag. You had kids that was dealing with life; lil crazy babies and school was a stop off between the bullshit they had to deal with otherwise.

Tiffany: Of course, I have in my imagination what 'dealing with life is,' but what did that look like as far as some of the students you're thinking about?

Dick: One parent at the house and a little sister that you primarily dealing with and taking care of. Or, you know, an uncle that's saying some fucked up shit and the ancillary effects of having that in and out of

[22] To avoid the misconstruction of Dick's reference to his students as "bad ass kids," I find it imperative to provide additional context which was mentioned in other parts of the interview. During his time as a teacher in New Orleans, Dick worked at five different schools, and the students he referred to in this excerpt were students at one school. He described these students as being "super cultured." He said, "They were New Orleans cultured and they were the ones who were gonna tell you what Super Sunday was, what the next Second Line was, and they might even be the ones whose peoples did the Mardi Gras Indians." Knowing little about New Orleans culture and the meanings of the events mentioned by Dick, my initial interpretation of his reference to these students as being "bad ass kids" was one that assumed a negative connotation. Yet as he explained further about the nature of Mardi Gras Indians, I realized that the phrase "bad ass kids" was actually one that possessed a familial tone. In terms of folks who did the Mardi Gras Indians, he expressed, "That shit is familial. You have grandpa who made Indian outfits and those kids would spend a whole year doing that. Ratchet as hell, ratchet lil babies, but also very deeply involved in these cultural institutions inside of the city. So, it's always a mixed bag." Deciphering between the students who were mixed within this bag that Dick referred to, I was reminded of Yosso's (2005) provocative question, *whose culture has capital*. Dick's students were outside of the boundaries of societal norms of what it meant to be a good kid. Therefore, referring to them as "bad ass kids" was like a father acknowledging his children's resistance to fit into the societal script but also acknowledging the hardships they might face by being outside of it.

> your people's life. Or having two parents but one of them is in the hood, working these streets, you know. Working a construction site and then doin some wild shit in the evening, and two parents in the house. But still, you got all those extra ancillary things and the impacts that they bring to the table and just clearly the old school cliché, 'Just one person tryin' to keep yo ass above water and you got a hundred other people trying to bring yo ass down to em.' Cause you seen a hundred people chillin' on the block with a story of making it to 50 something and you seen maybe two or three do it one way. So, the odds is better to just play the game that other ones is playin'. **It's not that the kids wasn't motivated. We had kids that had aspirations, I don't want to get it wrong, but there was not a lot of fear in turning out like ya momma. Or ya daddy, or yo' whoever, or you ain't got either one of them and it's ya grandmama. And she just tryin' to push ya ass to make sure you get out of school.**

In this excerpt, Dick explained the multiple tragedies he understood his students to face in their homes and society at large and why many of his students had "no faith in the system." While the Black American community has long viewed education as a tool for the enhancement and upward mobility of children (Farinde et al., 2016; Lerner, 1972; Tillman, 2004), Dick's account of the issues his students have to deal with illustrates how difficult it is for some students to succeed in school even when they have educational aspirations. He alluded to

here, and spoke directly elsewhere of racial, economic, and societal injustice that many of his students of color from uncertain homes faced. For many of his students, “School was a stop-off between the bullshit they had to deal with otherwise,” as Dick put it.

Undeniable in Dick’s story is that he wanted to be a role model for his students. Like the influence that Camille gained from her father to take on the role of an othermother, from my perspective, Dick wanted to take on the role of an *otherfather* (Hunter et al., 2006). His father had done so, but he felt unable to do the same. In our interviews, Dick explained, “I grew up with a father who was very present but was also a man who was probably a father to many boys just because of his [football] coaching. I never felt any resentment for that. It was just something that I appreciated; that was my dad.”

The appreciation that Dick felt for his dad was not only for the mentorship that he provided to other young boys but also for the mentorship that he provided for him, his son. Dick was a third-generation educator, and both his parents and his paternal grandmother preceded his entrance into the PK-12 profession. Being a third-generation educator is significant because there were several times in our interviews that Dick reflected on his father's difficulties during his time as an educator. The experiences his father shared with him were an inspiration for Dick and alluded to navigating his life as an educator. In one instance, he explained:

> I watched my father leave a job because he refused to fire a guy that the principal wanted fired. The guy wound up staying there and my father wound up getting fired. He stood by his decision though, and I think that

> was a turning point for me, to watch him do that because it made me think about all the opportunities he passed up on. Before I was born, he passed up on a coaching job in West Virginia at a small black college or something like that. He was just telling me, he always dreamed of getting a job at Tulane [23] and there was a time where it might've been a thing.

Though acknowledging the sacrifices made by his father, Dick took these lessons with an adamant stance that in his career as a teacher, his intention was to, "try it my own way," as he put it in our interview:

> I learned to embrace teaching as an act of service, but I know that I want my acts of service to maybe come through different mediums. I thought that by following directly in my father's footsteps, I could have been coaching and probably doing fairly well. I've turned down coaching jobs too, I don't know how many games I would have won but in New Orleans parish that would have been a bit more prominent.

As these excerpts from my interviews with Dick illustrate, he was fully aware of "the pain" associated with "knowing what lies ahead for Black children," but he felt "powerless to protect them" (Collins, 2000, p. 212). As a Black male teacher, he sought to be an otherfather like his father had been, to support his students with academic aspirations. However, he had little power to do so.

The affective turnover theory helps to explain how Dick's sense of powerlessness ground him down. He felt frustrated that some of his students

[23] A historically Black university in New Orleans.

didn't fear turning out like their troubled parents, and he felt powerless to disrupt this problematic generational cycle. The emotional collisions for Dick occurred at the intersection of being a Black male teacher, teaching young Black students with unstable family lives, and teaching in a city where violence is, unfortunately, normalized. The ongoing encounters with these forces led to Dick's feeling of resentment, which Brown (2021) describes as a feeling of frustration and anger related to perceived unfairness or injustice. Dick entered the educational system as a whole teacher with aspirations to be a service for young students. Yet these consistently fractious moments ground him down because, as with resentment, they were based on things he couldn't control (Ibid, 2021, p. 31). He felt disempowered to disrupt the generational cycle his students were in, and he felt profound fatigue from witnessing students fall victim so often to this cycle of going to jail or ending up dead. These were all fractious moments that ground Dick down from when he entered the U.S. education system as a teacher until he left for the UAE.

I Didn't Have Any Balance: Sunset

Unlike the feeling of being ground down by the emotional collisions of fatigue and resentment, which Camille and Dick felt because of the additional care they extended to their students, the story of Sunset illustrates feeling ground down by the emotional collisions she experienced in her pursuit of homeownership. This pursuit required her to work multiple jobs to afford an adjustable-rate mortgage, including the demanding job of teaching. In our interviews, she talked at length about the importance of buying a house and how

difficult it was for her. Though Sunset was unmarried and had no children, she was a caretaker for her immediate family members, and she sheltered them in her home during their times of need. However, as a teacher, her income was insufficient in providing enough money to cover the cost of her home and family expenses, which revealed an absence of wealth to tap into for such circumstances. As the excerpts below reveal, Sunset was ground down by the fatigue that resulted from working three jobs to pay her adjustable-rate mortgage, and this played a big part in her decision to pursue better living conditions abroad.

A consistent finding in research on teacher turnover in the U.S. is that teachers are overworked and underpaid (Caputo-Pearl, 2019; Reilly, 2018). As I noted in Chapter Two, during the 2020-2021 school year, the national average teacher salary was nearly $65,000, according to reports from the National Education Association (NEA) (2021). Moreover, across nearly 12,000 public school districts, the national average salary for beginning teachers was about $41,000 (NEA, 2021). These numbers do not indicate an increase or decrease in salaries. Instead, they illustrate the varying annual salaries that are determined by teacher compensation scales. These scales consider the number of years that teachers have remained in the profession and the number of degrees or credit hours that have been obtained. NEA (2021) reported that an annual salary of $41,000 for beginning teachers was a two and half percent increase from the previous year. Though this figure is the “largest annual increase in starting pay before the Great Recession” (NEA, 20201, para 5), teachers’ wages in many

states are barely enough to live on for a family. This was true in Sunset's case, especially once she bought a house.

When Sunset entered the teaching profession, she assumed she was joining the ranks of the middle class with a middle-class job. Understandably, her initial pursuit was homeownership. Yet the loan her bank offered her was an adjustable-rate mortgage that had a fluctuating payment each month. She explained:

> From 2004 to 2008 or 2009, I had an adjustable-rate mortgage. Currently, I have a $515 to $550 mortgage. It fluctuates here and there but, basically, it freezes how high the rate can go. It's not a fixed rate but it won't ever go higher than a certain percentage. At one point, I was paying $1,000 a month for my house. That's suburban mortgage rates. I was in an urban area. I was in a lower-income neighborhood. I should not have been paying $1,000, which was primarily all interest. I was paying $700 to $800 a month in interest, and the other $200 was going to them [the bank]. I am not exaggerating, I'm serious. I was a victim to the housing scandal. My mortgage rate should have been $500 but I was paying $1,000, then it was $900, then it was $700, then to $1,000. It changed every two or three months. That was basically half my income. And, with housing rates, I was only supposed to pay 33% of my income. I told myself, 'I will not lose this house. I don't care what I have to do, I will not lose this house and I will not lose my car. I will keep the lights and the water on, even if

> that means I don’t go out and socialize. I will not lose my house!’ And I didn’t.

One of the ways that Sunset refrained from losing her home was by picking up two additional jobs that provided a supplementary income to her teacher salary. In addition to teaching, working two other jobs meant that she spent several hours after school and working two state-initiated extracurricular programs on the weekends. One was a soccer program, and the other was a poetry program. As Sunset described it in the following excerpt, she worked every day of the week:

> On Monday and Wednesday, we had poetry. I was the poetry coach for the boys and the girls. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, we had soccer practice. On Fridays, we had a soccer game after school. Some Fridays the other schools came to us to play soccer and on Sundays, we got on the bus and went to another school to play soccer. But every Friday, there was a soccer match after school. Because it was a Latino community and they loved soccer, they would pop the popcorn, sell nachos, chips, and juice boxes. The kids from the neighborhood would come, the parents would come. We didn’t have no seats, we didn't have no bleachers, but the maintenance staff would bring those little gym benches out here. That’s all there was, just benches. It would be just an hour. School gets out at three o’clock, the game starts at 4:30. They [the kids] play for 45 minutes, everybody’s home by six o’clock.

Engaging in this weekly routine was necessary for Sunset to balance the cost of her fluctuating mortgage. She explained the math this way, “It was a $2,400 stipend, and you got $1,200 in December and $1,200 in May.” With the December stipend, she explained, “that was my Christmas money,” and with the May stipend, “that was my summer fund money,” but altogether, “that little $1,200 made a big difference in my life.”

The conditions that gave rise to Sunset’s situation have roots in structural racism and discriminatory housing markets. Research shows that when compared to White Americans, Black Americans are more likely to receive riskier loans with higher interest rates and pay up to $12,000 more for a 30-year mortgage (Shapiro, 2006). The reason for this disparity is White Americans' ability to rely on their families to assist with down payments resulting in their lower interest rates, which differs from Black Americans who are more likely to purchase homes without such assistance (Shapiro, 2006). During the subprime lending crisis, when Sunset accepted this adjustable-rate mortgage, the household wealth of Black Americans had significantly declined (Herring & Henderson, 2016; Shapiro, 2006).

As a Black American, middle-income woman, Sunset’s story reveals a blatant example of wealth disparity in the U.S. and its consequences. In her pursuit of a middle-class lifestyle with a job as a teacher, she fell victim to this national real estate crisis. She paid triple the price for her home, located in what she described as a “lower-income” neighborhood, and she was bound to an adjustable-rate mortgage that resulted in her taking on additional jobs.

When Sunset and I discussed her satisfaction with her career as a teacher, which I assumed would be limited as she left the U.S. for the UAE, she told me that her turnover decision was not about her career:

> **I was very satisfied with my teaching career, but what I was unsatisfied with was my adjustable-rate mortgage that made it necessary for me to have three jobs. If I hadn't had an adjustable-rate mortgage, I am 100% sure that I would not have worked multiple jobs for as long as I did.** On Monday through Friday, I worked 8 p.m. to 5 p.m., pretty much. Two days a week, I would go to my second job and teach till I think 5:30 to 7:30. Then on Saturdays, I would teach Saturday school from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the spring. I was with family and friends on the weekends, period. I couldn't afford to be out. I could go out to eat maybe once a month, but you know what I spent most of my money on, a premium cable package!

As Sunset and I continued to discuss the imbalance in her schedule and how much of her time was spent working to pay for her house, I mentioned to her that her life in the U.S. appeared to be difficult. She agreed:

> **It was! That's why I left. I didn't have any balance. I was single and I couldn't meet anybody because I was tired. Literally, there would be weeks when I would just go home, and I would make bacon and eggs, or I would pop popcorn and drink red wine.** That's when I saw *Scandal*. Olivia Pope would go home from work and pop popcorn and drink red wine. I was like, 'You may have two different incomes and two

> different careers, but we're the same; I eat popcorn and I drink red wine, that's my meal.'

This excerpt illustrates how tired Sunset was due to working three jobs to keep up the payments on her house and car, expenses she could not afford on her teachers' salary alone. Moreover, as a Black woman in the U.S., her family was less likely to have intergenerational wealth to invest in her home through a down payment, for example. Instead, she had to take out a large loan and provide resources for her family. These were the primary elements that collided for Sunset. She was tired from working three jobs and having little balance between her personal and professional life. Her identity as an aspiring middle-class woman and her lived experience resulted in being ground down by physical and emotional fatigue.

It wasn't until later in one of our interviews that I realized the significance of Sunset being a homeowner. Many times, in the interviews, I thought to myself, "Why not just sell the house"? I thought that selling her house, which was a significant burden on her, would relieve some of Sunset's imbalance. Why was she so connected to this house? As I read through the data multiple times, I finally recognized the importance of caring for her family and being a symbol of safety for them. There was a moment when Sunset described accepting a teaching position in the UAE. At this moment, she recalled her family accompanying her to the airport and explained:

> When I tell you my mama cried, my sister cried. She [sister] brought my nephew who was about to turn one in a few weeks, he was on her hip

> while she was crying. I was kissing him, and I was hugging her, and mom was hugging and kissing me. My sister went on home because it was morning. We all said bye before, but she came and said bye again. **At the time, she [sister] and her husband were doing really good, they were getting along really well. I felt like I could trust him with her, and I didn't need to be there as a safety net.** So, I felt like this was the perfect time to go. All my siblings were married, they had children, they were firmly settled, they were employed, Mom and Dad were in good shape. I was free to go. **I didn't need to be a backup for anybody because everybody had lived with me at some point or another.**

In this excerpt, Sunset helped me understand why homeownership was essential for her. Her use of phrases like "free to go" and "didn't need to be a backup for anybody," along with pointing out that everyone had lived with her at one time or another, indicate how central she was in her family's life and how they were in hers. She was the financial caretaker for her family and also the emotional one. This responsibility as caretaker ground Sunset down because it led to an imbalance between her aspirations for a middle-class life and her ability to afford its primary symbol: a house. The fatigue that resulted from working three jobs to pay her adjustable-rate mortgage impacted her decision to seek greater financial stability and better living conditions in the UAE. Teaching in the UAE presented an opportunity for Sunset to focus on herself, and with her family settled and supported, she felt the ability to do so.

Discussion

This first moment explains some of the conditions that led the life historians in this study to leave the U.S. for the UAE or, in other words, to become part of the teacher turnover phenomenon. Emotional collisions preceded their turnover decisions and resulted in feelings of being ground down by their personal and professional lives as teachers in the U.S. Like peppercorns in a grinder, Camille, Dick, and Sunset started whole, but through multiple fractious moments of othermothering, aspiring to be an otherfather, and caregiving for their families, they were ground down by the friction described in the emotional collisions in this moment. Their reflections on their lives in the U.S. reveal that they were ground down by the precarious lives of their students that often demanded they step in as othermothers and otherfathers, but they could not do so for all the children who needed their emotional and material support. In Sunset's case, she was ground down by the precarity of being a first-time homeowner with a variable-rate mortgage who felt responsible for providing a stable home for those within her immediate family. These emotional collisions, marked by race, class, and gender, prevented these life historians from living the lives they aspired to live.

In this first moment, affective turnover explains how their intersectional identities, mainly being Black, gendered teachers from lower- to middle-class families, collided with their experiences in the classroom, school, and broader society in a way that led to the feeling of being ground down. Yet the accounts of these three life historians reveal that, contrary to the feeling of burnout reported

elsewhere (e.g., Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001), these teachers were, as Gibbs-Bowling noted, *on the brink of burnout* (Smith & Gibbs-Bowling, 2020). I emphasize this notion of the brink of burnout because complete burnout would likely have led them to leave the teaching profession altogether (Ingersoll, 2001). Instead, their stories point to a moment when their aspirations for happier, better working, and living conditions began to take shape.

In the next section, I will discuss the second moment, *The Decision to Migrate*, which explains the second piece to this larger puzzle as to why these teachers did not burn out entirely and leave the teaching profession but rather turned to teaching in the UAE. It further illuminates how life historians' aspirations led them to migration and, as the stories below reveal, how the impact from key people—influencers—expanded their domestic aspirations to include international teaching opportunities.

The Decision to Migrate: The Second Moment

The second moment that helps me explain life historians' transnational migration decisions focuses on how their decisions to migrate took shape. This moment illustrates their migration as being impacted by people who I refer to in this section as *influencers*.[24] I will explain this concept further in the sections that follow. However, I mention them now to indicate that the life historians' decisions to migrate were not spontaneous occurrences. On the contrary, as this

[24] Merriam-Webster dictionary (2021) defines the term *influencer* in two descriptions: (1) a person who aspires or guides the actions of others; and (2) a person who can generate interest in something (such as a customer product) by posting about it on social media.

section will reveal, before they decided to migrate transnationally, several of them had already begun pursuing more satisfying living and working conditions in the U.S. These domestic pursuits are noteworthy because in nine of the 10 interviews, the life historians spoke about having faced a hardship that prevented them from achieving their domestic pursuits of happiness.

These hardships, or real and perceived barriers, are referred to as *pain points* in this section. A pain point is a phrase used in the business world to cultivate marketing strategies to increase product sales. By identifying and analyzing the problems faced by potential customers, their pain points, business owners can cater their marketing strategies to present their products as direct solutions toward those needs. This metaphor of a pain point is helpful in this section because it further illuminates the affective dimensions of historians' lives as teachers in the U.S., marked by race, class, and gender. The first component on their route of pursuing happiness began with an emotional collision. I explained in the previous section that these collisions resulted from the bumping of their identities and their lived experiences and manifested into emotions such as fatigue and resentment. It was these emotions that ground them down and influenced their decisions to seek happier positions and opportunities elsewhere.

