

ABSTRACT

CRAIN, JULIE CHRISTI. Why Do National Board Certified Teachers from Generation X Leave the Classroom? (Under the direction of Dr. Lance Fusarelli.)

This qualitative multiple case study focused on National Board Certified teachers from Generation X who have left the classroom. The study explored aspects of the teaching profession, the National Board Certification process, and Generation X as potential influences for National Board Certified teachers from Generation X to leave the classroom.

The study provides a detailed description of six National Board Certified teachers from Generation X who left the classroom and two National Board Certified teachers from Generation X who have stayed in the classroom. Participant narratives describe choosing teaching, early career, pursuit of National Board Certification, and deciding to leave. Cross case analyses are provided within those who stayed, within those who left, and across groups.

The study found that characteristics of the teaching profession that influence National Board Certified teachers from Generation X to leave the classroom include: perception of the profession, lack of performance differentiation, positive early career, unfair responsibility and lack of support, and salary. The study also found that no characteristics of the National Board Certification process influence certified teachers from Generation X to leave the classroom. Five of six leavers did not expect their careers to change after pursuing and earning National Board Certification. Most participants sought certification because they believed it provided professional validation. Finally, the study found that characteristics of Generation X that influence certified teachers to leave the classroom include: definition of career, desire to maximize earning potential, importance of work/life balance, need for challenge, and the aspiration to affect impact beyond the classroom.

Why Do National Board Certified Teachers from
Generation X Leave the Classroom?

by
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DEDICATION

For my grandmothers...

Crida Mae Lowery – graduate of Pembroke State College for Indians in 1942 (now the University of North Carolina at Pembroke) and retired elementary school teacher. Both of Grandma Crida's daughters, including my mother, earned bachelor's degrees and were lifetime educators. My mother went on to earn two master's degrees.

Edna Mae Crain – graduate of Winthrop College. Of Mama Crain's ten children, eight earned post-secondary degrees, including my father. Five became lifetime educators – teachers and coaches – and several of those earned master's degrees. One of those five earned his doctorate and was a professor.

These amazing women created an expectation of success for their children. My mother and father benefitted from this expectation, and carried that forward for their children. My sister Emily and I were often asked as youngsters where we would be going to college. You see, there was no question about whether or not it would happen. We both have earned advanced degrees.

Grandma Crida and Mama Crain were responsible for the rich learning environment in which I grew up. They gave rise to the assembly of educators that surrounded me during my childhood and provided the foundation from which I chose teaching as a profession. They are the genesis of my passion for caring for teachers. They are no longer with me, but I see their reflections in the faces of my parents, sister, aunts, and uncles. I feel their pride in the celebration that my family shares with me in my success. I love them and miss them.

BIOGRAPHY

Julie Christi Crain grew up in Pembroke, North Carolina and is a member of the Lumbee Tribe. She is the oldest child of William and Nelia Crain, and in the familial nomenclature of Robeson County, she is “one of Mrs. Crida’s grandchildren.”

Julie graduated from Purnell Swett High School in 1990 and attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as a recipient of a North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship. She graduated in 1994 with a B.A. in English Education and stayed on to complete a Master of Arts in Teaching in 1995. She was hired as an English teacher in the Wake County Public School System in August 1995.

Julie taught English 9, 11, and 12 and several electives at Fuquay-Varina High School from 1995-2007. She was an active participant in school improvement committees. Later as the school improvement chair, she encouraged her principal to begin a leadership team, engaging teachers in decision making and enabling transparency at all levels of leadership within her school.

From 2001-2003, Julie completed the Kenan Fellows Program for Curriculum and Leadership Development. She earned National Board Certification in 2002. In 2003 she began her doctoral studies in Education Research and Policy Analysis at North Carolina State University. In the summers of 2005-2008, Julie worked with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as a scoring validator, assessor trainer for scoring assessment center prompts, and assessor trainer for scoring the Documented Accomplishments Entry for the Adolescent and Young Adult English Language Arts

certificate. She also served as a Teacher in Residence for the Center for Teaching Quality during this time.

In 2007, Julie left the classroom to take a position at Wake Education Partnership in Raleigh, North Carolina. The Partnership plays a critical role in helping business leaders, elected officials, and educators work toward the common goal of increasing student performance as measured against world-class academic standards. She currently serves as the Vice President of Program Development.

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Zora Neale Hurston said, “Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose. It is a seeking that he who wishes may know the cosmic secrets of the world and they that dwell therein.” My dissertation included several teachers who allowed me to interview them about their experience. Thank you to each of my participants for allowing me to poke and pry so that I might know and understand your experiences, and thus my own.

I would be nowhere without the continued love and support of my parents – William and Nelia Crain. They lovingly created an environment that enabled my success, and supported me with books, science kits, and summer camps. I realize now the lesson I learned during the seasons of planting, tending, and harvesting a garden that filled our freezer with vegetables; on the fall overnight fishing trips to Cherry Grove; and on the cold, early mornings at Great-Grandma Charity’s house salting hams with Great Uncle Curley: work—hard work—pays off. I love you and am so thankful for your love and support – completing this degree would not have been possible without you.

My sister Emily has always been my cheerleader. Thank you for asking how the writing was going, for really listening, and for asking questions that made me think. We are both members of Generation X – we shared Rubik’s Cubes and spent hours (and *so* many quarters) at the beach pier arcade playing Ms. Pac-Man. My nephew Kohl and niece Kipper are a source of joy and true recreation. Thank you for asking me to play outside and putting up with the thousands of pictures I have taken of you. I love you all very much.

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Suzanne Luper, thank you for your friendship and company along my life’s journey. You have made it safe for me to be me, whoever I may be. You are a source of calm, centered thought and reflection. I cannot thank you enough for your support.

In 2001 I met Deborah Mangum, then director of the Kenan Fellows Program. She provided the first positive reference to a teacher leaving the classroom I ever heard. Such optimism was a stark contrast to words like attrition, turnover, and loss. It enabled positive thinking about my own growth and development. Deborah, thank you for expressing your belief in my potential and for challenging me to grow, believe, and achieve.

For twelve years I worked with an amazing faculty at Fuquay-Varina High School. From them I learned what teaching really is – an act of caring for students – caring for their

past, their present, and their future. It was a difficult decision to leave Fuquay-Varina High in 2007. But in many ways, I never left at all. I carry all of you with me every day.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Every year teachers leave the public school classroom. Some retire at the end of their careers, while others leave to pursue jobs in public education outside of the classroom – school administrators or district level program positions. Some leave to pursue jobs outside of education altogether. Numerous teachers leave after only a year or two, having determined the career is not one they would like to pursue. Many of these teachers enter the profession full of passion and energy. Cochran-Smith (2004) warns that though

they love children, they love learning, they imagine a world that is a better and more just place, and they want all children to have the chance to live and work productively in a democratic society...these reasons are not enough to sustain teachers' work over the long haul in today's labor market and in the face of the extraordinarily complex and multiple demands today's teachers face (pp. 390-391).

Well-known trends about the number of new teachers leaving the profession before reaching the fifth year fill headlines annually. The numbers are alarming. Numerous studies have found that as many as 50 percent of new teachers leave teaching within five years of beginning their careers in the classroom and as many as 33 percent leave in the first three years (Chang, 2009; Corbell, 2009; Hafner & Owings, 1991; Huling-Austin, 1990; Ingersoll, 2002; Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kimple, & Olsen, 1991; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Margolis (2008) notes this as an accelerated rate of attrition and suggests that, "Teachers with 4-6 years' experience may be considered, on average, mid-career in this profession of accelerated attrition" (p. 164).

Rates of attrition are highest among teachers at the beginning and at the end of teaching careers (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Rinke, 2007). The notion that most teachers leave the classroom due to retirement has been challenged, with studies showing retirement accounted for a small proportion of all those leaving teaching careers (Ingersoll, 2003; McDonald, 1999). Almost half of teachers leaving did so due to job dissatisfaction and the pursuit of a better job within education or outside the classroom (Ingersoll, 2003). Recently, *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher* (2012) declared an alarming increase in the number of teachers dissatisfied with their jobs. The percentage of teachers reporting they are very satisfied with their jobs dropped from 59 percent in 2009 to 44 percent in 2011, the lowest rate reported in 20 years. Additionally, the percentage of teachers reporting that they are likely to leave the teaching profession and pursue a different occupation has risen from 17 percent in 2009 to 29 percent in 2011.