In our interviews, life historians spoke about their domestic pursuits of happiness as opening businesses, pursuing teaching roles and leadership positions in schools in nearby counties and states, and how they tapped back into their former aspirations of teaching abroad. Yet most important in this section are the pain points that illuminate the barriers preventing life historians from achieving

their aspirations of happier living and working conditions domestically. Issues such as home ownership, professional credentials, and spending less time with loved ones were all part of an existing set of emotions; they were not new emotions. They were affective sentiments stemming from the emotional collisions that ground them down. These pain points distinctly connect with the navigational tools and advice that was provided by influencers, those who expanded the life historians' domestic aspirations into transnational aspirations.

Domestic influencers and *EDPat influencers* [25] are those who provided life historians with solutions to address their pain points. These influencers are people within the life historians' social networks, and, with their influence, they assisted them by providing navigational tools and advice. The information, which many of the life historians lacked, were solutions to address their pain points, or the barriers restricting their access to their perceived happiness. In the case of this study, it was these influencers who provided them with the necessary tools to pursue the UAE as a place that might provide them with the happiness they sought.

The application of affective turnover helps to explain how both types of influencers expanded the life historians' domestic pursuits of happiness into transnational ideals through provisions that helped to address their pain points, which further illuminates the fullness of how their transnational migration decisions took shape. Therefore, I have divided this section into two segments.

[25] Domestic influencers describe those who resided in the U.S. and were preparing for their own migration to the UAE and EDPat influencers describe those who resided in the UAE at the time of their encounter with a life historian.

The first provides data explaining the influence of domestic influencers, and the second provides data from EDPat influencers.

Domestic Influencers

A College Friend, Recruiter, and I Have to Get Out of Here: Melanie

Melanie was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri and at the time of our interviews she had been working in the UAE for three years. Before her migration, she worked as a teacher in Texas for Teach for America (TFA). Early in our first interview, she explained that her aspiration to become an educator had been deterred by a former high school teacher. She recalled his advice, which was, “You don't want to go to college and come out making $40,000 a year.” The advice was not only about the small salaries teachers made, and Melanie admitted knowing this. She felt that he “was encouraging me to get out and explore the world,” and further noted that, “I think he was trying to get me to think big and not be confined to a particular neighborhood in St. Louis, you know, with all this crime”. With the advice she received from her teacher, Melanie entered university and decided to major in Human Development and Family Studies instead.

When she and I began talking about her decision to migrate to the UAE, she confessed that her initial aspiration was to live abroad, not teach abroad. After studying abroad two times during college, first in Ghana and after in Italy, she explained how being abroad made her see the world differently. In the following excerpt, she describes how being abroad influenced the perception she held of God and of herself:

Melanie: **Being abroad helped me to get closer to God. I'm not gonna lie, that was the first time I felt free and now that I understand, my view of God has shifted**. I know more about the mind and the ego and perception. I see why He made me go or end up here. **Ghana allowed me to think deeper and to look into myself in a way that I was, but I hadn't seen.** I knew I was from St. Louis, and I grew up around all Black people, but I didn't know what that was. When I went to [University], I felt like, 'damn, the way I grew up wasn't normal. The world isn't all Black, right?'

Tiffany: Yeah.

Melanie: When I went to Ghana though, I was like, 'shit it is normal and it's okay to be Black and thriving.' Everybody around me was Black. I'll never forget that moment when I got off the plane and realized I was in Africa. I remember being in the city and standing next to this church in Cape Coast. I looked around and I was like, 'everybody is Black, wow this is real, like, this could be something,' you know. I'm a first-generation college student. My parents didn't have a lot, but we weren't poor, you know. So I guess with my identity, I started to look at myself intersectionally.

Tiffany: Yeah.

Melanie: At first it was like; I was a rich Black girl. You know what I'm saying? At my [high] school they would say I talked White because I had clean clothes and I had new phones. They were like I

> was bougie. But then when I went to [University], it was like, now I'm around girls who are Black, who have way more money than me and who have way more experiences than I do. So [at University] I'm kinda ghetto, you know. So, I questioned, what does it mean to be Black in a space that's White, and what does it mean to be as a certain kind of Black person in a space that's White, or Black in a space that's Black, which is really in a space that's White, you get what I'm saying?

The contradictions that Melanie alluded to in the excerpt above is what she described as her experience having an "identity crisis." During her time as a student at a predominantly White institution (PWI), she took on a leadership role with the Black Student Government. It was in this role that she described herself as a "poster child for Nah; this ain't right for the Black students." By this, she meant that she had taken on an activist role to call out policies and practices that were unfair and unjust for the Black students on her campus. After studying abroad to Ghana though, Melanie's perceptions started to shift and resulted in asking complex questions about her identity.

It was during this quest to understand the complexities of her identity that she developed a strong apparent sense of spirituality. This is noteworthy because it supports Irvine's (2003) findings that for some Black teachers, teaching perceived to be a calling. Particularly for Black female teachers, the religious conception of a calling means that they see their work as having a spiritual purpose (Ibid, 2003). This was the case for Melanie; however, her purpose was

centered on her personal development not the development of her students. As she noted, being abroad allowed her to develop a closeness with God that resulted in a sense of feeling "free" and seeing herself in a different light from what she had perceived in high school and in university.

The contradictions Melanie described regarding the political intersections of 'Blackness' and 'space' were also familiar to me, and there were several instances in our interviews, such as this one, that identified commonalities between her life and mine. They made listening to her feel as though she was speaking into a mirror, that she was telling my story. Regarding the sentiments of her identity crisis, I, too, studied abroad in Africa, but my trip was to South Africa. Yet even in South Africa, I felt this same identity crisis that she spoke of in our interviews. After my return home from South Africa, I too began questioning my identity as a Black American woman. Subsequently, I took on a minor in Black Studies, while attending a PWI at that time. The courses for my minor were held at the Center for Black Studies, which was the only place on campus where I felt as though I could learn something new about my identity as a Black person in America, and perhaps could find answers to the contradictions that surfaced from my experiences in South Africa. Nonetheless, like Melanie, my study abroad trip in Africa made me want to dig more deeply into my identity.

Melanie described her identity crisis as deriving from her schooling experiences in Missouri. Initially she attended a predominantly Black urban high school in St. Louis, where she was perceived by her peers as *acting* too White. After that, while attending a PWI in Columbia, located in Missouri as well, she

felt as though she was perceived by her Black peers as *acting* too Black. She explained this conundrum best in our interview when she said, “When I was in college and started talking, they found out I was from St. Louis, St. Louis Public Schools, so it was like, ‘now I’m a ghetto Black girl. But at home [in St. Louis], I’m not. I’m a bougie Black girl.” These experiences made Melanie confused about her identity and in our interviews, she explained how “Ghana brought all of those questions to the surface.” It was there when she realized, “Fuck, I'm just a Black girl, period.” Her second study abroad trip to Italy was far less complicated. In Italy, she confessed, “I felt more at home in Italy than in Ghana” (see additional transcript in Appendix C).

After leaving Italy and returning home to the U.S., Melanie admitted telling herself, “I was tired. I was tired of the fight, and I wanted to get the fuck out of here [America].” This quote points to the emotional collision resulting from fatigue that explains how her aspiration to live abroad took shape. Melanie felt ground down by her activism role requiring her to call out and fight out against the injustices inflicted upon the Black students on her campus. This sense of fatigue is significant because it resulted from her study abroad trip to Ghana and Italy and posed questions about her identity and how it intersected with her lived experience. Her role in the Black Student Government was a position to fight for her Black peers, yet it was her Black peers that she began feeling contradicted by.

It was during her senior year in college when her aspiration to live abroad took shape. Yet in our interview, she confessed, “I already had a job, but I knew I wanted to get out of America.” It was during this time, as she began the hiring

process with TFA, when she noted having few navigational tools about how to pursue her aspiration to live abroad. With little understanding about how to shift in this direction, she continued with her path toward TFA. During one of her interviews with TFA she received pertinent advice from one of the recruiters:

> When I was doing my TFA interviews they were like, 'Well, if you do TFA first and become a certified teacher, you can make way more money abroad if you really want to teach abroad. People do that all the time.' **That was a gem. I'm glad I did it. So, I knew I was going in [TFA] and that I was doing two years and then going abroad. Like, nothing's gonna stop me. I told myself, 'I have to get outta here.'**

With her adamant goal to "get out of here," as Melanie put it, she created a plan to teach with TFA for two years and then pursue her aspiration of teaching abroad. Teaching with TFA developed into a route that would allow her to live abroad as she aspired to do. The barrier, or the pain point, that Melanie faced, though, was not having teaching credentials. Many of the schools that she inquired into required that she have certified teaching credentials, which she did not have. She mentioned having searched for other opportunities abroad and having found a program to teach English in South Korea called EPIK [English Program in Korea]. However, with teaching credentials, for which she was told by the TFA recruiter that she could gain through TFA, she could make more money abroad as a teacher. Therefore, Melanie accepted the position and prepared for her move to Texas.

When Melanie began preparing for her move from Missouri to Texas, she contacted one of her college friends, a young Black woman who had been working in Texas with TFA. She hoped to gain some insight and advice to prepare her for her new job with TFA and was excited about being invited to her friend's home to talk through the process. Melanie explained asking her friend about what she planned to do next because her friend was preparing to leave Texas. It was then that her friend shared having accepted a teaching position in Abu Dhabi and was preparing for her move. Melanie admitted having never heard of Abu Dhabi at the point this conversation with her friend transpired:

> I looked it up. I already wanted to teach abroad after this [TFA] anyway. So, you know me, instead of going to South Korea like I planned, I looked it up and I was looking at the salary and the lifestyle. I'm like, 'Shit, that's where I'm going.' She showed me around Houston, and after that, she left. I kept in contact with her over Instagram, just social media. After I googled teaching in the UAE and found Teach Away, [26] I hit her up and she was like, 'most people went through Teach Away,' so I just applied.

Altogether, these excerpts illustrate the affective influence that shaped Melanie's decision to migrate. Her study abroad experiences in Ghana and Italy

[26] Teach Away is a recruitment agency that was officially incorporated in 2007. According to their website (https://www.teachaway.com/about-teach-away), 2008 marked the year they started working as a founding "recruitment partner for the biggest educational reform in the world in recent history - The Abu Dhabi Education Council." They quoted, "Boom. Recession. Teachers in the US are being laid off left and right. We're staring down a full-blown crisis - too many job-seeking teachers with zero opportunities at home. Thousands of teachers are looking to us for help finding jobs abroad. Luckily, our website has a handy job board that brings together thousands of opportunities worldwide." Several life historians mentioned using this agency to find their teaching jobs in the UAE.

developed her aspiration to live overseas mainly because of the feelings of feeling fatigue that arose for her as a Black American woman at a PWI. Melanie was tired of fighting for justice, and her activism in university was a pain point that began to take an emotional toll on her after experiencing what she described as an identity crisis during her trip to Ghana. With few navigational tools about pursuing a life abroad, encounters with the TFA recruiter and Melanie's college friend, both domestic influencers within her social network, provided her with resources to enact her transnational migration decision. Her initial aspirations were to live abroad, and she knew that after gaining her teaching credentials from TFA, she would eventually teach abroad, which brought about the pursuit of teaching opportunities abroad generally. Yet after the conversation with her college friend, an example of someone who had already navigated teaching abroad, the advice that she provided Melanie influenced her to apply, which she eventually used to teach in the UAE.

Teachers, Family, and Now's the Time: Madison

Madison spent 15 years in the U.S. teaching profession before her transnational migration decision began to take shape. Her career began as a teacher, and she later took on the roles of a subject specialist, vice-principal, and eventually a principal, the position for which she worked before she migrated to the UAE. At the time of our interviews, she had worked as an assistant principal in the UAE for six years.

Unlike the other life historians in this study, Madison was the only one who did not explicitly speak in our interviews about feeling ground down in the

U.S. However, there were specific points in our conversations when she discussed having difficult experiences. For instance, as a young principal working with veteran teachers, she felt pushback from some of the teachers, which she alluded as being a response to her age and little experience as an administrator. Yet according to her perspective, these sentiments did result in emotions that ground her down. This perspective made sense because early in our first interview, when Madison discussed her experience as a principal in Texas, she mentioned that she was doing very well and aspired to continue climbing the educational ladder:

> I was doing well [in the U.S.]. I was just going to keep on that path; being a principal and then seeing what I could do next. I was seeing so many colleagues that were being promoted. They had a group of principals that would go to their schools, check on them, check their data, just make sure they were on track. That was eventually what I wanted to do, to have my group of schools and help young principals continue to grow. **That was my goal, to be a school improvement officer.**

Madison was content in her position and the direction in which her career was heading, and she had clear goals. She discussed in our interview that the idea of teaching abroad was not something that she aspired to do and considered it only after being approached by two teachers who asked her to write letters of recommendation for them:

> I had two teachers who were like, 'we need you to sign our recommendations because we're going overseas.' I was sad to see them go but I was still going to be a principal for another year after they left. I did

> their recommendations and after, I was like, 'So tell me about this.' **I hadn't heard of people coming to the UAE or the reform efforts with ADEC [Abu Dhabi Educational Council]. I didn't know any of this stuff, but I was so intrigued because it made me think back to when I was 25.** They were like, 'They're doing this major educational reform there, so they're recruiting Westerners from all over.' One of them had a family, the other was a really young teacher. I filled out their paperwork and then I started to look at it for myself. They were like, 'They need school leaders too.' **So that's when I was like, 'let me see what this is about over here.'** I looked at where it [UAE] was in the world; I looked at everything.

This excerpt illustrates how the idea of teaching abroad developed as an option for Madison to consider. She was content in her career as a school principal and had clear aspirations to become a school improvement officer. Yet, when her teachers approached her, they became domestic influencers for her as she was intrigued by the idea of going abroad. However, as discussed in our interview, she honestly had no reason to consider pursuing educational opportunities abroad:

> **I didn't have a reason. I had my own house. I was doing well as a principal, so I was making money.** Because I'm single, the money I was making was mine because I wasn't trying to support a family or anything like that. I was doing fine, there was no reason for me to leave. I wasn't having issues professionally; you know some people will kind of try to

> escape something that's negative that's happening professionally. I didn't have any reason. I could have stayed and just kept on doing what I was doing. **But that thought process about if I'm going to do this, I need to do it now, while I still have energy and I'm still young because I always wanted to do this. So, if I'm going to do this, now's the time.** Otherwise, I just need to keep with my school. Principals are privileged for 30 years.

In this excerpt, Madison illustrates the affective influence of her decision to teach abroad. She was intrigued by the idea of teaching overseas, but as she noted, she had no reason to since she was financially stable, a homeowner, and in possession of clear future career goals. Yet, as she began contemplating the idea of teaching abroad, she considered her age and felt as though, if it were to happen, then "now is the time" while "she was still young" and had the energy to do it. Paying particular attention to Madison's affective dimensions, her age was a pain point because writing the recommendation for her teachers made her remember her early aspirations of teaching abroad, which had been buried and forgotten.

In our interviews Madison made it clear that teaching in the UAE was not her first time living abroad. When she was younger, she discussed frequently traveling abroad with her family. She said, "Even though my family traveled a lot, when we traveled, it was to Europe because it was just more familiar… Europe felt as if you're back home… just an older version of it." So, when she pondered the idea of teaching abroad, she decided to include her family in her decision. She said she asked each of them, "What would you think about me leaving":

> My sisters were like, ‘you need to go.’ My brother had been living in Copenhagen for 11 years. He was like, ‘the reason I come back to the States is to visit everyone but, there is no reason for me to ever come back to live there.’ So, he was encouraging me to move abroad. He’s like, ‘you will be amazed at the difference in how the world is compared to America.’ He has this idea, and he’s not wrong, that it’s this machine that is kind of ingrained in us that America is where it’s at. It starts and ends with America, even from a news standpoint. The fact that I had to do some research on the UAE just showed me how ignorant I was about the world outside of my door. So, he was like, ‘I’m telling you, once you get out, you'll see what I'm talking about, the world will open up for you.’ **I tell him all the time, you spoke that. That is how I feel. I have grown and changed so much since I left the States.** Because you’re in this box, you’re doing the same thing every day, get up, go to work, and all that; you’re living the American life. America has it to where you think the world is so far away. So, my brother was really in my ear, really encouraging me. My mother was like, ‘Eh,’ but my dad was like, ‘you need to go, you need to explore through the world, you gotta go. You gotta live.’

In this excerpt, Madison illustrates her family as being domestic influencers on her decision to teach abroad. They traveled together when she was younger, and as she contemplated leaving, she felt the need to include them in her decision. Her family’s encouragement, in addition to the two teachers requesting

letters of recommendation, was affective influence that shaped Madison's decision to teach abroad. From her perspective, she had no reason to pursue teaching opportunities in the UAE, but the pain point of missing out on a chance to experience one of her early career aspirations required her to move now or miss the opportunity altogether. As a result, Madison decided to migrate to the UAE.

A Good Friend and What am I Going to Do with My House: Sunset

As mentioned in the first moment, Sunset's primary concern while teaching in the U.S. was her house. She was ground down from working three jobs, resulting in fatigue from her attempts to make provisions for her family and pay her adjustable-rate mortgage. As a result, she had little time for leisure outside of the demands of working multiple jobs. In our interview, she discussed a junior high school friend, who took a teaching position in the UAE. As her friend prepared to move abroad with her two sons in 2011, her family organized a party for her, and Sunset accepted the invitation to attend this celebration. The following excerpt breaks down the influence of Sunset's two friends, one who invited her to the party and another for whom was celebrated at the party:

> A good sister-friend of mine called me and said, 'Hey, you remember so and so?' I'm like, 'Yeah, how's she doing? How're her boys?' She was like, 'Oh, they're good.' She said, 'I was calling you because I want to invite you to her going away party.' I was like, 'Where's she going?' She said, 'She's moving to Abu Dhabi.' I was like, 'Abu Dhabi, Sex and the City Abu Dhabi?' She said, 'Yes, Sex and the City Abu Dhabi.' I was like, 'well, that's hot. That's awesome.' She asked me if I wanted to go [to the

> party]. I was like, 'yeah, I'll go.' We went, it was great to see her and her mom and her boys; they were so big. It had probably been three years or so, maybe longer, maybe five since I last saw her. It was just a good fellowship. **As we were talking, she said, 'Sunset, you've been teaching 10 years. You should apply for this job. You would get it for sure.' I laughed at her and said, 'Girl, what am I going to do with my house? I'm not going to no Abu Dhabi.'**

This excerpt begins to reveal how Sunset's decision to migrate took shape. As she explained, while at a friend's party, she was encouraged to apply for a position in the UAE. Her friend, a domestic influencer, affirmed for Sunset that she would get hired after having taught for ten years. But, as illustrated in the excerpt above, Sunset laughed at the idea. Her concern, as she noted, was, "What am I going to do with my house?" Sunset's house was a pain point, and without a viable answer to the question or navigational tools to keep her house and pursue teaching opportunities abroad, Sunset continued with her career in the U.S. teaching profession.

When Sunset's friend arrived in the UAE, she began posting pictures about her experience on social media. These photos significantly influenced Sunset's migration decision because she viewed many of the images posted on Facebook:

> **Listen, her pictures were crazy.** The housing that was provided to her was a two-story villa. It was huge and had a whole lot of rooms and her boys were loving life here [in the UAE]. She wasn't in the city though.

> She was in Al Ain, and she was also an assistant principal. The boys were learning Arabic. Then they started acclimating and playing sports. It looked like it was the same as being in America only on holidays, she was taking her boys to places like Thailand and India and places all over the world. I thought to myself, 'I know she's an assistant principal, so she made a lot more money than I did, but that's three plane tickets, that's hotel rooms, that's every attraction they went to. That's a lot of money.'

In this excerpt, Sunset vividly explains the affective dimensions of her migration decision. The photos posted by her friend on Facebook evoked affective influence on Sunset to at least consider the possibility of a life outside of the one she spent as a teacher in the U.S. These photos began to shape her migration decision.

Sunset also discussed having a conversation about her resistance to inquiring into the opportunity to teach abroad in our interviews. She was unsure about applying for a teaching position in the UAE, and in our interview, she mentioned asking herself:

> **What's the worst that can happen? All they can tell me is no. I thought to myself, it doesn't even matter. I'm worried about the wrong thing, the first thing I need to do is apply. If I get the job, then I can worry about the house because I knew at the end of the day, I could rent the house out.**

After convincing herself that it was possible to keep her home and teach abroad, Sunset began researching opportunities to teach overseas:

> I started my search by looking at a website. I saw all these different countries. I'm literally like, 'Wow, this is crazy. Spain, Brazil, Portugal, Thailand, and Kazakhstan.' I don't even know what Kazakhstan is. I clicked on Abu Dhabi and just said, 'I want to apply.' The website took me to the form, and I filled out that long form, attached all those documents, the certification, the degree, all of that. The next day I went to church, and I sat down next to my mother; I'm late all the time. When I sat down next to her, I leaned over and whispered in her ear, 'I applied for a job in Abu Dhabi last night.' She looked at me, and I will never forget this as long as I live. She's fanning herself with the paper program and she said, 'We'll see what the Lord says,' and zoned back into the message.

There is a fine line between categorizing both friends as domestic influencers because one friend, the friend who posted photos of her life from the UAE, could be classified as an EDPat influencer because her pictures were of her life in the UAE, and these images pulled Sunset into inquiring about positions abroad. However, most notable in my analysis was that Sunset's initial encounter with this friend was at the departure party in the U.S. At that time, this friend was preparing for her migration abroad.

Altogether, these excerpts illustrate how two domestic influencers affected Sunset's migration decision. Without knowing what to do with her house, this pain point would have had little influence on her, but after seeing photos posted by her friend on social media, Sunset eventually applied for a teaching position in the UAE.

EDPat Influencers

A Friend, Son, and Breaking Even: David Jr.

David Jr. worked for 12 years in the U.S. before his transnational migration decision took shape. Like Madison, he also climbed the educational ladder as a teacher and subject specialist and eventually became a vice principal. He was one of two life historians in this study who had a spouse and children, which is significant because when his transnational migration decision began to take shape, his family was an essential component of his decision.

David Jr. was a husband and a father. In our interviews, he described his turnover in the U.S. as seeking an opportunity to better provide for his family. When he was a vice-principal, he explained how he opened his own business to gain additional income to make financial provisions for his family:

> **That was a tough period too. Being an assistant principal and owning a cigar lounge, I had no time at home. That's another reason why it was beneficial for us to leave because the only reason I ended up getting a cigar lounge was because I wanted to make enough money to be able to travel like we did when we got over here [the UAE]. But that owning the business stuff is overrated.** You're responsible for everything. Everybody only sees the highlights of you owning something, but they don't see the headaches that come with it because you still gotta make money. The amount of time that I put in there, and the money, all I did was pretty much break even. When I sold it [the lounge] I pretty much just sold it to get my money back. I had the cigar lounge for two years and

> then I became a silent partner because I established so many relationships, people were coming because of me. They wanted to keep me around, but I was burnt out. I was enjoying the time that I got to spend with my family, the time that I could, and then when the salary came up to move abroad, it was like, 'Oh my god. It was almost like I waited too long; I should have been gone.'

This excerpt illustrates the pain point in David Jr.'s life as a husband, father, and administrator. His biggest concern was to be a good provider for his family of four. Opening his own business proved to be a "tough period" because it required that he spend less time with his family. As he described, he envisioned that an additional income would allow him to do the same things in the U.S. that he was able to do with his family in the UAE, like leisurely travel. Yet with little time and only "breaking even" with business profits, he felt "burnt out."

This feeling of burnout led David Jr. to begin searching for positions elsewhere. He mentioned first searching for principalship positions in Atlanta, but as he noted in our interview, "It was apparent that I was not prepared for those interviews." This was another pain point, and it was at that point that he and his family had been living in Atlanta for nearly nine years. He eventually came to a decision that "We're going to move because we were burnt out of Atlanta."

He discussed in our interviews that his initial searches were for administrative positions in nearby states. Yet with his family being such an essential part of where they might move to next, he decided to include his children in the process of determining where they would go to next:

> I asked my son, ‘where would you like to move?’ He said, ‘China’, and this is after we had picked several cities. Dallas [Texas] had actually won, but we decided that was too far [laughter]. So, we didn’t go. I asked my son, why China? He’s like, because we don't know what they do over there. That’s when I started looking abroad.

David Jr.s’ son was a domestic influencer, but he was not the first person to mention the idea of teaching abroad to him. In my second interview with David Jr., he noted that "there were several times that [teaching abroad] came up throughout my journey," yet when his son mentioned having a curiosity about what people did in China, he decided to inquire more seriously into opportunities abroad. I wanted to know more about the other times when the idea of teaching abroad came up for him and he elaborated:

> Somebody who actually went [to the UAE] in 2010 was like, ‘David, you need to bring your family out here.’ I was like, ‘I just can't do that because I can’t see how we could survive.’ So, I never looked into it for real. Then when [my son] brought it back up, that’s when I decided to do it. I looked at the money that they were offering, I was like, this is enough, and my wife won’t even have to work. [The salary] was way more than what I was making. It was not more than we were making collectively in the States, but we didn’t have to worry about housing and insurance. We also get to travel the world. **It was like, ‘this is a no-brainer, if we don't like it, we can always come back.’ So, it was like, if we stay here [in America]**

we’re gonna say, ‘woulda, coulda, shoulda’s’. We can always come back.

Each of the excerpts above illustrates David Jr.’s decision to migrate. He clearly described burning out in the sense that being an administrator and business owner proved to be more difficult in the U.S. than he had planned. In his attempts to be the financial provider for his family, it meant that he had to hold multiple positions, and this prevented him from spending time with his family, which was vital for him as a father and husband. Providing sufficiently for his family was an obvious pain point for David Jr., and this may have made him more receptive to the affective influence from his son and friend. It was their influence, his son’s curiosity about what people did in China and his EDPat friend who told him to “bring his family out here" that made him become more serious about inquiring into teaching positions abroad. Yet, with few navigational tools and resources to understand how his family could “survive,” he never looked into the possibility.

When David began researching teaching abroad opportunities in the UAE, he found that these positions offered lucrative salaries that would not only allow him to provide for his family but that his wife would no longer need to work. From his perspective, the decision was a "no brainer" because they could stay in the states and have "woulda, coulda, shoulda’s," or they could go abroad and "come back" if they didn’t like it. So, David Jr. decided to migrate himself and his family abroad.

A College Friend and I was on a Hamster Wheel: Lee

Lee had worked in the UAE for five years when our interviews took place. In our first interview, she and I talked in detail about her experience as a teacher in the U.S., and she shared with me that she taught in the U.S. for six years before migrating to the UAE. Lee was born and raised in North Carolina. Her mother was a PK-12 school administrator when she entered the teaching profession. In our interview, she recollected when she and her mother were in the car driving home after school together, and her mother suggested that she consider becoming a teacher:

> Before the winter break, or I just know I was a senior [in high school], I wasn't 18 [years old] yet. I was working for an after-school care at the school that my mom was the principal of. I was riding with her because the bumper on my car was getting replaced. I got into a car accident, and I was talking about the group of kids in my kindergarten group. My mom said, 'do you realize that you refer to your afterschool group as your kids? You take ownership of them.' I said, 'really?' She said, 'yeah, have you ever thought about being a teacher?' I said, 'why, teachers don't make any money?' She said, 'some teachers make money… you won't be destitute'.

Lee eventually entered the teaching profession and explained her awareness about teaching abroad opportunities during her first year of teaching. She explained that she had "abandoned" the idea because with many of the positions, "you had to have at least two years of [teaching] experience, and I had just one year, so I wasn't qualified during that time." I was very interested in

understanding how Lee became aware of these opportunities so early on in her career because a common narrative from the interviews I've had with EDPats on my podcast is that teaching abroad is not discussed in teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, teaching abroad is rarely addressed in any spaces filled by aspiring teachers. Having no awareness about teaching abroad opportunities was true for my own experience, so I wanted to understand how Lee knew about these opportunities so early. She said one of her friends who was teaching abroad posted several photos about their experience on social media:

> I had a college friend that was already here [in the UAE]. He came in 2010 and after his first-year teaching in Charlotte. We were best friends in college, and he came to Abu Dhabi. I remember looking at the pictures and him talking about it. He was teaching first grade, 'he's like, kids are wild, but living here is dope as fuck'. So, he'd been telling me about it, and we talked about studying abroad in undergrad. He did study abroad, I didn't.

Realizing that she needed a few more years of teaching experience before she would qualify for a position, Lee "abandoned" the idea as she put it and continued with her teaching career in Maryland. In 2014, Lee explained in our interview that she suddenly "had this feeling that I wanted to do something different," as she described it:

> I finished my master's [degree] in January and I started applying for other positions within the county. With a master's in curriculum and instruction, I was getting no's because I didn't have an admin certification. For a lot of

> curriculum leaders, they wanted you to have an admin certification and I didn't have that. **I was pissed.** I was so interested [in teaching abroad]. I wanted to do something different. **I felt like I was on a hamster wheel, and I was just doing the same thing every day. I was tired of doing the same thing and feeling like things weren't going anywhere.** I just felt like every day was about going to work. Some days I worked late, went to church, came home, and went to sleep. Monday through Friday it was the same thing. Saturday, I could finally chill out, do my grocery shopping. Sunday I'd go to church and come home. I was just on this cycle.

This excerpt illustrates multiple pain points that shaped Lee's transnational migration decision. She was bored and felt as though her life as a teacher in the U.S. was like being on a "hamster wheel," which was her way of explaining that she was "tired of doing the same thing every day." She wanted to do something different, which led to her decision to begin applying for leadership positions in schools in nearby counties. For her, the idea of doing something different meant using her master's degree to get out of the classroom because, as she put it, "things weren't going anywhere." However, one particular pain point that created a barrier for Lee was that even with her master's degree, she was not qualified for many of the curriculum positions to which she aspired. She did not have an administration certification, which meant that she would need to pursue additional schooling to gain the credentials needed or remain in the classroom. These options evoked an emotion that Lee described as feeling "pissed," and made her think more seriously about teaching abroad.

Lee's college friend, an EDPat influencer, posted photos on social media of his experience as a teacher in Abu Dhabi. These photos affectively influenced her migration decision because they reminded her that she had abandoned her aspiration to teach abroad earlier in her career. When she initially investigated it, she was not qualified to take on such a position. However, in her domestic attempt to get out of the classroom and pursue a vertical promotion elsewhere, this proved to be a difficult transition for Lee because she did not have an administrative certification. After seeing the photos posted by her college friend, teaching abroad became a solution to address her pain point of feeling stuck in the classroom.

When Lee began searching for opportunities to teach abroad, she explained that her initial searches were "online searches" that included teaching opportunities with the Department of Defense. She also reached out to her college friend who migrated to the UAE years before she did. She explained in our interview that he provided her with information about how he found his position abroad:

> I was at the hair salon one day and I don't know how I ended up on the Teach Away website [recruitment agency]. **Actually, [college friend] told me when I asked him who he applied with.** I was sitting under the dryer at the salon waiting on my braids to dry and I did my initial application under the hairdryer! It was a long process but the very first step wasn't. I got something back saying fill in the rest of this form to go onto the next step. March, I applied. By May, I had my interview in New York. A

> couple of days after that, I got the offer letter signed and sent back. By July, I'm packing up my apartment.

As Lee continued to talk about her application process, I was interested in hearing more about her college friend. His influence on her decision to migrate was apparent to me, but she spoke little about what he had done or said. Seeking more information about her college friend's role in her migration decision, I asked her to talk more about his role. She explained:

> I remember thinking to myself, well, at least [college friend] is there. I'll know someone and my parents were cool with it because they knew he was here [UAE]. I remember my dad saying, 'Oh, well [college friend] is there, at least you'll know someone.' So, it was confirmation from them [my parents] to apply. **I also remember my cousin; I was in Charlotte talking to her about possibly moving to Maryland. Before I moved to Maryland, she was telling me, 'If you don't like it, go home, that's all there is to it.'**

This excerpt illustrates that Lee's college friend was an EDPat influencer who impacted her decision to migrate to the UAE. He taught in the UAE, and the photos he posted on social media and conversations with her affectively influenced her to apply for a teaching position.

Altogether, Lee's migration decision took shape because she wanted something different from her "hamster wheel" life. Yet, with no leadership credentials, this pain point made it difficult for her to get outside the classroom and into a different position. Like David Jr.'s decision, Lee understood that

migration to the UAE had little risk because, as she was told by her cousin about her move to Maryland, “If you don't like it, go home, that's all there is to it.” Therefore, she decided to apply with the influence she received from her college friend, an EDPat influencer who had migrated to the UAE a few years before her.

A Significant Partner and a Semi-toxic Mindset: Dick

As mentioned in the first moment, Dick’s primary concern about teaching in the U.S. was the emotional collision of resentment that resulted from witnessing the tragedies faced by his students over and over again. He also experienced a great deal of turnover while working in New Orleans. In the eight years Dick spent working as a teacher in the U.S., he migrated between five different schools. In our interviews, he often talked about his domestic migration:

> The last two schools were technically in the same charter district, and they were both on my side of the river per se, so it wasn’t like I was going 20 miles out, but yeah, I saw some campuses. In one instance, I took some time off. My boss told me that they had to downsize. I was still on a temporary authority to teach [license] and that school was getting ready to be absorbed by another charter school, so they started downsizing staff. My lady friend [Nichole] was [terminated] the year before, midway into her first year too. A lot of it is probably voluntary mobility though.

Dick explained that his migration between multiple New Orleans schools was voluntary and involuntary, which is significant to mention because it helps to illustrate how his decision to migrate took shape. It is also important to note here that the "lady friend" that Dick mentioned is his girlfriend, Nichole, who was also

interviewed in this study and will be discussed further in the third moment. Nicole migrated to the UAE two years before Dick did.

When Dick and I discussed how his decision to migrate took shape, he confessed, "**I was following love, but I was also ready to get out of the school system.**" He disagreed with many of the policy decisions being made concerning his students and charter schools as a whole. Feeling as though there was very little impact he could make on the system; he made the decision to begin pursuing other opportunities. It is important to mention here that educational researchers have found that having little impact on school-decision making is a factor causing higher turnover rates for Black teachers, and this was the case for Dick (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Though he witnessed the tragedies faced by his students, he also realized his limited ability to change their circumstances in his role as a teacher.

Having few opportunities to express the disdain he felt toward charter school policies, Dick shared in our interview how social media had become an outlet for him. Yet after a confrontation with a friend who was a principal at a charter school in New Orleans, Dick realized how negative he had become toward the educational system. He explained how his friend made a post about the positive sentiments of charter schools on Facebook, and Dick responded with an unfavorable opinion. His friend responded to his comment by writing, "Yeah, Dick, we know how you feel about charters." Dick confessed that "he kind of shook me" because:

> **I realized that I had become semi-toxic in my own mind and how I felt about the system that I was in.** I wasn't venting it to the children or

> nothing like that, nothing degrading, **but just in the sense of I was upset. I didn't like what I was seeing, even if it was going to turn out nice at the end.**

In this excerpt, Dick expressed the pain point of having become "semi-toxic," as he described it, about the charter school system in New Orleans. Emotionally, he was "upset," and this emotion led to his aspiration for happier working conditions elsewhere. When Dick's decision to migrate took shape, unlike his migration between fives schools, which he had previously done, he decided to migrate to another country instead. His girlfriend had already relocated to the UAE:

> When she left, I think the relationship was at a place where it was not on the rocks but just kind of one of those theorems where you say, 'let it go and see if it comes back.' We maintained contact and it was still important to feel like I was carrying myself in a certain way even though we had our freedoms. Enough time passed where it was like, 'you still really care so you can't be in denial about it.'

Dick's aspiration for happier working conditions is evident in these excerpts. However, when he realized that he still cared for his girlfriend, he decided to pursue a teaching position where she was, in the UAE. Though Dick's decision to migrate had been shaped by his realization of the negativity that he felt toward charter schools in New Orleans, like Lee, he faced one issue that prevented him from qualifying for a teaching position in the UAE: Dick did not have state-certified teaching credentials. During the eight years he spent teaching

in New Orleans, he was on a temporary teaching license and had not fully completed the certification process. When he discussed this issue in our interview, he explained, “I hadn't finished the masters [degree] and daydreaming about suddenly transitioning completely out of the field wasn’t there.” At that point, when Dick made the decision to pursue teaching abroad, he said, “I finished up the program for my certification” but “prior to, one of [my girlfriend’s] friends who played rugby with her out here [in the UAE] managed to help me get in at a private school.”

Thus, it was Dick’s girlfriend, and her social network of friends in the UAE, who became EDPat influencers for him. His girlfriend influenced his decision to migrate to the UAE and her friend assisted him with navigational tools to find a teaching job at a private school. With this opportunity, Dick completed his teaching credentials, which he had not done during the eight years he spent teaching in the U.S. and accepted the teaching position in the UAE.

Discussion

In this second moment, I have shown that life historians’ decisions to migrate to the UAE took shape after encountering an influencer, either domestic and EDPat or, in some cases, both. Before they decided to migrate, some had domestic aspirations for leadership positions in nearby counties and states, while others wanted to continue in their careers and climb the educational ladder. Whether preparing for migration or having migrated, influencers provided life historians with affirmation, navigational tools, words of encouragement, and

personal archives such as photos posted on their social media accounts from the UAE.