Much investigation and energy is given to retaining those teachers just beginning their careers. Less is known about those teachers who are near mid-career and are leaving the profession. In 2011, those individuals are from Generation X. Buchanan (2010) warns that “younger workers – the Gen X-ers and GenY-ers – have an increasing capacity to vote with their feet in terms of their careers. Increasingly, the teaching profession needs to be competitive to attract, value-add to and retain quality staff” (p. 209). Even less is known about those teachers who leave the profession after attaining advanced certificates like that offered by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

In the past twenty-five years, media has drawn attention to generational differences. Members of Generation X have been characterized as slackers and whiners, and were the

first generation warned that they would have to work longer and harder than their parents to be just as well off (Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1993; Tulgan, 2000; Williams, Coupland, Folwell, & Sparks, 1997). With the arrival of Generation X in the workplace, the 1990s brought headlines of clashes between Generation X and the Baby Boomers. Titles such as *Managing Generation X: How to Bring Out the Best in Young Talent* (Tulgan, 2000), *Beyond Generation X: A Practical Guide for Managers* (Raines, 1997), and *The neXt Revolution: What Gen X Women Want at Work and How Their Boomer Bosses Can Help Them Get It* (Shelton & Shelton, 2005) provide promises of how to deal with generational differences in the workplace. While there are explorations of Generation Y and the Millennials in the teaching profession (Bontempo, 2010; Margolis, 2008), very little literature explores the lives of teachers from Generation X.

Statement of the Problem

National teacher attrition data is reported in the Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS), a survey completed by a sample of teachers who participated in the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) from the previous year. Both the TFS and the SASS are projects of the National Center for Education Statistics. The goal of TFS is to provide teacher attrition data for public and private school K-12 teachers in the United States. These surveys are nationally representative and are the, “largest and most comprehensive data source available on the staffing, occupational, and organizational aspects of elementary and secondary schools” (Ingersoll & May, 2010, p. 11). The 2003-2004 SASS survey sample includes 43,244 teachers from 8,747 public schools. The 2004-2005 TFS survey sample includes 5,323 teachers from 3,763 public schools.

In 2008-2009, the last school year in which the TFS was administered, 8 percent of public school teachers left the teaching profession (Keigher & Cross, 2010). As demonstrated in Table 1, the number and percentage of public school teachers categorized as “leavers” has been steadily rising since the first administration of the TFS in 1988-89 (Keigher & Cross, 2010, p. 6).

Table 1

Number and Percentage of Teacher Leavers in Public Schools

	Number	Percent
1988-89	132,300	5.6
1991-92	130,500	5.1
1994-95	167,600	6.6
2000-01	221,400	7.4
2004-05	269,600	8.4
2008-09	269,800	8.0

The teachers interviewed in this study will represent the lowest percentages of leavers by years of experience and age. Teacher attrition patterns show that teachers between the ages of 30 and 50 have the smallest attrition rates (Keigher & Cross, 2010; Rinke, 2007). Further, teachers with corresponding years of experience (10-19 years) have lowest attrition rate among the various experience categories (Keigher & Cross, 2010, p. 7). This data is noted because the subject of this study is National Board Certified teachers from Generation X, the generation of individuals born between 1965 and 1976 (Strauss & Howe, 1991). In 2012 these individuals were between 36 and 47 years old and had between 14 and 25 years of experience (assuming a classroom career start at age 22).

This study specifically examines teachers in North Carolina. At the state level, the Public Schools of North Carolina releases an annual NC Teacher Turnover Report detailing reasons why teachers leave through the Department of Public Instruction. The report notes a state teacher turnover rate of 11.17 percent for the 2010-2011 school year, or 10,792 teachers of the 96,651 teachers employed; this marks a slight increase in the teacher turnover rate of 11.10 percent for the 2009-2010 school year (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2011). This is higher than the national attrition rate of 8 percent reported in 2008-2009, the last school year in which the TFS was administered (Keigher & Cross, 2010). The report does not provide specific details of teacher characteristics such as age, years of experience, license area, or additional certifications. The report does include the number of teachers reported leaving who have tenure. Teacher tenure in North Carolina is awarded at or near the end of the fourth consecutive year of employment (North Carolina General Statute 115-325c). The number of teachers reported leaving for the 2010-2011 school year was 10,792 teachers and 42.56 percent of them (4,594) had tenure. This is an increase over the 2009-2010 school year (36.52 percent) as well as the 2007-2008 school year (33.96 percent).

It would be in the best interest of all involved for teachers who are most effective to stay in the classroom. The literature presents varied conclusions on the attrition of effective teachers. Goldhaber, Gross, and Player (2011) found that on average, North Carolina's most effective elementary teachers in the first five years of teaching are the least likely to leave. In a study of attrition, mobility, and teacher effectiveness using North Carolina teacher, student, and school data, the authors note that, "the odds of exiting the system decline by 22 percent with each additional standard deviation of effectiveness" (p. 73). Further, teachers in the top

quintile of effectiveness are least likely to leave, and those in the bottom quintile are more likely to leave, than those teachers in the middle of the effectiveness distribution.

In a review of empirical literature on teacher recruitment and retention, Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) found multiple characteristics describing those teachers who leave the profession. A “U-shaped pattern of attrition with respect to age of experience” can be seen, demonstrating high levels of attrition within the first years of teaching and at the end of teaching careers (p. 173). Levels of attrition were higher among minority teachers, female teachers, and teachers in the fields of science and mathematics. Finally, teachers demonstrating higher academic ability as measured by test scores were more likely to leave teaching. This last finding was echoed by Goldhaber, Gross, and Player (2011), who found that significant predictors of teachers leaving the classroom include college selectivity (as judged by average freshman SAT scores) and teacher licensure exam scores.

Teacher attrition negatively affects teacher quality, student achievement, and school stability (Corbell, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003; Peske, Liu, Johnson, Kauffman, & Kardos, 2001). There is also a negative financial impact due to costs associated with recruiting new teachers to replace those who have left (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Corbell, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003). The Alliance for Excellence Education (2005) reported that at the national level, schools minimally spend \$2.2 billion to recruit, hire, and train teachers to replace those who left; the state of North Carolina annually expends more than \$84.5 million to replace public school teachers.

The effects of teacher attrition also include the loss of knowledge, skills, and attributes gained by teaching experience. Few studies have attempted to identify those skills

“required and acquired by teachers” (Buchanan, 2009a, p. 37). In a study of 22 former teachers, Buchanan (2009a) found that experience in a teaching career equips individuals with skills that are highly valued in other professions: these teachers had “little trouble applying their skills and knowledge in new contexts...ironically, it may be that other professions are recognizing this expertise more than the teaching profession itself” (p. 39). Respondents who were former teachers provided feedback regarding skills gained and/or strengthened during their careers in teaching. They are skilled at communication, particularly “breaking down and organizing information” (p. 41). For secondary school teachers, specific content knowledge and related skills have led to success in other careers such as medicine (science), plant nursery (agriculture), and museum curator (science). These former teachers were confident, able to present to and manage large groups of people confidently. They have people skills such as patience, tolerance, consistency, and conflict resolution and can encourage people and help them feel at ease. Finally, Buchanan’s respondents’ say they honed their management and organizational skills. One respondent noted that “21 years of managing people – staff, angry parents” (p. 44) prepared her for dealing with patients as a doctor. Buchanan notes that ultimately, “the profession is losing competent people...Assuming that new teachers will underperform their more experienced selves in five or ten years’ time, it is valuable if not imperative to retain as many teachers as possible” (p. 46).

The teacher is the number one school-based attribute affecting student achievement, and strong empirical evidence links teacher quality to student achievement (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003;

Hanushek, 1992; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Such evidence is found as far back as the Coleman report in 1966, which notes that teacher characteristics are the strongest school resource influence on student achievement (Borman & Dowling, 2008). One marker of teacher quality is National Board Certification, which has proven to be an effective signal of teacher quality (Cavalluzzo, 2004; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007).

National Board Certification (NBC) is a nationwide teacher certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). NBPTS is an “independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan and nongovernmental organization. It was formed in 1987 to advance the quality of teaching and learning by developing professional standards for accomplished teaching, creating a voluntary system to certify teachers who meet those standards and integrating certified teachers into educational reform efforts” (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2011a). NBPTS presents a vision for accomplished teaching and offers 25 certificates in different subject areas and student age groups (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2011b). Many states offer incentives such as a one-time salary bonus or a salary increase for the 10-year life of the certificate.