Affective turnover describes the way these influencers pressed on the pain points felt by the life historians, such as fighting for an understanding about one's identity, seeking an opportunity to financially support their family while also being able to spend time with them, seeking an escape from what felt like a routine life, or even resentment for the charter school system. The influencers within their familial and social networks impacted their lives and changed their domestic pursuits of happiness into transnational ones. Affective turnover further explains how the life historians' decisions to migrate to the UAE were not solely based on rational calculations but also on emotion, on pain points due to their limited perceptions of happiness as teachers in the U.S.

In the next section, I will discuss the third and last moment, *The Decision to Remain in the UAE*, which explains the last piece of this larger puzzle as to why these life historians migrated to the UAE. Emotions continue to weave through the entirety of these accounts, and, as the stories below reveal, reasons for why they choose to remain in the UAE further illuminate affect as a relevant component in the life historians' transnational migration decisions.

The Decision to Remain in the UAE: The Third Moment

The last moment that helps to explain life historians' transnational migration decisions is their decision to remain in the UAE. Before I discuss the findings, it is important to briefly discuss a few implications about recruitment agencies and applicants of color because of their pressing concerns within the

international school network. Concerns with recruitment agencies have been central in discussions about international school recruitment. For example, Kevin Simpson, the founder of the Association for International Educators and School Leaders of Color (AIELOC)[27], initiated a campaign to "call in and call out" recruitment agencies for condoning unjust policies and practices that blatantly discriminate against applicants of color. This is because some teachers, specifically teachers of color from various international backgrounds, believe that White teachers and administrators from Western countries, including the U.S, United Kingdom, and European countries, are the preferred candidates for teaching and leadership positions in international schools. Though there has been little academic research on these recruitment policies, and furthermore that this concern is outside of the scope of this study further research investigations are warranted about how race, gender, and nationality effect the preferences of recruitment agencies which, in turn, may reflect through choices of international school leaders and parents who enroll their children in such schools.

Nine of the 10 life historians in this study *were* recruited for positions in international schools and did not believe they were discriminated against by the recruiting agency. Yet the sentiments of international teachers of color suggest

[27] According to the website, the Association for International Educators and School Leaders of Color (AIELOC) began as a Facebook affinity group on March 14, 2017. It's founder, Kevin Simpson, notes that his inspiration for this organization developed after a colleague was discouraged from pursuing a leadership position at an international school because of her race and nationality. AIELOC developed into an association in January 2020 and attracts "leaders around the world committed to speaking up, learning, advocating for change, taking action in addressing racism and discrimination in the international school ecosystem, amplifying the work of BIPOC, and researching topics of our own interest" (para 2, http://aieloc.org).

that the emotional weight of racial bias was still present in their lives. Therefore, the concept of *transnational emotions* is central to the narratives in this section. It is a concept that identifies the shifts in life historians' perceptions about their emotions in relation to the continuation or, in some cases a cessation, of feeling defined by race, gender, and/or class in the UAE. These were not new emotions that came forth in the UAE. Instead, they were transnational emotions rooted in the emotional collisions that manifested in their lives as teachers in the U.S. and traveled with them to a new locale, morphing into something different in some cases and staying stubbornly the same in others. As this section reveals, transnational emotions explain how life historians engaged in comparative sense-making in choosing to remain in the UAE. It identifies the way that their emotions, including feeling ground down in the U.S., helped explain their overall sense of happiness in the UAE.

The term *restoration,* particularly my emphasis on the prefix *re* with the root word *store,* was significant to use in this section because it supports my argument that the life historians' decisions to remain in the UAE were acts of (re)storation. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines restoration as being restored to a former condition. My argument is not that life historians were restored to the whole teachers they were when they entered the U.S. teaching profession; instead, I contend that most prevalent in their narratives about why they chose to remain in the UAE were emotions rooted in the U.S. that grew with their relationships and engagements in the UAE (Crenshaw, 2018).

This section draws on data from the accounts of six life historians. I mentioned Lee, Camille, and Sunset in the last two sections. In addition to their narratives, I draw upon three accounts that have not been mentioned in this findings chapter, namely, those of Eltee, Reign, and Nichole. In Chapter Three, I explained that one of the goals of this study is to highlight common experiences and emotions related to the life historians' transnational migration decisions Together, these six stories illustrate the concept of transnational emotions and how they influenced these Black American teachers' decisions to stay in the UAE, at least for now.

Physical and Mental Safety: Camille

As mentioned in the first moment, Camille was ground down by fatigue as a teacher in the U.S., resulting from the constant provisions she enacted for her students raised by their single fathers. After leaving her teaching position at her first school, she took on a job as a teacher coach in the Maryland school district in her initial pursuit of happiness. Unfortunately, this job did not provide her with the happiness she sought. In our interviews, Camille explained that even with a new job, her life in the U.S. was "still routine":

> It was still the routine of getting up, going to work, coming home, and at that point in time, I was in a serious relationship with my now ex-husband and so it was almost like clockwork. You knew what we were going to do on the weekends. You work, you grind all weekend and then, you know, we gonna do this happy hour on this day, on this day for this month, we know this the weekend we going to this wine festival. This is the month

> we rent the house in the woods, and this is the month we go to the beach. Like it's year after year after year, you knew what was going on. And I was like this. There has to be something more to this. Living check to check was another thing. I was making $75,000. I don't know where it went. I didn't have fancy nothing. We weren't going out to eat all the time. I'm bringing in $75,000 and I was driving a Mitsubishi Lancer and eating spaghetti and taking my lunch to work every day.

When I interviewed Camille in the UAE, I was surprised that her career in this new country, in a way, replicated her experience in the U.S. In the UAE, she also began her career in a teaching position at one school, and, three years after that, she was moved to another school to a different grade level. Unhappy with the new grade level at her second school, Camille decided to leave that position and, at the time of our interviews, six years into her stay in the UAE, she was a teacher coach.

Even though she had moved between various schools and positions, Camille still chose to remain in the UAE. There were multiple parts of my interviews with her when she discussed this decision. In our first interview, she said, "**I'm safe here. Safety is priority. Especially in the last four years with the attack on African Americans in the U.S., I feel safe here, and I like feeling safe.**" Further describing what it was like for her to feel safe, Camille discussed the several changes that had occurred for her in her daily behaviors:

> **My key is under the doormat. Who does that? Where I used to live in Abu Dhabi, I always left my door unlocked when I walked and visited**

> **a friend on another floor. Safety is a huge thing. I can leave my purse in one grocery aisle, I'm over at the other end of the store having a conversation and when I return to the aisle, everything is still there. It's fine. I don't have to think like that here.**

This excerpt illustrates transnational emotions in that Camille used her home country as a comparison to express what it meant for her to feel safe in the UAE. She emphasized how race was a factor in this equation in stating "especially with the attack on African Americans in the U.S." In the UAE, Camille felt safe to leave her key under the doormat and leave her purse in a grocery store aisle while shopping; in contrast, in the U.S., she did not feel safe because, from her perspective, African Americans were under attack.

This sense of feeling under attack in the U.S. also came up in my interviews with Sunset. She explained how in the UAE, her daily behaviors drastically changed:

> There's no one getting shot at the grocery store, no one's getting shot in road rage killings. If I decide to, I can get up and walk out of my apartment at two o'clock in the morning and walk around the corner and have no fear. I like the safety here, I like the comfort here, I like the diversity here, and I have none of that at home. At home I have low safety, limited comfort, and limited diversity.

In addition to the accounts from Camille and Sunset, feeling safer as a Black American in the UAE came up in several other interviews with life historians, but it is important to note that it was also linked to their nationality.

They recognized that they were still perceived first by their race, but their identities as Americans, as 'Westerners' added a layer of safety for them. For instance, in my interviews with David Jr., he revealed that being Black in the UAE could "get you in a situation **until you open your mouth**." What he meant by this is that having an American accent provided him with what he described as "Western privilege" because "when they find out that you are American," they treat you differently, which led him to the conclusion that "This is how White people feel in America." Moreover, David Jr. mentioned having conversations with other "people of color that came from the Western world," who were also in the UAE, and they agreed with him that "they just treat us a lot better." As he put it, "We go up on the totem pole."

It is essential to mention that the life historians referred to themselves interchangeably as American and Western in many of our interviews. Having taught in the UAE for three years, I was familiar with and often referred to myself as a westerner. Therefore, I was not surprised with the way that Eltee described this identity. In our interview, he explained that "In the States, you have racism issues based on skin color;" however, in the UAE, it is more of a "classist" society because "What passport you have determines how well you are treated." From his experience, Eltee believed, "There are countries that are treated very well, for instance, western countries":

> If you're from the United States, if you're from UK, or Ireland, you're going to be right on with the Emiratis as far as treatment in the country, but if I present a passport from Zimbabwe or Bangladesh, I'm not going to

> be treated as well. I'm not going to have a very good paying job and the living conditions they give me are not going to be good at all. It's unfortunate. That's the hit, that's what goes on behind the luxury or the glamour and glitz of a place like this. It's not just an indictment here, you will see elements of the same thing in every country on the globe. Even in the States, you see this same type of treatment. So, I think we just need to look at ourselves a lot of times and see what we can do to better humanity because until we fix how we view one another, then things won't really get better.

This excerpt from my interviews with Eltee helps to understand how having an American passport in the UAE resulted in better treatment than those who did not have one. This understanding illuminates further Camille's expression of feeling safe in the UAE regarding race even though it cannot be explained from a single axis of race. As the other life historians alluded to, nationality was also a major factor in their safety sentiments. "Being right on with Emiratis," the local population that Eltee alluded to in the excerpt above, was one thing. However, for many life historians, they engaged with Emiratis and engaged with people from other nationalities, too. Eltee agreed with David Jr. regarding the way they might be viewed when "You haven't opened your mouth to talk" and then afterwards. Eltee explained, "When they hear your accent, and they recognize that you're from America, then you're automatically treated differently, but, as long as your mouth is closed and they think you're from Africa, then you can receive some of that backlash." Eltee did not explicitly describe the backlash

that might result from being perceived as African, yet he did explain that "Being from America doesn't mean that you're going to always be treated with equality or treated fairly." He said, "You're still an expat in the country, and this is not your country."

During my analysis of Camille's story, this notion of safety initially led me to believe that feeling safe for her was rooted in feeling physically safe as a Black American. Yet, I became curious about it when she said, "I don't have to think like that here." This led me to other parts of my interviews with Camille that helped me realize that physical safety was one of two components of what safety meant to Camille. The other component was mental safety. For instance, in our second interview, Camille attempted to expand more deeply on her thoughts about what safety meant for her, but this was difficult for her: "I feel like when I put it into words, it makes me sound bougie." She further explained:

> **Here, I don't feel the pressure that I felt there [in the U.S.].** I really can't explain what that is, I just know that when my friends have come here to visit, they say, 'I get it, **I feel it,** I see what you're talking about.' **Not having that pressure is really relaxing**. You're always on guard in the States. You're on guard for something. If you're not on guard for your safety, you're on guard for your finances. You're on guard for family issues. You are always on guard. Here [in the UAE], you don't really have those issues. People are not calling you for little things. Typically, if they call you, it's something serious. **You don't have to deal with that here.**

In this excerpt, Camille illustrates another example of transnational emotions in her description of feeling safe as both physical and mental. In explaining how it felt for her to feel mentally safe [28] in the UAE, she compared her relaxed feelings to the sense of pressure and being on guard in the U.S. This comparative sense-making was a way for her to explain how the absence of safety included feeling on guard for her "Safety, finances, or even family matters." In contrast, in the UAE, "Not having the pressure is relaxing," as she put it. "You don't have to deal with that here."

It is also vital to point out Camille's selection of the word "bougie" when describing her difficulty expressing what it meant for her to feel safe. This word is significant because it was the same word used by Melanie in the second moment when she discussed her experience as an African American student at a predominantly Black high school in St. Louis. Having a cell phone and other possessions that portrayed a sense of economic status made Melanie feel as though she was perceived by her peers as being part of the bourgeoisie, or "bougie," as well. Like "acting White," a degrading racialized term used to describe Black people who supposedly mimic behavior that is uncommon in the Black community, "Acting bougie" can be viewed as a form of "Acting White".

[28] As I began analyzing what it meant for Camille to feel mentally safe, I thought of Regge Life, a Black American filmmaker who examined the life experiences of African Americans in Japan. In his 1992 film, *Struggle and Success: The African American Experience in Japan*, one of several interviews was with a network correspondent named Bill Whitaker. Describing the feeling of living in Japan, Whitaker expressed, "Japan offers you a form of *psychic freedom*, you don't have to think of race on a daily basis. It's not thrown up in your face as it is in the United States" (Life, 1992). As Camille described, this concept of psychic freedom helps to express the feeling of mental safety. Although there are vast differences between the societal cultures, experiences, and other factors between Japan and UAE, the most significant is that Black Americans, specifically Bill Whitaker and Camille, expressed this sense of feeling mentally safe.

This understanding of the term helps explain Camille's discomfort with seeming bougie and why she used it to describe her sense of guilt for feeling more relaxed and safer in the UAE.

I Feel a Sense of Freedom Here that I Don't Feel at Home: Lee

After teaching for three years in Abu Dhabi, Lee left her position and returned home to the U.S. When I learned about this in our initial interview, I was surprised about her decision to return to the UAE for a second time. With affinity to the EDPat community, I have heard many different stories about EDPats, and I knew that it was common for teachers to teach at a school in one country and subsequently migrate to a school in a another. This was the case for me. After teaching in Morocco for two years, I left my position and subsequently migrated to a position in the UAE. Yet what I found to be rare about Lee's story was that after leaving the UAE and going back home, she eventually returned to the region.

It was Lee's second year teaching in Ras Khaimah at the time our interviews took place. She had previously taught at school in Abu Dhabi, and altogether spent five years working in the region. It was during the third year of teaching in Abu Dhabi when her mother passed away, which Lee disclosed in our interviews as the reason for her to return home. Though she packed up her life in the UAE for this return, she confessed that even after she got home, she had little intention of remaining there.

After listening to my interviews with Lee several times, I realized that she spoke very little about how it felt to lose her mother. However, there was a point

during my time in the field when she and I attended a social gathering together. We were all sitting around having a conversation when she mentioned having to clear out her mother's house and personal possessions. This was a difficult experience for her, so she hired a company to do it for her. Though she spoke very little of it in our interviews, it was obvious that her mother's death took an emotional toll on her because after everything was settled, she spoke about spending a year traveling the world. She referred to this as a "gap" year because she felt as though she wasn't ready to return to work.

When Lee did decide to go back to work, she returned to the UAE for a second time and accepted the position for which she worked at the time of our interviews. I was curious about Lee's decision though because I thought about how she could have pursued a teaching position in another country, as other EDPats have done, or even another profession, instead of returning to the UAE. I also thought about how her return to the U.S. was based on unfortunate life circumstances, and perhaps at the time that she returned home, she wasn't ready to do so. Yet whatever her reason, most evident about her decision was that there was something significant about the UAE, seeing she was drawn to migrate there two times.

The point in our interviews when Lee and I discussed her decision to migrate was when we completed her LLT in the first interview. We were discussing the various turning points in her life when we began talking about her decision to remain in the UAE. I made it a point to reference the fullness of her experience before answering the question, therefore I reiterated for her:

> You taught here for three years, and then you left, and then you took your gap year, then you came back. Here you are again, having a completely different experience. What is it making you want to stay here? Like what are you gaining here?

Lee answered:

> **I feel a sense of freedom here that I don't feel at home. I feel 'at home' here and I didn't feel 'at home,' at home. I felt stressed at home. I felt burdened at home, and I knew that here, I can keep a certain lifestyle that is hard for me to maintain at home.** I can keep up my manicure and pedicures, I can get my hair done as frequently as I like, and these are surface level things, but they mean a lot to me. I can get my hair done when I want to. **I'm not struggling. I can save [money].** I have never been able to save as a teacher at home. I'm going to be able to put myself in a different place financially and that was the motivator to come back here. Now, initially my first time around, I was traveling and experiencing, and I changed as a person due to seeing the world… but, **my motivation for coming back [to the UAE] was purely financial because I knew, I said, 'Ok, I know what I can do. I can go back, and I can stack up some money. I can change my life and generational name, if done properly.'**

In this excerpt, Lee expressed several transnational emotions that illustrated the sentiments of why she chose to return to the UAE and remain there. She felt more "at home" in the UAE than she did in the U.S. This comparison of

her life in two different geographical locations evoked a transnational emotion of freedom helping her to express her decision to migrate a second time. She said, “I feel a sense of freedom here that I don't feel at home.”

Lee’s understanding of freedom was associated with financial freedom though. Moreover, it was rooted in her financial struggles in the U.S. Returning to the UAE, according to Lee, was “purely financial.” Working there provided her with enough money to live a particular lifestyle that she felt was “hard to maintain at home [U.S.].” Though she described them as “surface level things,” feeling as though she could get her hair and nails done as frequently as she liked was important for her, and for some of the other life historians.

Camille expressed in our interviews how getting manicures and pedicures were a normal part of her lifestyle in the UAE:

> Everything that we do here is normal. It’s normal every month for us to go get manicures, pedicures, all types of waxes, peels, massages; that’s normal here. If you don’t do it, in fact, your friends are like ‘Girl, what are you talking about you don’t get a monthly massage or monthly facial?’ It’s normal well-being here.

Sunset expressed a similar understanding about her lifestyle in the UAE:

> I’m happy [here]. I can get regular massages. I can get manicures and pedicures. I can get Moroccan baths. I can travel. I can meet people and get to know people and have meaningful conversations with people from different countries any day of the week.

These quotes from Camille and Sunset further illustrate Lee's understanding about the sense of freedom she felt in the UAE. Having enough money to not only provide for her basic needs, but also frequently visit salons, were expressions of well-being, as Camille referred to them. Furthermore, these expressions did not pose a risk of going into debt to enjoy them, as Lee noted, as a teacher in the UAE, "I can save [money]."

Having the ability to save money was also part of the reason Lee chose to remain in the UAE. She said, "I'm going to be able to put myself in a different place financially" for which was the primary "motivator to come back here." From her perspective, having access to more money and saving money could potentially "change her life," and also her "generational name, if done properly." In terms of generational change, Lee meant that with enough money, she could change the lives of her future children as well. This quote is noteworthy because it pinpoints Lee's aspiration for upward socioeconomic mobility, which she felt was difficult to achieve as a teacher in the U.S. "I have never been able to save as a teacher at home," she said.