Research suggests that National Board Certified teachers from Generation X should be among the least likely of all teachers to leave the profession (Corbell, 2009; Keigher, 2010). The cases examined in this case study do not conform to this pattern. These former teachers exhibited all of the characteristics of those likely to complete careers in the classroom; they are mid-career and have earned National Board Certification. Yet, they left the profession. Some are employed in parallel professions – education policy and/or

education non-profits. Some are employed in non-parallel professions. None continues to be employed at a school building or by a school district.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study is to describe why National Board Certified Teachers from Generation X are leaving the classroom. It will do so by exploring characteristics of the teaching profession, the National Board Certification process, and Generation X. The following research question, and sub questions, will be explored:

1. Why are National Board Certified Teachers from Generation X leaving the classroom?
 - a. What characteristics of the teaching profession lead National Board Certified teachers from Generation X to leave the classroom?
 - b. What characteristics of the National Board Certification process lead teachers from Generation X to leave the classroom?
 - c. What generational characteristics of Generation X influence National Board Certified teachers to leave the classroom?

Definition of Terms

Generation – a sociological concept first established by Karl Mannheim in 1923, and further expanded and defined by Oretaga y Gasset and Marías (Marías, 1970). Individuals in a generation are born within the same period of time and in a similar place, and experience the same social and historical events that bond them together. These social and historical events shape the values, ideas, personality, and behavior of the generation and create a generational identity.

Generation X – the name given to the group of individuals born between 1965 and 1976 in North America.

National Board Certification (NBC) – a ten-year certification earned by teachers granted by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) – a teacher who has earned National Board Certification.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) – the national organization that generated, organized, and continues to orchestrate the National Board Certification process. They are an independent, non-profit, nongovernmental organization.

Teacher Attrition – refers to teachers leaving the profession.

Teacher Retention – refers to efforts to retain teachers in the profession. This includes induction programs for new teachers and incentive programs for experienced teachers.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it will offer some insight into why experienced, highly effective teachers from Generation X are leaving the classroom. The case study participants will be mid-career teachers with National Board Certification who left the profession. Research suggests National Board Certified teachers are among the most highly effective teachers active in the classroom given their experience level and National Board Certification (Cavalluzo, 2004; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003, 2007). It is in the best interest of students and school administrators to prevent the attrition of these teachers.

This study is also significant because it will help states and districts protect their investments in teachers. Rinke (2008) found that teachers with higher qualifications (such as advanced degrees and certifications) are more likely to leave the profession. National Board Certified teachers represent a significant financial investment by the state of North Carolina. Until 2010, North Carolina paid for certified instructional personnel to go through the certification process, at a cost of \$2500 per teacher. Each candidate is also provided three days of paid release time to work on the portfolio. These incentives are more generous than most other states provide. As a result, North Carolina has the largest number of Nationally Board Certified teachers in the nation. Research shows that National Board Certified teachers are highly effective; the investment is a worthy one (Cavalluzo, 2004; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003, 2007). North Carolina has made a substantial investment in National Board Certified teachers. It makes sense to explore the reasons why that investment is not keeping these teachers in the classroom.

Finally, this study is significant because it adds to the research on the lives of teachers from Generation X as well as the attrition of National Board Certified teachers. Reviews of the literature found no dissertations or literature reviews addressing the lives of teachers from Generation X, attrition of teachers from Generation X, attrition of National Board Certified teachers, or any combination of these three topics. No research exists on why National Board Certified teachers from Generation X are leaving the classroom. This research will fill a void in the literature.

Overview of Approach

A qualitative collective case study methodology will be used to address these research questions. The researcher will include no fewer than six and no more than eight cases for inclusion in the study. Purposive sampling will be used to identify individuals who are between 36-47 years of age, have between 14 and 25 years of experience, and have attained National Board Certification. The researcher will conduct semi-structured interviews to collect data. An interview guide will be used to ensure that all cases respond to the same questions. Questions will be as open-ended as possible to yield thick, rich descriptions of the experiences of former teachers in the sample.

Qualitative research allows a researcher to capitalize on personal experience, rather than be limited by its influence. McMillan (2004) states that it is imperative that a researcher's biases and perspectives be understood and utilized. To that end, it is important to detail the researcher's experience in the following Subjectivity Statement.

Subjectivity Statement

The researcher is a NBCT from Generation X who left the classroom. She was born in 1972, and remembers very clearly the media comments generated about a newly titled "Generation X" when exiting college in 1994. She is from a family of teachers – her mother, grandmother, aunts, and uncles filled her childhood days with stories from their own classrooms. Early on she knew teaching as a storied profession; holiday gatherings were extended storytelling sessions of classroom challenges and triumphs. Though her early career thoughts did not include teaching, it was not a strange thought to consider.

As a high school senior she pursued and was awarded a North Carolina Teaching Fellowship, a state-sponsored fellowship/scholarship worth \$5,000 per year at many campuses across North Carolina. It was repaid with four years of teaching service in North Carolina. It was a bit of a surprise to her parents that she would consider teaching as a profession. For years she spoke only of the science professions. Everyone was comfortable with teaching as a backup profession for her, but they hoped she would pursue other possibilities after graduation. She graduated from UNC Chapel Hill in 1994 with a B.A. in English Education, and stayed on a year to complete a Masters of Arts in Teaching. Her mother returned to graduate school mid-career and advised that graduate school would be easier now than it would 10-15 years down the line. Her parents were very generous with their support, and enabled her to begin a career in 1995 having already attained a master's degree.

The first years of her career were full of challenges – curriculum to master, students to reach and teach. When hired, she agreed to coach junior varsity girls basketball. There was barely a free minute to be found. Year three of her career, the first she did not coach, seemed to be the first year she began to feel more in charge of her classroom and her curriculum. She understood enough of her students and the curriculum that she could generate better assignments. School improvement committees offered an opportunity to engage with her colleagues in a larger-scale effort to improve her school. She was enjoying her career.

Year six brought new and different feelings. For the first time, all was not well. She began to feel restless and a bit bored. Though she had initially planned on pursuing

administrative roles, she had concluded that those were roles for which she was not best suited. Rather than focusing on school improvement and larger quality issues, the assistant principal and principal roles seemed to deal with mountains and mountains of minutia – locker assignment, textbook storage and purchasing, transportation, campus maintenance, discipline, disgruntled parents, and lots and lots of duty – game duty, bus duty, lunch duty, courtyard duty, prom duty, etc. There were no other roles for teachers to occupy other than that of classroom teacher. Was this it for the next twenty-four years?

In the winter of year six, she found notice of a new fellowship program for teaching advertised in her school's media center. The Kenan Fellowship Program was a two-year opportunity to develop leadership and curriculum. Later that spring, she was fortunate to be awarded a Kenan Fellowship for her curriculum proposal that brought a science focus into her English classroom via science fiction. Years seven and eight of her career were quite possibly the richest she had known. She met regularly with a group of eight other teachers for training, leadership development, curriculum development, and encouragement. With their encouragement, she completed the requirements for and was awarded National Board Certification during year seven of her career. During year eight, again with encouragement, she began to consider pursuing a doctorate degree. As her Kenan Fellowship ended, she enrolled in her first doctoral courses at NC State. Four years later, having completed her coursework and year twelve of her career, she made the decision to leave the classroom.

The decision to leave the classroom was gut wrenching. Four years had passed since the researcher had completed her Kenan Fellowship. She had sought additional ways to be involved at her school. She became the school improvement chairperson and encouraged her

principal to begin a leadership team of school leaders which she chaired. The leadership team was able to engage teachers in school-level decision making, and encourage transparency at all levels of leadership within her school. All of these developments and changes were good, yet there were few, if any, additional roles or challenges that remained for her professionally. She had twelve years of experience, a master's degree, and National Board Certification. She was the school improvement chair and led the school improvement team. Unless she took a step into administration, there were no other steps to take. Eighteen years stretched out before her, and each of them looked remarkably the same. She happened upon a job opportunity in her degree field – education research and policy analysis. A local education foundation was looking to replace a staff member who was returning to the classroom. (Ironically, that staff member joined the faculty at the school the researcher left.)

Five years have passed since the researcher left the classroom, and she still is trying to figure out why it was necessary for her to leave. She believes in public education. She believes teachers willingly bear great responsibility for student learning and development. She believes that it is necessary for teachers to grow and develop throughout their careers. She also believes there are few, if any, roles for teachers beyond the classroom. That seems to have been the case for the researcher. Had there been additional roles that provided some route for advancement, she would have most assuredly pursued those.

Organization of the Study

This chapter provided an introduction to the topic of teacher attrition of National Board Certified teachers from Generation X, a statement of the problem, and the purpose and significance of the study. Important terms were defined, the organization of the study was

reviewed, and the researcher's subjectivity statement was presented. Chapter Two provides the theoretical framework for the study and reviews the literature on Generation X, National Board Certification, and teacher attrition. Chapter Three describes the methodology and techniques that will be used to conduct this study. Chapter Four presents the findings organized around themes generated from analysis of the case studies. Chapter Five will provide a summary of the study's findings, discussion of these findings within the context of existing research, implications of the findings for practice, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

“You belong to it too. You came along at the same time. You can’t get away from it. You’re a part of it whether you want to be or not.”