In short, Lee's decision to return to the UAE a second time and remain there was based in the transnational emotion of freedom. The affective dimensions of this emotion evoked a sense of (re)storation because as a teacher in the UAE, as Lee said, "I'm not struggling." She felt financially free and stressed less about her finances, which was different from her life as a teacher in the U.S.

Being Able to do Things You Haven't Been Able to do in the States: Eltee

In my interviews with Eltee, he frequently mentioned being ground down by emotional collisions resulting from working as a teacher in the U.S. Like the other life historians, the emotional provisions he provided for his students eventually led to his transnational migration decision. He taught in the U.S. for ten years before he decided to migrate to the UAE, and at the time of our interviews, he had been teaching as a middle school math teacher in Abu Dhabi for six years.

In our interviews, Eltee and I spoke about his decision to remain in the UAE. Like Camille, he also felt sentiments of relief, but, in his case, the relief was associated primarily with his sense of economic ease. For example, in our first interview, he mentioned that he had very little excitement about teaching in the UAE. On the contrary, he was most excited about his salary as a teacher. He said, "The amount of money we were making was insane in comparison to what we were making in the States. This was significant for Eltee because this was not the case for him in the U.S. In the UAE, he said, "I got to take home my entire check":

> No money was deducted [in the UAE]. When you're a teacher [in the US], you don't get to make a lot of money but when you're working overseas, our government has made an interesting foreign policy that when you work off U.S. soil and remain off for 330-335 days, then your salary is tax-free. So, you are exempt from paying taxes. Of course, you still need to file every year for them to keep tabs on you, **but the fact is I can make**

> **the same amount of money here [in the UAE] that I was making in the States but because it is tax-free, it appears to be more. It almost doubles**. The money that Uncle Sam, Medicaid, FICA, and Social Security would take from me, here, all of that money is in my check. I don't have to pay rent on my housing here either. So, in America, with my small teacher salary, they might take 35% and leave me with 65% but with that 65%, I still had to pay rent. I still had to pay a car note and all that. Over here, I have 100% of my check and I don't have to pay for housing. **So that is making money.**

In this excerpt, Eltee vividly describes how teaching in the UAE provided him with a salary like what he had in the U.S., but it resulted in more take-home pay because he did not pay taxes there. Not paying taxes was very significant for him in that it helped advance him to a higher economic level.[29] With a tax-free salary, free accommodation, and his ability to retain "100% of his check," he felt that "that was making money," and this quote demonstrates how he perceived his life in the UAE.

Most interesting about this quote is that, like several other life historians, Eltee acknowledged that their salaries in the UAE was not more than what they

[29] From this excerpt, some readers might interpret Eltee's decision to remain in the UAE as an escape of social responsibility related to paying U.S. taxes. Yet it is essential to understand that as a racialized, gendered, and classed subject in the U.S., as Eltee alluded to, upward economic and social mobility was a struggle for him. This struggle connects with Sunset's transnational migration story about generational disparities and provides an additional example of how Black Americans' lives are situated and limited by a lack of economic wealth preventing their access to upward mobility. As Eltee mentioned, with a 35% reduction to his monthly salary, the 65% that he was left with, he used to make provisions for his basic needs; to pay rent and his car note. Therefore, by teaching in another country, he was also able to bypass the system for which he felt cheated by.

made in the U.S., but it made a big difference for them not to have taxes and other contributions taken out of their paychecks. For instance, in my interview with Sunset, she and I discussed her salary in the UAE, and she expressed:

> The misconception is that they pay us a lot of money. No, I'm making less than I was at home [in the U.S.]. At home, I never saw my full salary. Here, I get the whole thing. So basically, I have the lifestyle of someone who makes double my salary at home because I get to bring home all my money.

Madison expressed a similar understanding about her salary:

> Back in the States, as the principal, I was making quite a bit but incomparable to what I'm making now. Actually, it was more [at home], but the thing about it is, I'm not paying taxes and so I was able to pay off quite a bit. I have no debt in the United States except for my mortgage so I was able to pay everything off. Car, credit cards, I don't have anything. I don't have any school debt. Nothing. **So, this opportunity has blessed me to be able to, when I go home, just breathe. To be free unless I just start putting stuff back upon myself. So, the salary piece has definitely influenced me a lot and has allowed me to be able to go and travel the world because I have this income.**

These quotes from Sunset and Madison help further explain Eltee's perception of how his salary in the UAE influenced his decision to remain there. Having a tax-free salary and housing accommodations meant access to more

economic capital, which he felt to be inaccessible in his life as a teacher in the U.S.

With Eltee's access to this economic capital, I was interested in understanding its impact on his life in the UAE. Therefore, in our interviews, I asked him if he could explain in more depth how this change impacted his life, and he explained, "When I have so much money, I tend to spend a little more than I normally would, so that was exciting." The following excerpt elaborates on the feeling of excitement that Eltee described in spending this extra money he had in the UAE:

Eltee: **I got a good return on my investment. I had a good time, and I met a lot of people. That was the return on my investment.** A good friend of mine would throw these live parties and since I'm a cool guy, I bought VIP tables. Oh, but these VIP tables are not cheap, you know. I'm talking about 1500/2000 dirham ($400/$550) a pop. **But you know, I got to bring about five of my good friends, we got bottle service, we got food, and we had a good time.** I invested in social events, social life. I gotta say socialism because I shared the wealth.

Tiffany: You made people feel good about themselves.

Eltee: Correct. When my birthday came, I did a lavish thing. I rented a Rolls Royce just for fun. I had that Phantom, girl. That is one car I would love to have in my life because you do not hear it while you're driving. I see why it costs so much. It rode so well that after

I pulled out of the parking lot, 10 minutes later I had a speeding ticket [laughter]. I didn't know I was moving that fast. I got the ticket and I looked at the time stamp and I had just pulled out of the lot! **I spent money on a lot of stuff. Yeah, it was great.** Especially when you pull up at hotels and they just run out and be like, 'we got everything, sir. We'll put you in VIP.' I mean everybody else had to get the little valet tickets. I didn't have to get one. They just stuck me in VIP. **It's like wow, 'this is what the locals [Emirates] feel like all the time' and it's been fun.** The travel is fantastic. Since I've been here, I've traveled to 17 countries. Looking at some of my friends, I'm a little disappointed in myself [laughter]. I figure I scored pretty low on this traveling test, but I've done well. I have plans to do more. Abu Dhabi is so centrally located in the world that you can get to so many different places in a fairly reasonable amount of time which is awesome. I flew from here to Egypt, that's like a four-hour flight. From here to Tanzania, that's like a five-hour flight. I mean you are just so centrally located to a lot of places and that makes traveling really affordable. Think about America, it might take six hours to fly from New York to Los Angeles. In six hours, I could be in Italy [laughter]. **The benefit, other than having a good time, is being able to do things that you haven't been able to do in the States.**

> **Meeting people that you may have not met there.** Other than that, your pockets just get smaller. That's it.

There are many examples of transnational emotions in Eltee's description of his life in the UAE, but perhaps the most profound has to do with how possessing economic capital changed his lifestyle. With a sense of relief from financial limitations, which he felt to be a regular part of his life in the U.S., Eltee spent his money in the UAE on things that allowed him to feel happier about himself and the lives of others he encountered. As he noted in our interview, his activities in the UAE were things he felt financially unable to do in the U.S. This comparison helps explain why he chose to remain in the UAE. Whether traveling, meeting new people, or experiencing being treated in a way he hadn't experienced before, Eltee felt restored and fulfilled by the money he was making in the UAE.

Loneliness is More Manageable When There's Something Fun to Do: Sunset

Of the ten life historians in this study, Sunset's account of her transnational migration is the only one mentioned in each of these three moments. This is significant because in addition to her ability to be forthcoming about the details of her life, her story inevitably linked with the stories of the other life historians. Before I discuss why she chose to remain in the UAE, I will briefly synthesize her whole story. As mentioned in the first two moments, Sunset faced an emotional collision of feeling ground down by the multiple jobs she took on to afford her adjustable-rate mortgage and care for her family. These factors are the primary ones that propelled Sunset's aspiration for better working and living conditions.

While attending a party for a friend who was preparing to migrate to the UAE, Sunset's friend influenced her to apply for a position there, too. At first, though, she hesitated because she did not know what to do with her house. Yet after her friend arrived in the UAE and began to post pictures on social media, Sunset decided to apply for a teaching position and eventually moved to the UAE herself.

In our second interview, Sunset explained that her relationship with a long-term boyfriend ended right before she migrated to the UAE. Working multiple jobs every day of the week strained their relationship, and Sunset described feeling lonely at this point in her life. Brown (2021) describes loneliness as the absence of meaningful social interactions, including intimate relationships, and Sunset explained in our interviews that feeling lonely was another factor that influenced her transnational migration decision. Her loneliness came from the breakup with her boyfriend and because, during the time she worked in Texas, she said, "All my friends were married, my siblings were married, and everybody had kids." Therefore, not being in a relationship was particularly difficult for Sunset:

> I was single, and I was about to start making some bad decisions because in 2008. I broke up with a long-term boyfriend, which thank God I did because that would be a disaster if we were still together… so I get out and start dating aggressively. Then I immediately realized what I was doing; casually dating. I did it to avoid the hurt. But then you realize, you're not healing and if you have any sense, you stop all that foolishness and you sit down and you try to work through it and unpack it. "Okay, let's

> talk about this. Let's deal with this. What did we do? What can we do differently next time?" Once you just stop avoiding that rush of pain and stop hiding in dudes, then what? You figure your life out. In 2009 until about 2010, I was just very quiet. A dude that I didn't want, didn't like, and wasn't interested in, he was hanging around. **He caught me in a lonely moment, got in my face, and I was letting him hang out too much. I was like, 'This is not going to end well, you need to do something before you make a bad decision.' So, I got a job in another country.**

To prevent herself from making a bad relationship decision, Sunset moved to the UAE. She confessed, "I got a job in another country …. I had to flee because lonely hearts can make bad decisions." I asked Sunset how she would describe her decision to "get a job in another country." I asked her, "What would you call that, running? Escaping? How would you define that?" She explained:

> I was preventing myself from making a bad decision. He had two kids; he had a 'live-in' that he never married. I asked him. He said, 'well, I've proposed to her more than once.' I said, 'You have two kids, you live together and have been living together for years, and you've proposed to her more than once and she says no?' He was like, 'Yeah, she doesn't want to get married'. I said, 'do you cheat? Because you're sitting over here right now, drinking my beer.'

When Sunset arrived in the UAE, she spent very little time grieving the loss of her relationship or the decision to get a job in another country to cope with

heartbreak. She viewed this situation as follows: "When you land in a foreign country, a new man isn't really what's on your mind." She went on to say:

> You've got other things to occupy your mind because the most amazing thing happened, I got over here, and I had disposable income. **Then I found out you don't go on vacation here; you go to other countries.** Where are we going? Egypt, Zanzibar, Cyprus, Prague, Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana twice, Amsterdam three times, London, Brussels. **You get to move around and your whole life is a completely different thing. You still want a guy, you're still interested in meeting a guy, but if you don't, it's okay because I'm planning to go to Kenya.** If you don't, it's okay because I'm going to Delhi. If you don't, it's okay because I'm going to Egypt. I've got all these other new experiences that can be happening and who knows what can happen. I landed in Ghana and met a man. **It's just that loneliness is more manageable when there's something fun to do.**

In this excerpt, Sunset explains how living in the UAE made it easier to manage the loneliness and heartbreak rooted in her experiences in the U.S. I was very intrigued by Sunset's perception because loneliness, even in the absence of heartbreak, had been a component of my decision to migrate abroad. Rather than losing a relationship, I lacked a community and family support system in the U.S., and one of the factors that pulled me abroad was the travel possibilities. As Sunset noted, "loneliness is more manageable when there's something fun to do." During the five years I lived abroad, I addressed my loneliness through travel and visited

more than 30 countries. In many ways, I felt particularly close to Sunset over the course of our interviews.

These excerpts illustrate Sunset's transnational emotions and explain how living in the UAE provided her with a way to manage loneliness. Unfortunately, educational researchers tend to pay little attention to teachers' personal lives, and yet, as revealed in Sunset's life story, her personal life was a central component of her decision to leave the teaching force in the U.S. and go to the UAE. Furthermore, teaching in the UAE provided her with the ability to travel, which made her "whole life a completely different thing." With access to "disposable income," Sunset's life changed in the UAE, specifically because she was able to travel and focus on herself rather than unfulfilling relationship and its demise.

Travel is a significant factor that allures educational professionals to the UAE, and not only Black American teachers. In Chapman et al.'s (2014) study that examined the motivational factors that pulled 38 higher education professionals to the UAE, they found the majority of the participants to be "adventure seekers". These seekers viewed higher educational institutions in the UAE as opportunities that provided them with "reasonably good salaries, benefits, a different culture, and few professional demands outside of teaching" (Chapman et al., 2014, p. 139). However, these seekers also viewed themselves as "short-timers, fully expecting to move on to yet another international work setting after the novelty of the UAE had worn off" (ibid.). Although Chapman et al.'s (2014) study focused on higher educational professionals in general, the findings help

explain how Sunset's decision to remain in the UAE was one of adventure through travel *and* of (re)storation by visiting new places.

As an African American woman who taught in the U.S. for ten years, Sunset was emotionally ground down before her migration to the UAE. In her pursuit of happier working and living conditions, the UAE became a viable option; however, she had no way of knowing how her life might change while there. Having lived there for eight years, which was the case at the time of our interviews, she was not the "short-timer," that Chapman et al. (2014) alluded to in their study. Furthermore, she spent the "disposable income" for which she gained through her position on traveling. The UAE provided Sunset with opportunities for adventure. However, adventure excludes the affective dimensions of Sunset's life. The UAE provided her with restoration and a chance to restore after years of being ground down.

The UAE provided several life historians with a chance to restore after years of being ground down. In addition to Sunset, Melanie also talked about the significance of travel after a breakup with her fiancé. They lived in the UAE together when they decided to split ways, and Melanie described feeling hurt and a strong sense of loneliness after he decided to leave the UAE and return to the U.S. without her. After a few months of not speaking with him, she decided to travel. In our interview, she said, "I went to six countries in like six weeks; I just let it out. I cried, I ate, I met people, and I told random people my story."

These stories of Sunset and Melanie reveal that travel was a form of (re)storation for them. They dealt with stressful situations in the UAE by

traveling, which was vastly different from how they could have coped with stress and loneliness as teachers in the U.S. who did not have enough disposable income to do so. They felt that the sadness of heartbreak and loneliness were more manageable when traveling to new countries because of the energy that went into new experiences. As noted by Sunset, "You don't go on vacation here; you go to other countries." Similarly, Camille explained that she had made international travel part of her life in the UAE. As she put it, "It's not something that I have to save up six months to do," and she, like Sunset and Melanie, felt (re)stored by their ability to use their financial resources in ways that would have been nearly impossible in the U.S.

It Was Just What I Had Always Done Until I Got Here: Reign

At the time of my interviews with Reign, she had been teaching in the UAE for two years and planned to return to the U.S. after the 2019/2020 school year. In our first interview, she explained that migrating to the UAE for her was a “holistic wellness experience” after caring for her parents and son for several years. Like most of the life historians in this study, while in the U.S., Reign was in search of greater happiness. There was a prominent moment in our interview when she described asking herself, “what would make me happy?”:

> I've always wanted to teach by the beach. That’s always been a dream of mine and not many people have that experience. When I looked at the UAE, I said, ‘Man, the sunshine, the different landscapes, you have the mountains, you have the desert, you have the mangroves.’ You have all

> four landscapes, you know. I said, 'That's where I need to be.' I need to be able to kick my shoes off and walk in the sand and be grounded.

In this excerpt, Reign explains when she began contemplating leaving the U.S. and why the UAE was an appealing option for her. Yet the interviews revealed that it was far more than beaches that she sought. In her pursuit of happiness, she described intentionally seeking a place that would allow her to feel more "grounded," as she noted, and with its appealing landscapes and habitats, she imagined the UAE to be a place that would restore her after a great deal of caregiving in the U.S. In our interview, Reign explicitly used the term "purpose" when describing her reasons for choosing to remain in the UAE. She said, "You're here for something greater than just your job or just your career." She understood "something greater" to be a spiritual quest for her and explained, "I had to find out what my purpose was."

As Reign and I spoke more deeply about her life in the UAE, she told me how teaching there felt vastly different from teaching in the U.S. She said, "I enjoy being able to just go to work and not have to worry about my appearance" in the UAE. I was very intrigued by this comment because I got to know Reign very well during my data collection period, as I did the other life historians, and in each of our encounters, she was well dressed, and her hair was perfectly styled. She was very poised, so I wondered why her appearance had been worrisome for her in the U.S.

In our second interview, I asked her to speak more deeply about this issue. Reign explained that appearance was an issue that she struggled with while

teaching in the U.S. as she felt she had to maintain a certain formal look. In the UAE, she realized that this attention to appearance was unnecessary. She explained in our interview, “I didn't have to be dressed up to the nines, I didn't have to wear heels, I didn’t have to wear makeup to work. I really didn’t.”

Reign views on her appearance were vastly different from mine for although I dressed professionally as a teacher, I never wore heels to work. Thus, I asked her, “Is that what you did in the States?” In a tone that conveyed a sense of confusion as if I had questioned the American standard for teachers, Reign responded emphatically, “Most definitely!! You can’t come to your job dressed down [In the U.S.]. I wore my heels every day. Once I got to class, I had my flats underneath my desk to walk around.”

Before Reign could finish explaining her daily behaviors in her classroom in the U.S., I inadvertently interrupted her because I was surprised to learn that she disliked wearing heels. Instead, for her, it was part of the act of performing what it meant to be a teacher. In our interview, I explained to her that she appeared to be the ideal teacher, from my perspective. I said, “You know, like the one that kids actually bring apples to!” At this moment, Reign jumped in:

> Dressing up makes me happy but if I don't want to dress up to come to school, I shouldn’t have to. **It was just what I had always done until I got here** [the UAE]. I was like, ‘Oh, I can wear traditional clothing. I can wear this. I can wear that.’ **The focus is not on the appearance, the focus is on comfortability and what I'm bringing to the kids, not what I'm showing up as and the representation of myself.**

In this excerpt, Reign illustrates a transnational emotion that helps explain how teaching in the UAE allowed her to reassess what it meant to look like a teacher and the pressure she felt of having to appear as a role model. In the UAE, she could focus on "comfortability" and not "representation," which she felt was an issue for her while teaching in the U.S.

Later on, in my second interview with Reign, I asked her if her appearance and her view about herself had any association with being a role model. She said, "Yes. For sure. You have to show up not only for the kids but for the staff and for the parents." From Reign's perspective, the school climate in the U.S. led to certain expectations for teachers to be role models, particularly the high expectations of parents. She explained, "If you don't look a certain way, they don't want their kid in your class." In addition, she felt that there were consequences for not appearing to be a role model. Specifically, according to Reign, there might be allegations from parents like, "Oh, she's not professional" and "she's not dressed professionally." These comments, Reign believed, could result in parents ostracizing teachers who they deemed to be unprofessional and not fit to work with their children.

During my analysis of Reign's story about why she chose to remain in the UAE, I was drawn to scholarship about Black American teachers as role models (Gershenson et al., 2017; Kelly, 2010; King, 2016; Siddle Walker, 2001). Educational scholars agree that there is an urgent need to diversify U.S. schools because "teachers of color are positive role models for all students in breaking down negative stereotypes and preparing students to live and work in a multiracial

society" (King, 2016, p. 1). Yet, without paying sufficient attention to the affective dimensions of Black American teachers' experiences and their perceptions of themselves as role models, as Reign's story reveals, the affective dimensions of their lives are overlooked. For Reign, being a role model was "draining":

> **I felt like I had to be a role model every day I walked into that campus.** You have to represent yourself well. So, when I got here [UAE], I didn't have those same expectations about appearance. Yes, you can be a role model, but not just by appearance alone. It's more so about your actions. **[In the US] It's a lot of work. It's draining. It's draining and you feel like that's what you have to do to subscribe to be able to get respect. You cannot be high caliber without showing the whole appearance. You can't. Your appearance is more than half of it.** Of course, your ability takes a primary role, but your appearance is the first thing that people see and judge you by. That's the culture we live in [in the US]. It's relaxing [in the UAE]. It's very refreshing to be able to do the opposite [in the UAE]. So that's what I was able to do once I got here, it's the complete opposite. I don't even focus on my attire. Is what I'm wearing today clean? Now that I'm in kindergarten, I wear comfortable clothing so I can sit down on the floor with my kids. Before, I didn't sit down on the floor!

This excerpt further illustrates Reign's transnational emotions and helps to explain why she chose to remain in the UAE. As she explained in our interviews,

being a role model in the U.S. was draining because it meant subscribing and conforming to parents' expectations. In addition to being a role model for students, Reign also had to be a role model for the parents. Yet, in the UAE, this was not the case for her. She described feeling relaxed because she didn't have to worry about her appearance as much and focused more on comfort and making deeper connections with her students.

Okay, Fine. We Are Just Here to Teach: Nichole

Reign was not the only life historian in this study to discuss the implications of being a role model in the U.S. and in the UAE, but these roles were often discussed as carrying very different emotional weight. Nichole's account also vividly illustrates the impact of being a role model in these two countries and how it influenced her experience as a teacher and her decision to stay in the UAE.

As I mentioned in the first moment, Nichole is the partner of Dick, and they taught together in New Orleans before they migrated to the UAE. After Nichole migrated two years before him, her influence from the UAE impacted Dick's transnational migration decision as it was her friend who assisted him with finding a teaching position at a private school. Nichole's story about being a role model describes some Black American EDPats' experiences in the UAE. However, it was her more limited accountability for her students that affected her decision to remain there. In other words, she felt less stress in the UAE because she was a different kind of role model than in the U.S, which positively impacted her experience.

When I interviewed Nichole, she worked as a middle-school math teacher at a school in Ras Al Khaimah. Though it was her first-year teaching at that particular school, it was her seventh-year teaching in the UAE. In our second interview, she and I discussed the relationship between her and her students. She had recently left an all-girls' school in Abu Dhabi for which she worked for six years before moving to Ras Al Khaimah. In Ras Al Khaimah, her school was co-ed, but they still instructed girls and boys separately.

One of the most interesting aspects of Nichole's experience as a Black American woman teacher in the UAE was the influence of wearing her natural hair. By natural hair, I mean that her hair texture was untreated with chemicals, and she did not wear it straightened. As a result, her hair was full and fluffy and was a distinct attribute of her appearance and experience. In Abu Dhabi, her hair positively impacted the relationship she created with the young girls she taught. In our interview, she explained:

> **When I wore my hair natural, [the girls] loved it. We had a lot of Black teachers in Abu Dhabi. Our entire math department were Black teachers and most of us wore our natural hair.** I was at this school for six years. **The Black girls at the school, I think some were Arab and some were Emirati, by year four or year five, they all started wearing their natural hair too.** I had a girl come to school with big curly hair. I was like, 'Oh my goodness.' And then, we had more girls who started coming to school with their curly hair. I was like, 'Oh my

> gosh.' They started wearing their natural curly hair. I was like, 'Okay, all right.' It was so cool.

In this excerpt, Nichole illustrates how wearing her natural hair impacted how young girls in her school felt about their natural hair. She and the other Black women in her department were role models for the young girls so that they, too, would embrace their natural hair texture and feel more confident about themselves. This experience is significant because Black women who wear their natural hair in the workplace in the U.S. are often "stigmatized as unprofessional and less beautiful" (Dawson, Karl & Peluchette, 2019, p. 398). Yet, in the UAE, this was not a dilemma that Nichole faced; on the contrary, wearing her natural hair resulted in developing closer relationships with her students. She stated proudly, "We were showing them that we were okay with wearing our natural hair." She speculated that "Some of the little Black girls began to think, 'My hair is just like hers; I'm going to wear it out.' And they did."

Nicole's hair was a factor that allowed her to build positive relationships with her students, but she was also acutely aware that they were not 'her children' as she felt with her students in the U.S. This more limited responsibility to be a role model for them helped to explain why she chose to remain in the UAE. When she and I spoke more deeply about her decision, she expressed that teaching in the UAE allowed her to feel less stress associated with the duties of being a role model. In the excerpts that follow, Nichole illustrates a vivid transnational emotion as she compared her experience teaching in the UAE and in the U.S. She explained:

> **Being over here, it's like I am teaching other people's children.** If I'm dealing with stress, I can just be like, 'You know what, I don't care.' I know that's bad as a teacher, but I feel okay saying that. **If I was back home and I'm stressed, I don't want to be like, 'I don't care' because I go back to work and see faces that look like me.** [In the U.S.] I'd be like, 'You guys need to learn, or you will not do well.' But here [in the UAE], everybody's dealing with the same thing, the same craziness that I'm dealing with in the classroom.

As I listened more closely to Nichole's explanation, I realized that she was explaining a difference in how it felt to be socially accountable and academically accountable for students with whom she more closely identified. At a point in our interview, she recounted her experience teaching in the U.S. and explained more fully what feeling accountable meant for her:

> I do feel accountable [in the U.S.] because what if I have a stressful year? If I'm all stressed out, I'm not delivering a great message or a great lesson to my students. Once they move up to the next year, the next math teacher is like, 'You all don't know anything.' Like, I just failed a whole group of my own people. Yeah, I feel some type of way.

In this excerpt, Nichole explained that the accountability she felt for her students in the U.S. had to do with them being "a group of my people." This differed significantly from the students in the UAE she described as "other people's children." As a Black teacher who taught Black students and other students of color in the U.S., she felt greater emotional pressure to do well on

behalf of 'her people'. This is significant because it points to Delpit's (2006) work on teaching other people's children and adds an additional layer about the emotional sentiments that some Black teachers feel and perhaps, don't feel for the students for whom they teach. Delpit's (2006) viewpoint about middle-class African American teachers was that even they carried damaging stereotypes about the poor African Americans students they taught. Yet, in the case of Nichole, her story points to a sense of accountability for which she felt for some students and not for others.

It is essential to mention here that Nichole was not the only life historian to mention a vast difference between the accountability they felt in the U.S. and in the UAE. In my interviews with Madison, for example, she also mentioned having an "intrinsic responsibility to kids." She felt that as an educator, she too had a "responsibility to educate children," and she wanted to "make sure that they're getting the best education possible no matter what the nationality is." Yet, like Nichole, Madison explained that "It's a different kind of connection when they're from your community. When it's your culture that you're helping to develop, it's a different kind of connection, a different kind of love." Madison described this difference as a "different level of responsibility." In our interview, she elaborated:

> I have a high level of responsibility for the kids back home in the States because I see, still to this day, the injustices, and the persecution, just the indifference that people have towards those communities in education, I feel like [in the UAE], the students, the staff, the parents look to me for

> leadership and guidance and there's respect there. **I love my school community but it's a different kind of love when it's back home, with your kids, and you see yourself in little girls. It's just on a different level.**

This excerpt from Madison expresses sentiments very similar to those of Nichole, who also felt less accountability in the UAE. Nichole provided her students with safe classroom space and tools to enhance their academic success. However, she did not feel personally responsible for their success as she did in the U.S. with her Black students. This is not to say that Nichole did not feel stress while teaching in the UAE because she did. However, the pressure felt different for her, and Nichole also described her perception of feeling stressed differently there than in the U.S. When she explained this feeling in our interview, she said:

> You don't feel as accountable or as responsible for what's going on because this is going on across the country. Like in Abu Dhabi, in the public schools, they take the midyear exam and the end-of-school exam. We don't make it; it comes from MOE [Ministry of Education]. They provide it. Across the UAE, all the students were failing the math exams. It wasn't just our school, it wasn't just my class, it was across the UAE. So, I was like, '**I don't feel bad because this is not on me.'** All of the students are not understanding this math that you want us to teach them.

Nicole felt less accountable for her students' academic outcomes, and she also felt less responsible about the education system as a whole, both of which are significant to understanding Nichole's decision to remain in the UAE. She was

fully aware that teaching in the UAE was at the invitation of the government; it was not an invitation for her to change societal, cultural, or academic systems. She explained:

> We're coming into someone else's country where they have already been doing the things that they're doing. If they change things in the middle of their already planned year, that's what they're doing. Ok, they want to change it. Okay, fine. You want to try to see if this might work? Okay, fine. We are just here to teach.

Believing that she was in the UAE "just here to teach" helps to understand Nichole's decision to remain in the UAE. She was content with being a "guest" in the country and accepted that she had little autonomy in her role as a teacher. She knew she could not change the system, but she also did not appear to want to do so as she did in the U.S. In this case, her transnational emotions center on the stress that accountability can invoke and the contentment that its absence can bring about for Black teachers. Nichole and other life historians felt accountable to students and their families, and thus to helping change the unequal education system in the U.S., and this ground them down because they often did not have the ability to make policy-level changes. As discussed in previous chapters, educational scholars argue that Black teachers are more likely to turnover when they lack involvement in school policy and decision-making (Ingersoll & May, 2011). The social and academic accountability that Nichole felt for Black students in the U.S. impacted her role as a teacher because if her students failed, she felt as though she had personally failed them. In contrast, she did not carry this burden of

responsibility and accountability with her in the UAE, where she was a guest and not invited to get involved in social or educational reform.

My research and that of others suggests that feeling accountable while simultaneously feeling disempowered to implement change is a significant reason for Black teachers' decisions for turnover in the U.S. Nathan Gibbs-Bowling's transnational migration decision helps to explain Nichole's story more fully because, as mentioned in Chapter One, he also described his decision to teach in Abu Dhabi as an opportunity to "just teach." From his perspective, the students' basic needs were met in Abu Dhabi and their lives were vastly different from the precarious lives of the students he taught in the U.S. Similarly, Nichole felt this type of accountability for three and half years while teaching in the U.S. She felt she could not be relieved of it because it was ascribed to her based on her identity as a Black American woman who had chosen to enter the teaching profession. In the U.S. she felt socially and academically accountable for her students, whereas, in the UAE, she felt relieved from the heavy weight of accountability.

Discussion

In this third moment, I explained some of the conditions that influenced the life historians' decisions to remain in the UAE for at least two years. Their transnational emotions help to explain their perceptions of why they chose to stay in the UAE and convey distinct comparisons between their lives in the U.S. and the UAE. In their reflections on their lives, the excerpts from the accounts of Camille, Lee, Eltee, Sunset, Reign, and Nichole clearly reveal that staying in the

UAE was alluring because their lives felt vastly different from U.S. in many important ways.

In the UAE, they felt safer as racialized and gendered subjects; they felt relieved of the pressure to guard their finances as they were taking home more money; they felt visible; and they felt less accountable as role models and as the key to their students' academic success. With access to more economic capital, they could do things they could not do as teachers in the U.S., such as invest in their social networks or travel internationally as a part of their (re)storation. They also felt less responsible for the future outcomes of the students which allowed them to worry less about their appearance and spend more time focused on their work as teachers.

In this third moment, affective turnover helps explain the restorative nature of leaving the U.S. after being ground down emotionally. I am not arguing that the lives of these Black American EDPats were idyllic or that they felt (re)stored fully in the UAE. Instead, in the UAE, they were able to experience a sense of (re)storation from the emotional tolls that were prevalent in their personal and professional lives in the U.S.

(Re)storation, along with emotional collisions, and pain points, are the three components of the theory of affective turnover that I have developed through my analysis of these three moments. Each of these life narratives, marked by race, class, gender, and nationality, illustrate how remaining in the UAE provided life historians with access to a sense of happiness that aligned with the lives they aspired to live but could not in the U.S. In the next section, I provide a

conclusion of the chapter that further details my understanding of affective turnover.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented findings that illustrate life historians' transnational migration decisions. Taken together, these data explain the moments they began contemplating leaving their positions in the U.S., how their decisions to migrate took shape, and why they chose to remain in the UAE for at least two years. Their intersectional identities marked by race, gender, class, and nationality have affective dimensions; understanding these dimensions is essential in making sense of their transnational migration decisions.

In the first moment of this chapter, the accounts of Camille, Dick, and Sunset explained how they were ground down in their personal and professional lives by fractious emotional collisions. These collisions illustrated how their identities and lived experiences bumped against each other, and in effect, led them to contemplate their initial turnover decisions. Their considerations about leaving were affective responses influenced by the implications of race, gender, and class on their lives as teachers in U.S. schools and society. Emotions like fatigue and the affective dimensions of imbalance explained life historians' contemplations to leave the U.S. and their decisions to migrate.

In the second moment, the life history accounts of Melanie, Madison, Sunset, David Jr., Lee, and Dick illustrated how life historians' initial pursuits of happiness were oriented toward moving to nearby states and counties and finding other positions in the education sector. Each of them spoke of encountering an

influencer who expanded their domestic pursuits of happiness into transnational ones. The affective dimensions of influence revealed how, in Melanie's case, she felt fatigued and was "tired of the fight" in concerns with understanding her identity. David Jr. also felt fatigued and mentioned being tired after opening a business to financially support his family, resulting in him spending less time with them and only "breaking even" with profits. Encounters with influencers tapped these pain points, which life historians felt prevented them from achieving the happiness they sought. Some of them also explained that migration to the UAE was an opportunity that required little risk. Phrases like "We can always come back home," "What's the worst that can happen," and "Coulda, woulda, shoulda," all illustrate that the decision to migrate was an opportunity to see what life was like somewhere else and made the UAE a viable option to explore.

In the third moment, the life history accounts of Camille, Lee, Eltee, Sunset, Reign, and Nichole illustrated why they chose to remain in the UAE for at least two years. Their transnational emotions revealed numerous comparisons between their lives in the U.S. and the UAE. Most of the life historians felt that their lives were vastly different in the UAE even though race continued to be a salient part of their identities. However, when coupled with being an American and with the knowledge that they were not responsible for their students' success in the same way as in the U.S., they felt relieved and able to enjoy lives that they could not lead at home. In the next chapter, I will conclude this dissertation study with a discussion about its interventions, implications, and limitations.

Interlude to Chapter Five: Effective Versus Affective Turnover

When I began analyzing my data, I listened to my interview with Nathan Gibbs-Bowling several times. I was drawn to his interview because of his keen ability to discuss the relationship between educational policy and advocacy alongside his personal narrative as a teacher. It was intriguing and made me realize that, as a teacher, he was satisfied. His life as a teacher was not bound to his classroom, and he had clear aspirations about serving not only his students but also the parents and members within his community.

The day that I interviewed Gibbs-Bowling, I arrived at his school in the morning and was escorted by a security officer to his classroom. The school he taught at is known as the Embassy School because many of the students enrolled are children of diplomats and American ambassadors living in the UAE. When I approached his classroom door, I first noticed his 10th-grade students. They were seated at rows of tables and were facing the projector where Gibbs-Bowling stood. Trying not to disturb his lesson, I quietly walked into the classroom and sat down in a seat at an empty table near the back. Gibbs-Bowling was teaching about the 2019 American presidential election. As he did in Tacoma, Washington, he taught government in Abu Dhabi. His lesson included a discussion about the political implications of voting statistics, and he encouraged his students to investigate how numbers are used to disseminate stories during elections. After class, we briefly toured the school, and he eventually led us to the student-led podcasting studio where we conducted our interview.

The studio was a small booth, big enough for the two of us, and it was layered by sponge soundproofing blockers on all four walls. As Gibbs-Bowling connected my Zoom H4n Pro recording device to the sound equipment, he and I briefly discussed the format of the interview. I wanted to be sure to inform him about the interview style and the few bullet points that I noted during our pre-interview meeting. It was at this time that Gibbs-Bowling made a comment that intrigued me. There was a point in our conversation when he described the commonalities between teaching in Washington State and in Abu Dhabi, and I remember listening and thinking to myself that this is the perfect moment to refer to that earlier comment. After he completed his thought, I said:

> So, this has me thinking about a comment that you made before. Your suggestion, not that every African American teacher should leave the States to come abroad, but that they should at least take the opportunity to consider it. Talk to me about this idea that you've established in the first six months. (Smith & Gibbs-Bowling, 2020).

The purpose of asking this question was to gain some insight into his view about the politics of teacher turnover and what he believed teaching abroad offered Black American teachers. I was also interested in understanding how he had come to such a conclusion after teaching for only six months in Abu Dhabi. Having taught abroad for nearly five years, I had taken an adamant stance in my podcast and in my research on Black American teacher migration that my intention was not to convince Black teachers to leave America. I entered these two projects with the view that teaching abroad was an opportunity that needed

explanation and exposure, which I intended to provide, and, with that exposure, teachers could expand their aspirations about their careers as teachers. In contrast, Gibbs-Bowling was much more direct about his views that teaching abroad *was* the right choice for frustrated teachers. The excerpt that follows is a transcript from our podcast interview and explains Gibbs-Bowlings' understanding about why American teachers should consider teaching abroad:

Nathan: I mentioned earlier that teaching is a transferable skill. So, if you can teach mathematics in Baltimore, you can teach mathematics in Philly because math is math. **I've got a draft in Google docs that basically says if you're a frustrated American teacher, don't go on strike, go abroad.**

Tiffany: Amen, hold on. Wait, say this one more time.