Thomas Wolfe – *You Can’t Go Home Again?*

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review research literature related to this study. This literature review will start with an overview of two theoretical frameworks for the study: perception theory and generation theory. This provides a foundation for exploring teacher perceptions and generational characteristics.

The literature review will then provide an overview of research on Generation X, National Board Certification, and teacher attrition. First, research on Generation X will define the generation, describe generational attributes, and explore Generation X as a workforce. Next, research on National Board Certification will provide a brief history and explore the effects of National Board Certification on student achievement, professional impact, and teacher retention. Finally, research on teacher attrition will describe predictors, teacher explanations, and generational issues as well as describe a possible new career model for a new generation of teachers.

Theoretical Framework – Perception Theory

Participants will be asked to describe their perception of the teaching profession at various points of their teaching career. Therefore, a review of the literature on perception theory is included.

The perceptual tradition describes how an individual's view and experience of the world informs human behavior. In particular, the perceptual tradition maintains that an individual's behavior is based on how that individual perceives the world (Combs & Avila, 1985; Combs, Avila, & Purkey, 1971; Purkey, 1970; Purkey, 1978; Purkey & Novak, 1988; Purkey & Stanley, 1991; Schmidt, 1997). Purkey (1970) notes that the key distinction to this approach to understanding human behavior is that "it gives primary importance to a person's perceived world, rather than to objective reality" (p. 2).

Purkey and Schmidt (1987, 1996) and Purkey and Stanley (1991) have summarized primary features and assumptions of the perceptual tradition. The following list is provided from Purkey and Schmidt (1996):

- “1. There may be a preexistent reality, but an individual can only know that part which comprises his or her perceptual world, the world of awareness.
2. Perceptions at any given moment exist at countless levels of awareness, from the vaguest to the sharpest.
3. Because people are limited in what they can perceive, they are highly selective in what they choose to perceive.
4. All experiences are phenomenal in character. The fact that two individuals share the same physical environment does not mean that they will have the same experiences.
5. What individuals choose to perceive is determined by past experiences as mediated by present purposes, perceptions, and expectations.
6. Individuals tend to perceive only that which is relevant to their purposes and make their choices accordingly.

7. Choices are determined by perceptions, not facts. How a person behaves is a function of his or her perceptual field at the moment of acting.
8. No perception can ever be fully shared or totally communicated because it is embedded in the life of the individual.
9. Phenomenal absolutism means that people tend to assume that other observers perceive as they do. If others perceive differently, it is often thought to be because others are mistaken or they lie.
10. The perceptual field, including the perceived self, is internally organized and personally meaningful. When this organization and meaning are threatened, emotional problems are likely to result.
11. Communication depends on the process of acquiring greater mutual understanding of one another's phenomenal fields.
12. People not only perceive the world of the present, but they also reflect on past experiences and imagine future ones to guide their behavior.
13. Perceptions create their own reality. People respond not to reality, but to their perceptions of reality.
14. Reality can exist for an individual only when he or she is conscious of it and has some relationship with it.
15. A person may perceive the "facts" involved in a situation, but may grossly distort the meaning of these facts.
16. Client distress may be more a process of perception of a situation than a situation itself."

(pp. 29-30)

As defined in the perceptual tradition, the term perception extends beyond sensory information to include meaning (Combs & Avila, 1985; Combs, Avila, & Purkey, 1971; Purkey & Stanley, 1991). According to Combs and Avila (1985), the term “refers not only to ‘seeing’ but also, more importantly, to ‘meaning’—the personal significance of an event for the person experiencing it. These meanings extend far beyond sensory experiences to include such perceptions as beliefs, values, feelings, hopes, desires, and the personal ways people regard themselves and others” (pp. 29-30). Combs and Avila (1985) refer to all of these things as an individual’s “perceptual field” (p. 31) and conclude that individual behavior is based on it.

This study seeks to understand why a group of individuals (National Board Certified teachers from Generation X) exhibited a singular behavior (each left the classroom). Understanding each individual’s perceptual field – their “beliefs, values, feelings, hopes, [and] desires” will inform the why each exhibited the same behavior (Combs & Avila, 1985, p. 31). Each participant’s unique experience as a National Board Certified teacher from Generation X who has left the classroom has shaped that participant’s perception of teaching. Purkey and Schmidt (1996) note that the perceptual tradition attempts to “understand human behavior through the eye of the beholder—from the perspective of the person’s personal and unique experience” (p. 28). Therefore, it is an appropriate theoretical approach to this study.

Theoretical Framework – Generation Theory

The concept of the generation is an ancient one. Myths and legends of many diverse cultures – Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Celts, Teutons, Slavs, and Hindus – use the concept of generation as a way to indicate the passage of time, perhaps describing the length

of a war or reign of a sovereign (Guirand, 1968). The ancient Greeks, including Homer, Plato, and Cicero, recognized divisions of life. These divisions had distinct characteristics and associations – “youth...is a time of action, while contemplation and counsel are for the aged” (Nash, 1978, p. 5 as cited in Braungart & Braungart, 1986). Such distinctions and group identities continued throughout the Classical, Hellenistic, and Classical Roman periods (Nash, 1978).

In modern English, many senses of the word generation are first attested in early English translations of the Bible. Psalms 11:8 (1382 translation) and Mark 8:12 (1535 translation) both use the word as a collective reference to all people born and living at roughly the same time (*Oxford English Dictionary*). During the 19th century, the study of generations focused on defining the generation in units of time. Comte, Ferrari, and Dilthey believed a generation was thirty years long, and Giraud believed it to be fifteen years (Mannheim, 1952; Sills, 1968). Even Thomas Jefferson believed the length of a generation was thirty-four years long, though he later revised the number to 18.2 years (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Establishing the Cohort Approach

Writers first explored the notion of a generation as a cohort (a group sharing a specific location in history and a common personality) in the 18th and 19th centuries. In 1750, Ben Johnson in *The Rambler* used the word generation in this way, as did Edward Gibbon in 1781 (*OED*). Goethe noted that the way each person views the world is defined by experiences of their youth, and that those individuals of the same generation are linked by bonds of mutual understanding (Braungart & Braungart, 1986). John Stuart Mill, a student

of Comte, explored how generations set the pace of social progress. A succession of generations possesses society, each one necessarily influenced by the prior generation and all of history, and also influencing the generation that follows (Laufer & Bengston, 1974; Marías, 1970; Sills, 1968; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Wilhelm Dilthey advanced the idea that a generation is a space of time as well as a contemporary relation of individuals to each other (Mannheim, 1952; Marías, 1970; Sills, 1968). This contemporary relationship is important because individuals experience common influences; this is the basis of groups developing common peer personalities.

But in 1923, it was Karl Mannheim who firmly established the concept of the generation within a sociohistorical context with his essay *The Sociological Problem of Generations* (Pilcher, 1994). Mannheim noted several elements of the generation. Individuals must share a generation location – be born within the same period of time and in a similar place. They must also share a generation actuality – experience the same social and historical events that bond them together. “Individuals of the same age are...only united as an actual generation in so far as they participate in the characteristic social and intellectual currents of their society and period” (Mannheim, 1923, p. 304). José Ortega y Gasset’s theory of generations shares these required elements. For Ortega y Gasset, a generation shares a time span that shapes its views. These generations receive ideas, values, and institutions of preceding generations as well as produce their own (Kertzer, 1983; Marías, 1970; Sills, 1968).

Cohort Generation

A generation is made up of individuals who were born in a limited number of consecutive years who age in a similar historical environment (Elder, 1975; Kertzer, 1983). Within this historical environment, members of a generation share similar experiences, and are exposed to events and social conditions (Laufer & Bengston, 1974). These events and conditions shape the values, ideas, personality, and behavior of the generation – the generational identity (Marías, 1970; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

To examine and understand a generational identity, it is necessary to identify and understand the shared experiences, historical and cultural events, and social conditions that define a generation (Elder, 1975). A review of the literature will now provide an overview of Generation X, the generation of focus for this study.

Generation X

Birth Years

A review of the literature shows that many birth year ranges are used to identify the generation of individuals born after the Baby Boomers. The most widely accepted and longest range of dates is 1961-1981 (Miller & Miller, 2000; O'Bannon, 2001; Ritchie, 1995; Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1993). The most widely accepted and concise range of dates is 1965-1976 (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003; Bowen, Kotler & Makens, 1999; Crispell, 1993; Mitchell, 1988; New Strategist Editors, 2006).

For the purpose of this study, Generation X is defined as those born between 1965 and 1976. In 2011, the members of Generation X were between the ages of 35-46. In the

2010 Census, Generation X included 50,154,042 people and was 16.2 percent of the total U. S. population (Howden & Meyer, 2011).

Defining Generation X: A Generation with No Name

Strauss and Howe (1991) refer to the generation born between 1961-1981 as the 13th Generation, as this is the 13th generation of individuals born in the United States since the nation's birth after the Revolutionary War. Patalano (2008) reports that the generation has also been referred to as “the MTV Generation, Generation X, Generation Next, Baby Busters, Slackers, Twenty-Somethings, Post Boomers, Generation 2000...and the Shadow Generation” (p. 5).

Author Douglas Coupland made the term “Generation X” popular in when he published *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* in 1991. The novel featured the lives of young adults in the late 1980s who faced challenges and realities unlike their Baby Boomer parents. Ulrich and Harris (2003) offer that “Generation X has always signified a group of young people, seemingly without identity, who face an uncertain, ill-defined (and perhaps hostile) future” (p. 3). The phrase was first coined by photographer Robert Capa in 1953 to describe young men and women growing up after World War II (Ulrich & Harris, 2003). Later, it was used as the title of a study of British youth in 1964 by Jane Deverson and Charles Hamblett.

Generation X – The Formative Years and Resulting Generational Attributes

Generation X grew up during an era of hostility toward children. During the 1960's and 1970's, the proportion of G-rated films fell from 41 percent to percent to 13 percent; even Walt Disney laid off cartoonists (1991). Strauss and Howe (1991) note that movies

produced portrayed a distressing image of childhood: “*The Exorcist, Exorcist II, Damien, Omen, Omen II, Omen III*...and when the film children of the 1970’s were not slashing and hexing parents, they were pictured as...prostitutes (*Taxi Driver*)...arsonists (*Carrie*), spoiled brats (*Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*), or abandoned articles (*Kramer vs. Kramer*)” (p. 97).

Strauss and Howe (1991) noted many elements that reveal a *kinderfeindlichkeit*, a society-wide hostility toward children. Homicide rates of children under the age of four doubled, the number of legal abortions increased by tenfold, and birth control technology increased in popularity (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Rates of childhood poverty increased while poverty rates of adults and the elderly fell. Further, “the nation financed a growing share of its consumption by piling up federal debt and other unfunded liabilities whose greatest burdens, adults realized, would someday fall on small children” (p. 98). Though many of these trends would stabilize or reverse in the 1980s, there was an impact on the formative years of Generation X.

Parental divorce had more effect on Generation X than any generation prior. Strauss and Howe (1991) noted that a child from Generation X faced two times the risk of divorce than did child Baby Boomers and three times the risk of children from the generation before the Baby Boomers. Williams et al. (1997) noted that by the 1970s, 40 percent of marriages ended in divorce. As a result, children of Generation X often lived in complex families consisting of step-parents and step-siblings or resided in single-parent households (Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1993; Williams et al, 1997). Strauss and Howe (1991) note that, “In 1980, just 56 percent of all dependent children lived with two once-married parents, another 14 percent

with at least one previously married parent, 11 percent with a stepparent, and 19 percent with one parent. One in five had half siblings” (p. 325).

Generation X experienced a substantial increase of mothers returning to the workplace (Strauss & Howe, 1991; Williams et al., 1997). Between 1960 and 1980, the proportion of mothers with full or part-time jobs and having children aged five or under rose from 20 to 47 percent. Throughout the 1970s, the number of “latchkey” children under 14 doubled. “Latchkey” refers to children letting themselves in when they return home from school as opposed to having a parent (typically a mother) at home. As a result, children of Generation X were noted to be better than child Baby Boomers at “negotiating skills, consumer awareness, adult-interaction skills, and defenses to prevent extreme dependency on parents or authorities” (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 325). Alverson (1999) noted that, “GenXers are increasingly independent because they inherited adult responsibilities earlier than their predecessors” (p. 16).

Generation X is also aware of its financial vulnerability (Ortner, 1998; Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1993; Williams et al., 1997). They will pay more into and get less out of social security (Malkin, 1994). In 1990, one in five members of Generation X lived in poverty (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Strauss and Howe (1991) also note that incomes of male wage earners have fallen; “In 1967, male wage earners in their early twenties made 74 percent as much as older males; by 1988, that ratio had fallen to 54 percent. Between 1973 and 1988, the median income of households headed by persons under age 25 (adjusted for inflation and family size) fell by 18 percent” (p. 327). Generation X will also need to work longer and harder to have the same standard of living as the Baby Boomers and will experience less

promising promotion paths (Strauss & Howe, 1993; VanSant, 1993). As a result, members of Generation X move quickly into and out of jobs, especially when they see a dead end (Bova & Kroth, 2001).

Shared social and historical events shape a generation's identity and attributes. These events and conditions shape the values, ideas, personality, and behavior of the generation – the generational identity (Marías, 1970; Strauss & Howe, 1991). The shared events for Generation X include incidents such as: *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, the Three Mile Island nuclear accident in 1979, the launch of MTV in 1981, the Commodore 64 personal computer released for sale in 1982, the Challenger space shuttle disaster in 1986, and the Chinese government execution of protestors in Tiananmen Square in 1989 (Arsenault, 2003; Bova & Kroth, 2001; Oblinger, 2003; Patalano, 2008; Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1993; Tulgan, 2000).

Alverson (1999) calls Generation X “the lost sheep of the modern age...plagued by divorce, drugs, crime, homelessness, declining incomes and a troubled education” (p. 15). Denham and Gadbow (2002) note that members of Generation X are marked by skepticism, having grown up, “seeing every major American institution called into question, including the presidency, organized religion, higher education, and corporate America” (p. 4). Despite these beginnings, many members of Generation X have succeeded in becoming global entrepreneurs, having created such companies as Netscape, Yahoo, Amazon, and Google (Wong & Wong, 2006). Perhaps, as Patalano (2008) suggests, these events have benefitted Generation X and have “served to impart to Gen X the lessons that nothing is forever and that they needed to take care of themselves – because nobody else was going to” (p. 21).

Generation X at Work

Ortner (1998) notes, “Whatever else Generation X has been about – social problems, ecological disasters, AIDS – it has always been, first and foremost, about identity through work: jobs, money, and careers. The issues have been economic from the very beginning: declining male wages and family incomes, working harder for less money, shrinking job markets, expensive degrees that lead nowhere, McJobs” (p. 421).

Members of Generation X have distinct workplace attributes and characteristics. Zemke et al. (2000) and Conger (2001) (in Arsenault, 2003) report that members of Generation X can be described as: “fair, competent, and straightforward; do not respect authority as did past generations as they prefer egalitarian relationships; like to be challenged and thrive on change; brutal honesty is a trademark of this generation” (p. 130). Bova and Kroth (2001) provide these workplace characteristics of Generation X: “parallel thinkers; independent and resourceful; accepting of change; they ‘want it now!’; comfortable with diversity; have expectations of work/life balance; technologically literate; free agent approach to careers; lifelong learners” (p. 58). Such attributes are different than those of generations before and after Generation X (Applebaum, Serena, & Shapiro, 2004; Arsenault, 2003; Bontempo, 2010; Gempes, 2008; Jurkiewicz, 2000).

Generation X – Workplace Values

Generations bring different values and motivations to the workplace (Alverson, 1999; Arsenault, 2003). Members of Generation X value the ability to learn new things, autonomy, flexibility, dynamic career paths, feedback and short-term rewards (Bova & Kroth, 2001; Jurkiewicz, 2000). Tulgan (2000) suggests that because members of Generation X were

latch-key kids and learned to take care of themselves, they now value trust, freedom, and flexibility to complete their jobs. Tulgan (2000) further states that as members of Generation X experienced substantial financial, family, and societal insecurity in a time of rapid change, as a generation they have a greater sense of independence and individualism.

With members of four generations now in the workplace, research exploring generational differences is valuable. In a study of 805 telecommunication employees, Rodriguez, Green, and Ree (2003) determined generational preferences for leadership behavior differed among Baby Boomers (47.7 percent of respondents) and Generation X (52.3 percent of respondents). Questions were asked about fulfillment, technology, flexibility, monetary benefits, and work environment with the goal of informing workplace leadership practice that will “guide and inspire” the workforce (p. 74). Members of Generation X are most fulfilled by challenging tasks completed within one workday, while Baby Boomers prefer a challenging task completed over several days. The two generations displayed different preferences for technology; Generation X preferred completing purchasing tasks on the internet while Baby Boomers preferred the telephone. When considering workplace flexibility, Generation X preferred flexible work hours and locations while Baby Boomers preferred regularly scheduled work hours. Different monetary benefits were also preferred; Generation X preferred a 401k with a lump sum distribution while Baby Boomers preferred a retirement plan with benefits. Finally, the two generations preferred different work environments; Generation X preferred an environment that is challenging and fun, though perhaps not secure while Baby Boomers preferred job security.