Nathan: Sure. If you're a frustrated American teacher, don't go on strike, go abroad. Y'all American teachers are valued internationally because if you can work in our dysfunctional system, with our students, who are wonderful but who's needs aren't met, then you can work anywhere and teach anything. If you can teach a migrant population, a high mobility population, a population of students experiencing life trauma, successfully, in the US, then you can do it anywhere. And so, I really, I'm talking out of both sides of my face right now because one side of my face says **I was in a school for ten years and in that school, I built relationships and, in those relationships, I created family and community and that**

made me a more effective educator. That's true. Conversely, I think that teachers should view themselves as professionals and what do professionals do when they're not satisfied, they leave. And there's so many teachers in the United States who are not satisfied with their work/life balance and with their job requirements, what they're asked to do, with how much is on their plates, with the way they're treated, with the way they are everything, that like, they should consider other options. I have a lot of friends who work in tech right, bros in tech, sistahs in tech. Every two or three years, they are bouncin'.

Tiffany: Nobody's loyal, right.

Nathan: **But that is what's on the other side of my mouth, teaching is relational, and you build those relationships over long terms.**

Tiffany: But it's also a field of goodbyes, right. You're constantly saying goodbye, and it's no different from what's happening here. You're constantly saying goodbye. The only consistent factor is you.

Nathan: Well, there is a trap, right. So, if you are happy where you are, I'm not talking to you. If you are happy, fulfilled, you have work life balance, you feel like you're making a difference, you feel like you're transforming a kid's life, then stay with your whole heart in it because those kids love you and need you. If you're not happy and you're whack, go somewhere and do something else but don't be a teacher. **But, if you're a teacher and you can do this work**

> **and make a difference in kids' lives but your needs aren't being met professionally, then you owe it to yourself and to your family to do something different**. I'm struggling right now because I'm not gonna be here forever. I signed a two-year contract and at the end of two years, I have some decisions to make.

This excerpt from our interview was critical in helping me think more deeply about the affective dimensions of teaching in the U.S. during my analysis of this study. Gibbs-Bowling directly emphasized that teaching abroad was a viable option for *effective* teachers who were frustrated with their circumstances. "If you are happy where you are" as Gibbs-Bowling noted, "I'm not talking to you," especially if "you feel like you are making a difference and you feel like you're transforming kids' lives," if this is the case, "then stay with your whole heart in it because those kids love you and need you as he noted." Yet for "frustrated American teachers," the effective teachers who show up at teacher strikes and protests, show up for their student's ancillary needs, and build relationships with students, parents, and communities over the long term, then "don't go on strike, go abroad."

The phrase *effective* has become a buzzword in educational policy and policymakers promulgate the need to develop more effective teachers (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). Yet Gibbs-Bowling and the life historians in this study *were* highly effective teachers, and they were also "frustrated teachers" who saw teaching abroad as an opportunity to pursue the happiness they felt they

could not attain in the U.S. school system or in U.S. society at large. I realized at this moment that the one of the most important implications of this study is that we do not necessarily need more effective teachers in the U.S.; instead, we need policies that address the affective needs of effective teachers if they are going to stay in the teaching force in this country. The gaze of policymakers needs to shift from solely focusing on the effectiveness of teachers to the affectiveness of teaching.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

"If you're a frustrated American teacher, don't go on strike, go abroad."

Nathan Gibbs-Bowling (2020)
Interview on *(A)Broad in Education*

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a discussion about the conclusions of this study. First, I will provide an overview of the study, which is followed by a summary of the research process. After, I will discuss the major findings from this study and explain the importance of each of them. Next, I will discuss the contributions this study makes to multiple disciplinary fields and future research studies to further these inquiries. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Overview of the Study

Chapters One, Two, and Three introduced the study and Chapter Four was a presentation and analysis of its findings. Chapter One situated the relationship between affect and Black American teachers' transnational migration through a compelling account from Nathan Gibbs-Bowling. Even as an award-winning educator, his life as a teacher in the U.S. vividly illustrated how the affective labor placed upon him as a Black male teacher impacted his decision to leave his school in Washington for a school in the UAE. His story showed the importance of using the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and emotional transnationalism. As the two pillars making up affective turnover, these theories help explain the intersections of race, gender, and class, and the affective dimensions of Black

teachers' lives. They also pointed to the complex emotions that weaved in and out of each of the three moments discussed in this dissertation.

Chapter Two situated this study in larger discourses about teacher turnover through a review of relevant literature. The three bodies of literature I reviewed had to do with teacher turnover in the U.S., intersectionality in education, and emotional transnationalism. This chapter illustrated the gap in research that this study intended to fill, specifically that education scholars have long provided domestic interpretations of teacher turnover but have not sufficiently provided an international perspective on this matter. Moreover, by relying on quantitative datasets rather than qualitative inquiry, teachers are seldom asked about the factors that impact their turnover decisions. For this reason, the review of literature provided a foundation for the qualitative nature of this study and narrative life history design.

Chapter Three mapped out the methodological approaches employed for this study. It explained the significance of life history methods and the importance of conducting a study that relied on relational inquiry. Rather than bracketing myself as the researcher, it provided a rationale for why it was important to include myself in various parts of the discussion of the historians' lives. The chapter also explained the importance of referring to those involved in this study as life historians rather than as participants. From the procedures for recruitment to the protocol for interviews, the Black American EDPat community in the was central to this study and also the rationale for conducting it there.

The previous chapter, Chapter Four, presented the findings of this study, which were divided into three temporal periods described as moments: (1) *Contemplating Leaving*; (2) *The Decision to Migration*; and (3) *The Decision to Remain in the UAE.* In each of these moments, the three major themes that rose from the data were presented and analyzed: *emotional collisions*, *influencers and pain points*, and *transnational emotions*. I will discuss them in further detail later in this section. These findings supported the explanatory potential of affective turnover as a theory that can be operationalized to deepen examinations about teacher turnover. In the next section, I will provide a summary of the research process.

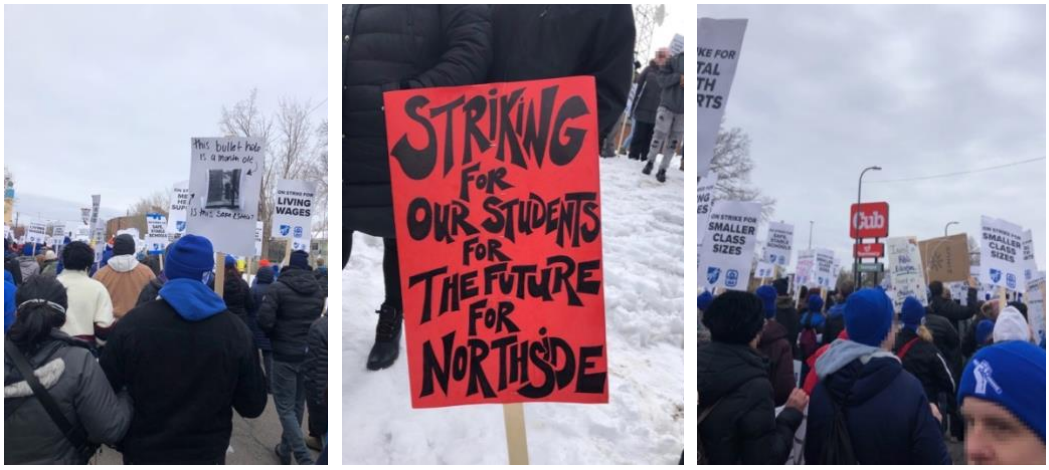
Constructing New Imaginations about Teaching Abroad

Before summarizing the major findings of this study, I will briefly discuss the process under which this chapter was written as it provides a glimpse into how I made sense of this research. I began this study with the story of Nathan Gibbs-Bowling because it was his public resignation that provided an example of the affective dimensions that I felt to be prevalent in Black teachers' lives and their transnational migration decisions. The migration of Black American teachers from schools in the U.S. to schools in other countries is a topic that has been underresearched in academic literature. As such, the aim of this study was an attempt to gain a deeper analysis about their attrition by widening the scope of domestic interpretations to comparative and international ones. By doing so, additional factors that cause their attrition could be identified and implemented into policy efforts put forth by school leaders and policy makers.

During the time that I began writing this chapter, what I thought to be the implications of this study, particularly what I felt I had learned from the lives of these 10 historians, began to shift at the point at which the teacher strike in Minneapolis, Minnesota occurred. As illustrated below in Figure 5, on March 8, 2022, union members and educational support professionals from the Minneapolis Public School District (MPSD) went on strike "for the first time in more than 50 years" (Evans, 2022, para 1). The significance of this strike led me back to my interview with Nathan Gibbs Bowling, to the quote noted in the epigraph above.

Figure 5

Photos from Minneapolis Teacher Strike: March 8, 2022



Note: Photos courtesy of Shakita Thomas-Kpetay, Education historian and strike attendee.

Before his transnational migration to the UAE, Gibbs-Bowling stood in front of the picket lines twice in Tacoma, Washington (see Figure 6 below). He mentioned in his PBS interview with John Yang, "It's a miserable experience to be on strike because I got into [teaching] because I wanted to make a different in students'

lives" (Yang & Gibbs, Bowling, 2019, para 22). As noted earlier in this dissertation, I spoke more deeply with Gibbs-Bowling when I interviewed him on my podcast. It was then when he spoke about a draft document sitting in his Google drive with the title, "If you are a frustrated, American teacher, don't go on strike, go abroad."

Figure 6

Nathan Gibbs-Bowling Tacoma Teacher Strike

Note: Photo from PBS NewsHour interview; Teachers on the Brink.

The frustration that Gibbs-Bowling alludes to is part of the affective sentiments that pushed the life historians in this study to the UAE and what I believe pushed these MPSD teachers to the picket lines. Regarding teacher empowerment, the decision to strike is synonymous with *the last resort* because doing so means that there is little room for anything else to be *said*. They impact children, parents, teachers, and entire communities. Strikes demand for *action*,

which prompts an imperative question that centers this research; action from whom?

When union members from MPSD were unable to reach an agreement on "living" wages for educational support professionals, caps on class sizes, and more mental health services for students, they decided to strike (Karnowski, 2022, para 2). In this case, action was placed upon the school board members and union leaders to come to an agreement about meeting the demands for which union members put forth. Yet, what is missing from this conversation, or perhaps being overlooked, is the fact that for paraprofessionals to earn a "livable wage," union members were forced to strike. It is problematic that professionals in this country must make demands for provisions of basic needs.

In the case of Gibbs-Bowling and the life historians in this study, they placed action upon themselves and enacted an alternative form of a teacher strike. For them, teaching abroad was an avenue to continue working in the education system, but in one that ensured that their basic needs were met as well as the needs of the students for whom they taught. In this vein, one might understand Gibbs-Bowling's suggestion more clearly. Teaching abroad is an alternative for teacher strikes, and particularly for frustrated teachers who are opposed to the conditions under which they work. These Black American teachers were interested in remaining in education, but they felt unsupported and undervalued in U.S. schools and societies. I have a provided a glimpse of understanding as to how I made sense of this research and I will now turn to the summary of the major findings of this study.

Summary of the Major Findings

The discussion in this section engages with my research question: *How do the intersectional identities and affective dimensions of Black American EDPats' lives influence their decisions to leave schools in the U.S. and teach in schools in the UAE?* As displayed below in Table 4, the four major findings that emerged from this study I have termed emotional collisions, influencers, pain points, and transnational emotions. These findings illustrate factors that help to explain the life historians' decisions to leave schools in the U.S. and remain in schools in the UAE.

Table 4

Major Research Findings

Major Research Findings			
Emotional Collisions	**Influencers**	**Pain Points**	**Transnational Emotions**
Othermothering	Friends	Identity Crisis	Mental and Physical Safety
Generational Cycle of Tragedy	Significant Partner	Routine	Adventure
Wealth Disparity	Teachers	Financially breaking even	Disposable Income
	Recruiter	Credentials	Academic and Social Accountability
	Son	Homeownership	Role Modeling

The three findings, *emotional collisions*, *influencers, and pain points,* engage with the first portion of my research question about the life historians' decisions to leave schools in the U.S.; the last finding, *transnational emotions*, engages with the latter portion of my research question that focuses on the decision to remain in the UAE.

Emotional Collisions and Intersectionality

Emotional collisions are the first major finding that emerged from this study. It provides insight into how Black teachers' intersectional identities and lived experiences ground them down in U.S. schools. This theme is significant because it captures the moment when life historians began contemplating leaving their positions and reveals their affective responses toward their experiences as professionals marked by race, gender, and class. In line with how affective turnover was operationalized for use in this study, emotional collisions can be thought of as the point at which teachers' intersectional identities and lived experiences collide and result in fractious moments that grind them down into a fragment of the teacher they were when they first entered the profession. These fractured emotions resulted in their aspirations for happier living and working conditions and essentially led to their transnational migration decisions.

Emotional collisions align with the broader literature about dissatisfaction for Black teachers and provide insights into factors such as school environments and hostile climates and why, alone, these factors cannot fully explain teacher dissatisfaction (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Kohli, 2016; Moore, 2012). Scholars argue that the likelihood of Black teachers' departure decisions are contingent

upon influence and autonomy (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Yet emotional collisions help to explain how the influence that Black teachers seek to have on Black students' lives has less to do with students' academic achievements and more with the complex problems students face outside of the classroom. Moreover, the complex problems that teachers face outside of the classroom. This is significant because educational scholars are aware that Black teachers often feel a sense of personal attachment and kinship to the African American children they teach (Irvine, 1999). However, little is known about the emotional toll that these attachments inflict on them. Though I will not discuss each of the sub-themes under emotional collisions, there is one—othermothering—which I believe is an important contribution to the scholarship on attrition for Black teachers.

Othermothering. Some scholars have found othermothering to be a positive component of a system of beliefs that African Americans perceive about their roles as teachers (Collins, 2000; Irvine, 1999; 2003). However, findings from this research suggest that othermothering for Black teachers also carries with it implications on their wellbeing and on their decisions to leave the U.S. to teach abroad.

Othermothering for example, was a significant component of Camille's transnational migration decision and was also an evident part of her experience teaching in the U.S. Early in our first interview, she described the experiences she shared with children for whom she spent time with outside of school hours. Her attempt was to provide them with time, attention, and resources, all of which she felt to be unavailable to them in their homes. This type of care though, was

familiar to me and as I began analyzing Camille's story, it required a type of reflexive thinking that led me back to my schooling experience.

My fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. Smith, was also an othermother. Our relationship began during my fourth-grade year when my mother became a homeowner and moved our family from government-assisted housing to a home in a residential neighborhood. This move required that I change schools in the middle of the school year. At my new school, I was placed in the classroom of Mrs. Smith, a Black teacher who quickly took interest in me. I was not the only Black student in her classroom, but there something significant about me because she began asking my mother for permission for me to spend time with her and her family. Mrs. Smith was aware that I was being raised in a single-parent household and that my mother worked multiple jobs to take of her three children. Yet, her requests shifted from invitations to dinner, to spending the night at her house, to joining her family outings. These gestures had a significant impact on my life.

At the time that I began analyzing Camille's story, I felt compelled to call my mother and ask about her thoughts regarding Mrs. Smith. On several occasions I posed the same question to Mrs. Smith, and each time she expressed that the gestures were something she felt driven to do. Yet she confessed that she never extended those gestures to any of her other students. My mother had a different view though. She said, "Maybe it's not about the impact that she was trying to have on you, maybe it was the impact you had on her." This made sense to me, and it helped me to think more deeply about the affective dimensions of othermothering.

Camille's role as an othermother might have been sparked by the impact her students had on her, and not the other way around. As such, this contradicts Irvine's (2003) finding that all Black teachers are othermothers and instead sheds light on the notion that some Black teachers are influenced to become othermothers. These relational dynamics also point to Delpit's (2006) notion of teaching other people's children because when affect is coupled with the dimensions of race and class, then we can see deeper levels of the connections that teachers have and don't have with their students. Nonetheless, in Camille's case, othermothering carried an emotional toll that ground her down and led to her decision to migrate to a teaching position in the UAE.

Influencers and Pain Points

The second two major finding that emerged from this study is *influencers* and *pain points*. These finding are interconnected because it was the influencers that tapped on the life historians' pain points, which resulted in expanding their domestic pursuits of happiness to transnational ones. These findings contribute new insights into understanding attrition for Black teachers because they illustrate how the life historians' decisions to leave teaching in U.S. can be influenced by others, and by the frustration and pain in their lives, but this doesn't necessarily mean they leave the teaching profession.

Before they made their migration decisions, some of the life historians sought positions and experiences they thought might lead to more financial stability in the U.S. When it did not, there was an affective dimension to these experiences—pain points—and this is where the influencers came in. As

discussed above, influencers are those who provided these teachers with navigational tools, support, and aspiration to pursue teaching positions abroad. This finding about the role of influencers is important because it explains that teachers' decisions to leave are not independent of others.

In this study, nine of the 10 teachers discussed influencers as those they tapped for information about teaching abroad, both those who were preparing for positions abroad and those who had already taken on these positions. These networks are noteworthy because they validate the necessity for resources like my podcast, *(A)Broad in Education*, in which teachers can hear from those who have already made this decision in the course of deciding whether they, too, would like to pursue a teaching position outside the U.S. Such resources also expand the imaginations of Black Americans because by seeing other Black people teaching and living abroad, the transnational migration decision might appear to be more accessible.

Though there are few Black affinity networks that provide resources for aspiring EDPats, there is a need for them. Black travel networks like *Nomadness Travel Tribe* and *Blaxit Global*, meaning Black Exit, dedicate themselves to curating these networks to inspire Black people to travel. For example, according to their website, Blaxit Global "is dedicated to educating, informing, empowering, and inspiring brothers and sisters of the African diaspora to pursue a life abroad" (https://www.blaxitglobal.com). It offers a podcast, blog, events, and a paid membership for current and aspiring Black travelers. Though some of these

networks have different focuses, they are all significant in the sense that they provide resources and navigational strategies to those who aspire to live abroad.

Transnational Emotions and Emotional Transnationalism

The third major finding that emerged from this study is the importance of considering *transnational emotions* in the analysis of teachers' rationales for teaching and staying abroad. It is a particularly relevant concept for the field of CIDE because it illustrates how studies of teacher turnover, that only consider factors present while teaching in the U.S., provide limited understandings about factors causing turnover for Black teachers. Examining turnover through a comparative and affective lens highlights how teachers compare sentiments related to safety, financial security, accountability, and role modeling between their lives in the U.S. and their lives abroad. I contend that this transnational comparative analysis in which Black teachers abroad engage in is a potent reason for them to stay overseas and to encourage others who are frustrated in the U.S. to do the same. The (re)stored dimensions of their lives, they described through sentiments of freedom, relaxed, and safe. In essence, these emotions made them feel differently about themselves and to also see themselves through an alternative lens, as Black Americans.

The most prevalent sub-theme related to transnational emotions was *role modeling*. Particularly because discourse surrounding diversification efforts in the U.S. teacher workforce has courted Black teachers because they are deemed as role models (i.e. Gershenson et al., 2018; King, 2016; Madkins, 2011; Siddle

Walker, 2001). Yet, by viewing role modeling through the lens of transnational emotions, a more complex understanding emerges.