Additional research demonstrates similar differences between the generations. A study of 368 employees of large organizations around the world provides additional insight into the differences between Generation X and their colleagues from other generations (Deloitte, 2009). This study found that employees from Generation X (37 percent) were least likely to stay with their current employer, as compared to Generation Y (44 percent) and Baby Boomers (50 percent). Forty percent of employees from Generation X cited lack of career progress as the number one factor to switch jobs, compared to Generation Y (30 percent) and Baby Boomers (20 percent). When asked about highest priority financial motivators that would contribute to the likelihood of staying in a position, 48 percent of Generation X employees listed additional bonuses and financial incentives; 41 percent of Generation Y and 40 percent of Baby Boomers responded with the same priority. Finally, members of Generation X, Y, and the Baby Boomers all chose different non-financial incentives as top retention tactics.

Further research provides differences between Generation X and Generation Y in the workplace. In a study of 290 employees of a large Silicon Valley technology company, Fernandez (2009) found that members of Generation X demonstrated significantly lower levels of work engagement than those of Generation Y. The study examined potential differences in work-related beliefs for Generation X and Generation Y. In contrast, Patalano (2008) found that members of Generation X demonstrated significantly higher normative organizational commitment scores and significantly higher affective commitment scores than members of Generation Y. This study of 203 employees at a large internet services company examined potential differences in organizational commitment in Generation X and

Generation Y. With Generation Y now in the workforce, and the Millennials joining the workforce in larger and larger numbers, future research will provide further insight into differences between these generations.

Generation X Values Work/Life Balance

Generation X watched their parents burn out at work, and they wish to avoid this in their own work lives. Alverson (1999) notes that, “The 13th generation wants balance...they desire the family and home life they missed as children and aren’t willing to have jobs compromise that ideal lifestyle” (p. 16). Tulgan (2000) notes that while the Baby Boomers were noted to live to work, members of Generation X work to live.

A study of over 1,200 people born between 1964 and 1975 representing eight companies in the United States and two in Canada found that Generation X is very committed to achieving a balance between work and personal life (Catalyst, 2001). Participants in the study ranked personal and family goals as extremely important: to have a loving family (84 percent); to enjoy life (79 percent); to obtain and share companionship with family and friends (72 percent); to establish a relationship with a significant other (72 percent). In comparison, the same participants ranked these work-related goals as extremely important: to have a variety of responsibilities (22 percent); to earn a great deal of money (21 percent); to become an influential leader (16 percent); to become well-known (6 percent).

The Catalyst (2001) study also found that Generation X experiences difficulty in managing work/life commitments. When asked if their jobs interfered in their personal lives, 43 percent noted a moderate interference and 29 percent noted severe or very severe interference.

Finally, the Catalyst study (2001) found that Generation X desires organizational flexibility that will help address their work/life balance issue. The following flexible work arrangements were noted: “flexible arrival and departure time; ability to change work schedule on an ad-hoc basis; telecommuting/work from home; reduced work schedule/part-time” (p. 18).

Jurkiewicz (2000) submits that the work/life balance demands of Generation X may present, “a new manifestation of ‘wealth’ not measured by profit inherent in commercial exchanges of goods and services, but by contributors to society that values family relationships, physical health, spiritual growth, education, and commitment to one’s social network as measures of success” (p. 67).

As Generation X is the generation of focus for this study, the generational identity is an important factor to consider. Members were born into an era that demonstrated hostility toward children and demanded independence at an early age. They bring different attitudes and values to the workplace than generations before or after them, valuing flexibility, autonomy, and dynamic career paths (Bova & Kroth, 2001; Jurkiewicz, 2000; Tulgan, 2000). Members of Generation X have an identity through work (Ortner, 1998), and they seek a work/life balance that will prevent the burn out their parents experienced (Catalyst, 2001). Generation X is defined by a tough beginning and an uncertain future.

This study explores why teachers from Generation X who earned National Board Certification leave the classroom. A review of literature on National Board Certification is necessary and is discussed in the following section.

National Board Certification

History

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is a non-profit, independent, nongovernmental organization founded in 1987 to “advance the quality of teaching and learning by developing professional standards for accomplished teaching, creating a voluntary system to certify teachers who meet those standards and integrating certified teachers into educational reform efforts” (NBPTS, 2011(a), ¶ 1). The establishment of NBPTS has been referred to as “one of the most significant teacher policy initiatives of the last three decades” (Goldhaber & Hansen, 2009, p. 230).

The effort to create the organization originated in recommendations of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy’s Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, which was convened after *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983 (NBPTS, 2011(d)). The task force’s final report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, suggested a board that would “define what teachers should know and be able to do...and support the creation of rigorous, valid assessments to see that certified teachers do meet those standards” (NBPTS, 2011(d), ¶ 4). The task force specified that most of the board members should be teachers still in the classroom and that National Board Certification be “developed by teachers for teachers, with teachers heavily involved in each step of the process from writing standards, designing assessments and evaluating candidates” (NBPTS, 2011(d), ¶ 7).

The stated mission of the NBPTS is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by:

- “Maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do.
 - Providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards.
 - Advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers.”
- (NBPTS, 2011(b), ¶ 2)

To encompass knowledge, dispositions, beliefs, and skills that characterize National Board Certified teachers, NBPTS created The Five Core Propositions.

- “Proposition 1: Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- Proposition 2: Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
- Proposition 3: Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
- Proposition 4: Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
- Proposition 5: Teachers are members of learning communities.” (NBPTS, 2011(c), ¶ 3)

As of 2011, there are more than 91,000 National Board Certified teachers. Three southern states have the largest number of NBCTs. North Carolina leads the nation with 17,945 National Board Certified teachers, Florida has 13,524 and South Carolina has 7,780 (NBPTS, 2011(f)). Eligibility requires that teachers hold a bachelor’s degree, have completed three full years of teaching experience, and possess a valid state license (or have taught in a state approved school if no license is required) (NBPTS, 2011(h)).

The Certification Process

The process of National Board Certification is a significant investment of time and effort. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction notes that the certification process can take up to 400 hours of preparation and will cover an entire school year (NCDPI, 2010). A candidate can successfully earn certification in one year, but a three-year window of time is provided for every candidate to successfully complete the process (NBPTS, 2011(g)).

The certification process requires candidates to prepare four written entries and complete assessment center exercises to demonstrate teaching practice. Three entries are classroom-based and use video of teacher instruction and review of student work; the fourth entry documents accomplishments with families, communities, and colleagues and the corresponding impact on student learning (NBPTS, 2011(g)). Six thirty-minute assessment center exercises are completed at a testing center and require candidates to demonstrate pedagogical and subject content knowledge as required by the certificate area chosen by the candidate (NBPTS, 2011(g)). Both portfolio entries and assessment center exercises are scored by teachers trained and qualified for scoring by NBPTS (NBPTS, 2011(g)).

Incentives

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards reported that almost all states offer incentives for teachers seeking National Board Certification (2011(e)). North Carolina offers several incentives and financial rewards for teachers to pursue National Board Certification. It does so because of a stated goal to “provide opportunities and incentives for good teachers to become excellent teachers and to retain them in the teaching

profession” (North Carolina General Statute 115C-296.2, 2010, ¶ 1). Participants in the certification process are provided three days of paid leave, a loan to cover the cost of the participation fee, and a twelve percent salary supplement for the ten-year life of the certificate. Prior to July 2010, the entire participation fee for the certification process was paid by the state (North Carolina General Statute 115C-296.2, 2010).

National Board Certification and Student Achievement

The first stated goal of NBPTS is to “advance the quality of teaching and learning” (NBPTS, 2011(a), ¶ 1). Rather than accept that certification alone results in improved student achievement, Goldhaber and Anthony (2003) treat teacher quality as “a teacher’s quantifiable ability to produce growth in student achievement, rather than by the individual qualifications or attributes a teacher brings to the classroom” (p. 6). A review of the literature exploring the impact of National Board Certification on student achievement shows a positive impact.

Goldhaber and Anthony (2007) assessed the relationship between National Board Certification and student achievement of elementary school students in North Carolina. North Carolina was chosen for several reasons, including the presence of a long-standing state accountability model with end of grade tests for grades three, four, and five and a large population of National Board Certified teachers. The study analyzed student end-of-grade test data for over 9,000 students taught by a teacher going through the National Board Certification process, and 6,000 students taught by a teacher who had already achieved National Board Certification. These data were compared against student data of teachers who have not applied for National Board Certification. Student gains of National Board

Certified teachers were found to be greater than those who were not applicants (4 percent of a standard deviation in reading and 5 percent of a standard deviation in math).

The authors then sought to determine whether the certification process resulted in higher teacher quality or whether the process identified more effective teachers. Findings showed that successful applicants for National Board Certification produce better student outcomes than unsuccessful applicants (5 percent of a standard deviation in reading and 9 percent of a standard deviation in math). The authors concluded the National Board Certification process successfully identifies more effective teacher applicants. The authors finalized their study by suggesting that the impact of National Board Certification will depend on the retention of National Board Certified teachers and the number of successful and unsuccessful applicants in a school.

Further, in a study of whether or not measurable teacher credentials can predict teacher quality and/or student impact, Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2007) analyzed data for all North Carolina students from 1995-2004 in grades three, four, and five where reading and math teachers were identifiable. This data is housed in the North Carolina Education Research Data Center at Duke University and includes student test data and teacher employment records.

The researchers standardized all test scores so that a comparison of scores across time was possible. The total number of scores analyzed was about 1.8 million, with about 1 million scores in grades four and five that demonstrated test score gains. Findings include “clear evidence that teachers with more experience are more effective in raising student achievement than those with less experience” (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007, p. 675). To

determine the effect of National Board Certification on student outcomes, the authors analyzed student scores of approximately three hundred certified teachers. The authors found that National Board Certified teachers produce greater student outcomes. Further analysis revealed that certification identifies more effective teachers, rather than the certification process making teachers more effective.

Interestingly, both the Goldhaber and Anthony (2007) and Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2007) studies produce findings that suggest the positive effect on student outcomes decreases slightly for teachers after successful completion of the National Board Certification process. Both studies suggest further research in this area.

Finally, in a study of 108,000 student records from the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Cavalluzzo (2004) examined student gains and teacher characteristics to determine any relationships. The effect of National Board Certification on student gains was large, positive, and significant at the .01 level. Cavalluzzo notes that in ninth and tenth grade math exams, “students with NBC teachers gain 12 percent of a standard deviation more than others on the end-of grade exam in mathematics” (p. 25). Additionally, Cavalluzzo notes that unsuccessful candidates produced smaller student gains than successful candidates.

National Board Certification and Professional Impact

In a qualitative, multi-case study of eleven National Board Certified teachers, Thomas (2009) explored the long-term professional impact of earning National Board Certification. Each of the eleven participants earned certification ten to fourteen years prior to the study. Thomas found that earning National Board Certification influenced the careers of these teachers in terms of reflection, confidence, new responsibilities, and frustration. All

participants stated that they engaged in reflection as a daily part of their professional lives, which enhanced opportunity for growth and improvement. Additionally, participants reported that earning National Board Certification provided validation for their work and increased their confidence to try new things and even question unsound practices. Further, eight of the eleven teachers experienced new employment opportunities and are serving in leadership and advisory roles that enable them to help others.

Thomas (2009) identified frustration as a newly identified theme not formerly found in research on National Board Certified teachers. Participants in the study reported frustration regarding lack of recognition. Thomas (2009) noted that participants remarked that, “school’s administrators don’t value or know the value of the NBCTs’ talents and skills” (p. 184). Participants also felt that administrators as well as other teachers lack an understanding of what the certification process requires. One participant believed that some teachers (not Nationally Board certified) were intimidated by those who had achieved certification. Finally, participants lamented the lack of opportunity to share their work. One participant noted that though she had “made offers to assist others, by contacting officials at the state level of governmental educational organizations,” she had yet to receive any notice of her effort (p. 184). Ultimately, these teachers believe “they have a lot to contribute and should be offered the chance to share their work” (p. 184).

Judd (2007) sought to determine any difference in teacher burnout between National Board Certified teachers and their non-certified peers. The study used the Maslach-Leiter framework to examine the construct of burnout on three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Judd defines emotional exhaustion

as being “used up” (p. 10) and offers that teachers suffer from emotional exhaustion when they “feel they can no longer provide services to their students the same way they did early in their careers” (p. 11). Depersonalization is defined as “an emotional distancing between the helping professional and their client” and a hardening of emotion toward the professional’s work (p. 11). Reduced personal accomplishment refers to “a decline in one’s feelings of accomplishment or experienced success in the workplace” (p. 11).

In this study, the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey was given to 476 teachers in Florida that included a sample of National Board Certified teachers and an analogous random sample of non-certified teachers. Results of the two groups were compared using an independent samples t-test, and multiple regression analysis was completed to ensure the differences between the two groups were a result of National Board Certification and not the model. Both emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment were found to have a significantly negative relationship with National Board Certification. This indicates that certified teachers are significantly less burned out than their peers as they demonstrate lower levels of emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment. Based on these results, Judd suggests that National Board Certification may be considered as a strategy to address teacher retention.

Lynch (2009) explored the leadership influence of Nationally Board Certified teachers in elementary schools and found that Nationally Board Certified teachers are teacher leaders, though leadership skills they possess and employ are not necessarily generated by the experience of the certification process. Lynch (2009) found that teachers seeking National Board Certification “tend to already be natural leaders who are goal-oriented and

self-driven” (p. 135). Most sought certification as a “vehicle to becoming better teachers, not necessarily to take on leadership roles outside the classroom” (p. 135).

Lynch (2009) also found barriers that prevented Nationally Board Certified teachers from pursuing or obtaining leadership positions. Though Nationally Board Certified teachers hold multiple formal leadership roles at the school level, few noted they were involved in leadership roles at the district level. Lynch notes that an existing provision requiring Nationally Board Certified teachers to spend 75 percent of their time daily with students limits additional leadership role availability and feasibility at the school and broader district level. Many expressed disappointment with “the limited roles available to them if they wanted to have a broader influence within the school system” (p. 135).

National Board Certification and Teacher Retention

Though Judd (2007) suggests NBC be considered as a teacher retention strategy, research on the relationship between National Board Certification and teacher retention is sparse. In a 2006 review of empirical literature on teacher recruitment and retention, Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley state that many programs that may have an effect on recruitment and retention, including National Board Certification, were not considered because “no sufficiently rigorous studies were found using data in the timeframe under consideration that linked these particular programs empirically to issues of recruitment and retention” (p. 192). The timeframe for consideration in this review included studies published by the end of 2004 using data that reached back to 1990 or later.

A thorough review of the literature found two studies in 2009 on the relationship between National Board Certification and teacher retention. These studies analyze data from

Florida and North Carolina, two states that account for a third of the more than 91,000 National Board Certified teachers nationwide (NBPTS, 2011(f)).

Jackson (2009) sought to find out whether National Board Certified teachers in Broward County, Florida were leaving the classroom as full time teachers at a lower rate than those teachers who have not earned certification. Jackson surveyed a random sample of National Board Certified and non-certified teachers in Broward County, Florida who had been employed for a continuous three year period of time. A statistically significant difference was found between the number of National Board Certified teachers (10 percent) and non-certified teachers (25 percent) leaving the classroom. (Note: teachers who left the classroom in either group remained full-time employees of Broward County.) Jackson determined that National Board Certified teachers in this study sought certification for financial incentives, personal goals, and professional advancement. Jackson suggests that these reasons were met and ultimately retained these teachers in the classroom.

Jackson also found a statistically significant difference between the number of National Board Certified teachers and non-certified teachers who obtained leadership roles during this three-year period. Jackson suggests that these leadership roles provide opportunities for shared decision-making and increased job satisfaction which keeps these motivated teachers in the classroom.

Goldhaber and Hansen (2009) examined the effect of National Board Certification on teacher career paths; they specifically examined whether these teachers remained in the profession and where they taught. White teachers with at least three, but less than thirty, years of experience who applied for and received National Board Certification between 1997

and 2000 were the sample for this study (n=5,565). (The sample was restricted to white teachers because the sample of minority teachers was very small. Only teachers with fewer than thirty years of experience were considered to avoid the effect of retirement.)

Employment records for these teachers through the 2003-2004 school year were the data. These records are held by the North Carolina Education Research Data Center and included detailed, longitudinal demographic and employment information for all teachers in North Carolina.