As revealed by the accounts in this study, being a role model in the U.S. entailed a great deal of affective labor to provide support for Black students and families. This, in my view, has been overlooked in educational studies. For some of the life historians, role modeling meant paying a lot of attention to looking professional, as in Reign's case. It also meant appearing to be an effective teacher, and particularly a performance for students' parents. This type of role modeling, which is particularly demanding for Black teachers like Reign, may feel like having to prove one's value, intelligence, and expertise, and is pushing teachers out of the classroom in the U.S. The life historians in this study described this type of performance as draining and limiting the connections they could have potentially made with their students.

In sum, transnational emotions become potent forces in Black teachers' decisions to stay abroad because, in this case, they compare the less demanding roles they have in the UAE to those they had to play in the U.S. For these life historians, it was in comparing their lives in the UAE with the demands on their emotional labor and other aspects of their lives like low salaries and expensive housing in the U.S. that helped them to articulate why they had left and why they planned to stay abroad.

Contributions to the Field

This study of teacher turnover expands the scope of research in this area by focusing on a group of Black American teachers who stayed in the profession

but moved abroad. Conducting a deeper analysis of their decision-making processes using a life history approach showed how their intersectional identities and the affective dimensions of their lives influenced their transnational migration decisions. The contributions of this study for CIDE are twofold in that it makes both theoretical and policy-relevant contributions, which I discuss below, followed by a programmatic contribution that was inspired by the findings from this study.

Theoretical Contributions

My analysis of the life histories of 10 African American teachers led me to propose affective turnover as an explanation for why they left the U.S. teaching force for positions abroad. It shows that the experiences of Black teachers are deeply affected by race, class, and gender, and there is a strong affective dimension to their intersection. These teachers engage in a great deal of emotional labor, which helps to explain why they would feel ground down and look for better conditions elsewhere. Though I have paid attention to factors that have been identified by other scholars studying turnover, namely, school climates, school working conditions, and salary, affective turnover takes a theoretical turn by examining their emotional dimensions.

Affective turnover describes a set of complex emotions described by many of the life historians; however, it is not a single emotion, or a set of emotions experienced in the same way by all. People experience and perceive life in different ways. Yet affective turnover describes one part of the process of emotional transnationalism that all of the life historians articulated in one way or

another as they all compared their emotions surrounding teaching and its related elements in the U.S. and the UAE. Each individual's narrative was unique, but, together, one can see patterns in how transnational comparison played a part in the life historians' interpretations of their reasons for migrating. These emotions, in a way, were invisible until they migrated to the UAE. It was their migration that provided them with a new experience and perspective, giving them a way to compare their previous experiences with those in their new locale.

This is the type of comparison of what James Baldwin alluded to when he described the sense of "looking from a distance" at the U.S. (Terkel & Baldwin, 1961). For Baldwin, making these critical comparisons meant leaving America and migrating to places where he could experience something new as this enabled the distance he needed, and the life historians needed, to see to the U.S. and their lives in it in a new light.

What I attempted to make clear in the beginning of this study is that Black Americans living abroad is not a new phenomenon. The autobiographies of James Baldwin, Josephine Baker, Nina Simone, and Richard Wright, among many others, document their lives. Affective turnover provides a way of explaining a different group of actors—Black teachers—who made the same decision to leave the U.S. and live elsewhere. It can help scholars to engage in more complex investigations about Black Americans' decisions to migrate today, especially in fields like education where their intersectional identities make their jobs particularly challenging. Using this theoretical tool can make their identities and

the affective dimensions of their lives more visible, and it provides a new perspective on migration.

Policy Relevant Contributions

Throughout this dissertation project, I continued to pose questions that pushed back on dominant discourses about teacher attrition and retention. According to Ingersoll and May (2011), "Increasing teacher production and recruitment has long been the dominant strategy for diversifying the teaching force and addressing the minority teacher shortage" (Ingersoll & May, 2011, p. 65). Yet, as they noted, recruiting new teachers, does not solve attrition.

Attrition and retention are two different problems and too often, educational scholars assume that retention is about keeping teachers in the classroom, which is problematic in many ways. The idea that new teachers will enter the education system and retire after 34 years is long outdated, and new ways of thinking about retention are necessary. Ingersoll and May (2011) suggest that with the knowledge we know about the teacher shortage among minoritized teachers, "We should develop teacher recruitment and retention initiatives together" (p. 65).

While I agree with this suggestion, the findings from this study show that we need recruitment and retention strategies that acknowledge the extent of teacher burnout, especially for Black teachers, or being ground down as these life historians described it. Educational scholars have documented repeatedly that teachers leave the classroom within the first five years and that pursuing another job and professional dissatisfaction are the two major roles for doing so (Ingersoll

& Smith, 2003). Yet very little has changed about the ways policymakers think about retention. As this study revealed, some teachers do not leave education; they are retained, but they pursue teaching positions in schools located in other countries.

If we begin to look at burnout and retention more holistically, we can begin to think more critically about how to get teachers out of the classroom when they are feeling ground down but retain strong teachers in the education system. By this I mean that we should expect teachers to feel burned out and ready for a change around year five. Between years one and four, there could be professional development to introduce teachers to other routes where they could utilize the skills they've developed in the classroom.

These routes could lead to positions like curriculum designers and coordinators, educational policymakers at the district or other levels, -- administrators, and even international teachers and administrators. Though this is not a full list of possibilities, the point is that it might help teachers to stay in the field of education if they were provided with possibilities beyond being classroom teachers when they enter the education system. This pre-burnout planning is necessary because, as this study revealed, burned-out teachers may have little intention to change careers, but they don't know a lot about the paths to other positions in the field of education. Creating policies that support new teachers to leave the classroom but remain in education might provide them with an incentive to stay in the profession.

In addition, if burnout is accepted as a likely condition for teachers given the many demands on them, especially on minoritized teachers, then there is a greater incentive to develop new policies to assist teachers with (re)storation. Most evident from this study is that Black teachers are tired, and they need more avenues to (re)store outside of the classroom, or even outside of the country. The happiness they desire in their personal and professional lives cannot be met under the conditions in the U.S. PK-12 system. (Re)storation also means that policies to make students' lives more stable are urgently needed, such as those that would provide their parents with higher paying jobs, safe housing, adequate food, and career development opportunities to enhance students' imaginations about the potential of their lives.

If school leaders are serious about creating policy and efforts to retain teachers, then they must look more carefully at the affective dimensions of teachers' lives and their identities. And if policymakers within and beyond the education system seek to support and retain good teachers, then changes well beyond the classroom are needed so that students come to school to teachers who feel secure. This means secure in their financial security, familial security, time security, and emotional security. Too often, teachers are viewed as individuals who have infinite stores of energy and compassion to care for the many needs of their students. However, this leaves me with the question: Who cares for the teachers? Whose responsibility is it to care for teachers? I argue that it is a question that educational leaders and policymakers need to take more seriously if addressing the crisis of teacher shortages are truly a national concern.

Future Research

This dissertation drew upon a great deal of the data from my interviews with the life historians, but there is a lot of material that has not been included owing to time and space constraints. Therefore, regarding my future research, I seek to continue to engage with the data that was collected for this study in two additional research studies.

First, I will continue developing affective turnover as a theory for comparative and educational scholars to draw upon for explaining the interconnected of affect, intersectional identities, and lived experience as it relates to understanding teacher attrition and migration. Inspiration for how to organize what I imagine as a stand-alone article comes from Vavrus' (2005) work on education and structural adjustment policies in Tanzania. Her article theorizes the notion of relative deprivation and provides an ideal model of how to interweave voices from the researcher, the data, and thick descriptions from field notes.

Second, I seek to do more research analyzing the individual accounts of the historians in this study and contributing to research that focuses on teachers' retention. For these articles, I draw inspiration from an emerging body of literature that diverges from factors causing attrition and instead focuses on factors encouraging retention (i.e. Farinde et al.'s (2016) study on retaining Black teachers). For example, in a recent presentation about my dissertation work, I discussed a theory referred to as racial micro-affirmations which was developed by critical race scholars (Solórzano & Pérez, 2020). Racial micro-affirmations are like racial micro-aggressions, but on the contrary, they pay attention to the

everyday forms of nods, smiles, embraces, uses of language, and other actions. Such actions are the expressions of acknowledgement, respect, and self-worth that People of Color engage in private and public settings (Ibid, 2020). This theory will help to explain the experience of one of the life historians in the UAE and her constant use of racial micro-affirmations amongst schools and the society at large.

A Programmatic Intervention

In addition to the two future research projects, I also want to engage in a programmatic intervention for teacher retention and restoration. *The Academy of Teacher Retention and Restoration* is a program that I seek to design that utilizes a traditional study abroad model but focuses particularly on novice and veteran teachers of color. In this professional study abroad program, teachers will engage in an international trip and self-exploration process similar to the methodological design employed in this study. The program will walk teachers through the creation of a linear life timeline, identity map, and procedures to identify the turning points prevalent within their lives. All of which will allow them to develop a professional plan and strategy to heal from their experiences as teachers and also 'graduate from the classroom,' by which I mean exploring protentional routes allowing them to transfer the skills for which were gained into the classroom to educational positions outside of the classroom.

In the several conversations that I've had with Black American teachers about their interests in leaving the classroom, there is a consistent response from many about not knowing where to go to next. Though teaching is often described as a transferrable skill, there is very little conversation in teacher education or

professional development programs about how to transfer these skills. Therefore, creating and implementing a programmatic intervention that allows teachers to strategize their 'graduation' from the classroom to other professions will result in fuller understandings about retention avenues for teachers. This proposal is one way that educational leaders can begin to pay more attention to providing solutions for teachers to move out of the classroom when they are ground down but still apply their talents in the educational system.

In conclusion, my goal in this dissertation has been to (dis)cover the routes of 10 Black American EDPats to more fully understand the factors that influenced their transnational migration decisions. As I mentioned earlier in this dissertation, (dis)covering routes is not about historical roots, but instead about understanding the route to a destination. A seeking to discover the identities, affect, and other factors that are too often 'invisible' in stories about Black American teachers. As such, I have provided a comparative and international analysis about the ways such factors pushed and pulled these life historians from old locales to new ones. Findings about their choices to leave schools in the U.S. for schools in the UAE sheds light on new understandings about attrition for Black teachers.

As I stated before, the need for such an investigation derived from the limited domestic understandings about turnover for Black American teachers. Scholars have argued that their declining retention rates are often due to dismissal and dissatisfaction, but these arguments do not account for the Black American teachers in this study and those like them. These are frustrated American teachers, who Gibbs-Bowling described in the epigraph in the beginning of this chapter,

who chose not to go on strike, but instead to go abroad. Affective turnover, I contend, helps explain how Black teachers' intersectional identities and the affective dimensions of their lives influence their decisions to turnover to teaching outside the U.S., and to migrate to countries like the UAE, rather than to leave teaching altogether.

Widening the scope of domestic interpretations and giving voice to Black American EDPats not only allowed for Black teachers to tell their own migration stories, but it also made them visible in the literature. Too often, educational researchers and policymakers rely on quantitative datasets that subsequently silence their lives and experiences, thereby inflicting sentiments of invisibility. It is my hope that my future research and work on teacher professional development fuels significant changes in the ways Black teachers are viewed. There is an imperative need to retain them in the U.S. educational system, and to do so, requires more expansive approaches to understanding the issues they are facing.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol Questions

Focused Life History

1. What year were you born?
2. What is your place of birth?
3. Is your birthplace the same place you grew up?
4. If not, where did you grow up?
5. Describe details about the climate of your childhood household.
6. How does your childhood household compare with your current household?
    1. Children/ relationship status/etc.
7. Describe the schooling and occupational experiences of your grandparents.
8. Describe the schooling and occupational experiences of your parents.
9. Locations and names of schools you attended.
    1. K-12, Higher Education, schools worked in, etc.
    2. Other training
    3. Past/Current/Future occupations
10. Describe how you became interested in education/teaching/administration.
    1. Name three important influences on your career choice.
11. Describe how you became a teacher/admin/counselor.

Details of Experience in US

1. How would you describe the school environment you worked in in the US?
    1. Suburb, city, town, rural?
2. What were your students/teachers/colleagues like?
3. How would you describe the relationship between students/ admin/ teachers/ parents/ etc.?
4. How were you similar/different from students and others in the building?
5. What were the most noteworthy world events, local events, or national events during your educational career?
    1. Describe what it was like working in education during these times.
6. What aspects of your position excited you?
7. What aspects of your position challenged you?
8. What organizations were of significance to you during your educational career in the US?
9. What personal qualities helped you sustain your career in education?
10. Outside of school hours, how much of your time, in the US, did you spend doing the following?
    1. Working on school demands (lesson planning, grading, extracurricular activities)
    2. With family and friends
    3. Traveling
    4. Participating in Organizations

11. How satisfied were you with your teaching career in the US?
12. How satisfied were you with your overall life in the US?
13. How many years did you work in the US before deciding to move to the UAE?

Details of Migration

1. How did you learn about educational occupations and your current position in the UAE?
2. What excited you most about educational occupations in the UAE?
    1. Pull factors/Pull factors
3. Describe your process of applying and accepting your position.
4. Describe your preparation process before moving to the UAE.
5. Describe your pre-departure and/or arrival orientation procedures, if any.
6. What did you know about the UAE and EMIS before coming here?
7. Did you have any fears or concerns?

Details of Experience in UAE

1. How would you describe your school environment in the UAE?
2. What are your students/teachers/colleagues like?
3. How are you similar/different from students and others in the building?
4. What are the most noteworthy world events, local events, or national events that have occurred during your current educational career?
    1. Describe what it is like working in education during this time.

5. What aspects of your position excite you?
6. What aspects of your position challenge you?
7. How would you describe the relationship between students/ admin/ teachers/ parents/ etc.?
8. What organizations are of significance to you during your educational career in the UAE?
9. What personal qualities help you to sustain your career in education now?
10. How satisfied are you with your life as a whole here in the UAE? Inside and outside of school?
    1. What aspects challenge/excite you?
    2. To what extent do you feel like you are part of the UAE society?
    3. Have you experienced any discrimination based on your race? Gender? Nationality? Religion? Other identities?
11. How many years have you worked in the UAE?

Reflection on Meaning

1. Comparing the UAE to the US, using the terms not at all, somewhat, or a lot, rate the extent to which the following factors impacted your decision to stay in UAE.
    1. Salary
    2. Benefits
    3. Lived experience in UAE
    4. Identities

5. Work life balance
6. Ability to travel
7. School culture
8. Societal culture

2. Describe your future career in education.
3. Do you plan to return to the US? Why?
4. From your experience, what advice would you give to school leaders or recruitment agencies who aspire to recruit more teachers of color.

Appendix B

Additional transcript from Dick Richardson about tragedy faced by young boy

Dick: This was a little boy who again, could have used therapy, medication, and counseling, and he was a big story in the city. He jumped somebody's fence trying to break in their car. White guy who worked for the city and had a wife and a baby in the house. This is New Orleans, inside of Louisiana. Like people talk about the Stand Your Ground laws in Florida, but we're just not ignorant about it. We always had a joke in Orleans parish, if you really want to get somebody, just invite them into your grass and then shoot them. As soon as they touch your property, there is something called a Kingdom law, something like a Kingdom rule. But anyway, there is a complete set of legit laws that says as soon as somebody steps on your property, and they are a threat, you are well within your right to fire upon them. It's not something that is used every day by any stretch of the imagination. It's not like Florida. We got a bunch of crazy test cases. It's usually very legitimate. If it does happen, it's like, 'well, you should definitely not have been there at that particular time' (laughter).

Dick: And so, this was an interesting case in the sense that the little boy was bad, and they had to do something. They had the footage, he jumped the fence, and was shaking the car, and the White guy, reasonably so I would have to say, or at least I've never found enough anger with the guy, he came out and he shot him. And this was not some, 'You're a 2A [second amendment] pro-gun nut' who was

just waiting to pull the trigger. This was some chubby good old boy, White guy, who worked down at city hall. I don't know if he ever said n***a in his lifetime, but that's not what you first read off of him. He seemed somewhat shaky, that he had to do it, but he hit the kid in the head. I don't think he [the kid] died either, but he didn't come back to school. It was like, 'Man, we got these kids falling through the cracks and some things you can't do as a school, but shit, you just get these sobering wake-up calls.' This was a kid who you could point at and be like, 'Man, you have to slow down, you have to let us help you.' That pissed me off about that school because it was again, a mismanagement of resources, and no good plans of how to deal with these kids. They came up with a program because the kid was SPED [special education] too.

Appendix C

Additional Selected Transcript from Melanie's Experience in Italy

Melanie: I felt more at home in Italy then in Ghana. In Italy, I was like, 'Oh yeah, this my shit.' Even the way I dressed. I brought the wrong clothes to Ghana. At [University], when it was hot outside, I wore tennis shoes. You know the little Nike running shorts and T-shirts that you wear in college? At [University], these people dressed up, baby. To the nines; long skirts with tank tops. I'm looking like I'm running every day. With the way I dressed, I wasn't prepared [in Ghana]. But in Italy, I already knew what to wear. It was like, 'I'm going in the winter? Cool. Tall boots, cute bag, nice peacoat, braids. I'm out here, alright! I was at home.' And I went with my best friend. My friend was a personal financial planning major, and I was in HDFS [Human Development and Family Sciences]. It was an elective for us both. Instead of us taking a nutrition class, this was a Mediterranean diet and lifestyle course. We went all over Italy. We learned about their lifestyle, girl. We went to a factory for each of their main foods, balsamic vinegar and olive oil. We went to a winery. Girl listen, we were in Parma, Italy and saw how Parmesan cheese was made. They age that cheese for 10 years, like REAL parma. When you see it, it's so beautiful! You know how cheese looks in movies? The cut cheese in the big circles? They're like this big, and then this wide, and it's like a circle. It has the date stamped into the cheese. I found my birthday! They had vinegar that had been aging for over a hundred years. We tasted hundred-year-old vinegar!

Melanie: They start their meals with like bread and olive oil, right. So, you dip it [the bread] in there [the olive oil] but there was no salt on the bread. You know they don't eat salt in the bread. At first, we were like, 'man, this is nasty.' But then, we saw other people putting a little pepper in the olive oil, then dipping it. We started doing it, girl! I felt at home! It was amazing! But because the trip was focused on the Mediterranean diet and lifestyle, it talked about how American food culture has affected the world. It was around mealtime. So, we took cooking classes, we walked to cooking classes every day. We went to this really famous market in Florence. It was a pairing with a [University in Florence]. So because we were cooking with each other all day, we would make meals for each other.