Goldhaber and Hansen found that earning NBC increases teacher mobility out of the North Carolina system. NBC teachers are more likely to be mobile than nonapplicants after they have been through the certification process. This means that NBC teachers are more likely to move, or leave a school, district, or the state than those teachers who have been unsuccessful applicants. This difference is statistically significant at a p-value of .01. Further, Goldhaber and Hansen find that NBPTS applicants who score just over the passing score threshold are 60 percent more likely to leave than unsuccessful applicants receiving scores just below the passing threshold. The authors believe that NBCTs leaving the North Carolina system are not leaving the profession but are seeking teaching positions in other states. They report that as North Carolina is “a net importer of teachers...many of the teachers in the state may work in schools far away from where they were raised...Since research has shown that teachers tend to be employed close to home (Boyd et al., 2005), it would not be surprising if NBCTs are using the NBPTS credential as a vehicle to move to a teaching position in another state” (p. 259).

Increased mobility is greatest for NBCTs at schools with high levels of low income and minority students. This suggests that the NBC credential may enable teachers to move to schools associated with better working conditions. These teachers sort themselves into schools with lower poverty, fewer minority students, and higher per student spending. Goldhaber and Hansen warn that this trend raises equity concerns. In earlier research (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007) positive student achievement suggests the NBC credential signals teacher quality. The authors warn that “schools that already tend to lose teachers—that is, those with higher proportions of minority students—could be harmed as a consequence of having a readily identifiable credential ostensibly signaling teacher quality” (p. 258).

Teacher Attrition

Why They Leave

In reviewing literature describing why teachers leave the profession, two approaches emerged. The first is an empirical/observational approach that seeks to describe predictors of teacher attrition. These studies describe teacher, organizational, and professional characteristics that are found in conjunction with teacher attrition. The second approach is more narrative. These studies describe what teachers say when they are asked about why they leave teaching. These categories will be addressed in this same order. Additionally, the literature provided some insight into an emerging generational problem of attrition as well as a corresponding new career model. This literature will be reviewed last.

Predictors of Attrition

Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) completed a review of literature from 1990-2004 that met criteria of relevance (recruitment and retention of teachers in the United States), scholarship (peer-reviewed processes for publication), empirical nature (qualitative or quantitative evidence for conclusions rather than theory or opinion), and quality (appropriate research design and analyses, carefully applied methodology, relevant focus, and well-supported interpretation). Of 4,919 unduplicated studies generated for consideration, 46 were included.

The authors found that external characteristics of schools and districts are related to teacher recruitment and retention rates. Higher attrition rates were found at schools with the higher ratios of minority, low-income, and low-performing students, in school districts located in urban areas, and in private schools (2006). The authors also found that compensation policies are related to teacher recruitment and retention rates. Teachers are knowledgeable about compensation in other districts and in other professions, and lower attrition rates are associated with higher salaries. In particular, they note that “the finding that higher compensation is associated with increased retention is well established” (p. 201). It follows then that when teachers were surveyed about salary, “self-reported dissatisfaction with salary was associated with higher attrition and decreased commitment to teaching” (p. 200).

In summary, Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) suggest their review indicates that “teachers exhibit preferences for higher salaries, better working conditions, and greater

intrinsic rewards and tend to move to other teaching positions or to jobs or activities outside teaching that offer those characteristics when possible” (p. 201).

In a meta-analysis and narrative review of research on teacher attrition and retention, Borman and Dowling (2008) sought to understand why teacher attrition happens and what factors affect attrition outcomes. Like Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006), they found that “personal characteristics of teachers are important predictors of turnover” and “attributes of teachers’ schools, including organizational characteristics, student body composition, and resources (instructional spending and teacher salaries) are also key moderators” (p. 367).

Four major themes emerged. First, evidence suggests turnover is higher among teachers who are “better trained, more experienced, and more highly skilled” (p. 396). Second, issues affecting attrition differ early and later in teachers’ careers. Attrition is higher earlier in the career when there is less “knowledge that is specific to the occupation and that is nontransferable...teacher attrition tends to diminish later in the career as a teacher builds a greater amount of specific capital” (p. 397). Later in the career, evidence suggests that salary is a greater retention issue, especially for teachers beyond the first five years of teaching experience. Third, numerous organizational factors affect teacher attrition. These include the composition of the student population with regard to race and income, availability of instructional resources, support from school administration, student discipline problems, and teacher input and involvement in decision-making. Many of these were specifically noted by Ingersoll (2001a, 2001b) and Ingle (2007). Finally, teacher salary consistently has emerged as a predictor of teacher attrition.

In a study of math and science teacher turnover, Ingersoll and May (2010) have identified individual, school, and organizational predictors that are associated with turnover. Though the study's primary focus was on math and science teachers, the authors included an analysis of whether or not turnover predictors differed for non-math and science teachers. The study used data from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) 2003-2004 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the supplemental 2004-2005 Teacher Followup Survey (TFS).

Ingersoll and May (2010) found that teacher age was the greatest individual predictor of turnover, with teachers younger than 30 and older than 50 more likely to leave teaching. Additionally, among school characteristic predictors turnover rates were significantly higher at higher poverty schools, and significantly lower at rural schools versus urban schools. Regarding organizational predictors, teacher turnover rates were lower at schools with: less student discipline problems; better administrative support and principal leadership; adequate materials and supplies; greater levels of faculty decision-making; and higher levels of teacher classroom autonomy (Ingersoll & May, 2010).

Moore (2011) used logistic regression to analyze responses from the 2007-2008 School and Staffing Survey and 2008-2009 Teacher Follow-up Survey. The goal of the study was to determine the degree to which school environmental factors and teacher background characteristics predict teacher discontent and attrition. The study found that predictors of teacher discontent include the middle school setting, urban and rural school locations, and teacher perceptions of student and community problems. Significant predictors of teacher attrition include certification type, size of school, classroom control, and

teacher perception of student problems. Of particular interest is the finding that “advanced certifications are often associated with increased odds of departure” (p. 99). This is supported by additional literature that indicates that teachers with advanced certifications abandon the teaching profession at higher rates (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond, et. al, 2001; Mac Iver & Vaughn III, 2007; Tye & O’Brien, 2002). Also of note is the finding that teacher discontent did not predict teacher attrition at a significant level. Moore suggests that the current negative economic environment could be encouraging dissatisfied teachers to remain in the classroom, as alternative employment options simply aren’t available.

Teacher Explanations of Attrition

Several studies note that teachers leave teaching primarily out of dissatisfaction with the profession and a desire for a better job (Corbell, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003). The following studies provide further explanations for why teachers leave by exploring what teachers say are the reasons they left, and for why teachers stay by exploring what teachers say are important factors in their decision to leave or stay in the profession.

The 2008-2009 Teacher Follow-Up Survey (Keigher & Cross, 2010) asked teachers who left the profession to rate various aspects of their current job as better while teaching, better in their current position, or not better or worse. The list of occupational aspects included items such as salary, benefits, opportunities for advancement, safety, and job security. One aspect ranked highest as better in teaching: opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others. Eleven aspects ranked highest as “better in current position.” In descending order they are: ability to balance personal life and work; autonomy or control

over work; recognition and support from administrators/managers; salary; opportunities for professional advancement or promotion; professional prestige; manageability of workload; intellectual challenge; sense of personal accomplishment; opportunities for learning from colleagues; and opportunities for professional development. Eight aspects were ranked as not better or worse. In descending order they are: Procedures for performance evaluation; general work conditions; job security; safety of environment; availability of resources and materials/equipment for doing your job; influence over workplace policies and practices; social relationships with colleagues; and benefits.

Buchanan (2009b, 2010) interviewed 22 former teachers about their decision to leave the classroom and their work lives afterward. Experience levels represented the full career spectrum of one to 30 years of experience. Interview questions asked participants about what kept them in teaching for the length of their experience, what led them to leave, their view of the teaching profession prior to and after teaching, the thought process of deciding to leave, and if there was anything that would have kept them in the classroom. A final question asked them to compare their teaching jobs to their current jobs in the areas of salary, workload, responsibility, working conditions/support, and the prestige of their profession.

Workload/responsibility: Many of Buchanan's (2009b, 2010) respondents noted that the workload required of teachers was greater than that required in their current positions. The burden of necessary work outside of regular school hours was often mentioned as greater in teaching. Additionally, teaching required significant responsibility for people (rather than budgets, systems, or processes), provided little or no authority, and was characterized by a lack of autonomy when compared to current positions held.

Working conditions/support: Most respondents noted that physical working conditions were better in their current positions than in the schools in which they taught. Adequate resources are provided to complete their jobs; while teaching, this was often not the case. Additionally, Buchanan (2010) states that, “Lack of support emerged as the single strongest predictor of a decision to leave the profession” (p. 205). This includes lack of support from administration and lack of support from peers. Some teachers’ faculty colleagues enjoyed the struggle of others. One participant noted, “I couldn’t believe the people who delighted in watching you get eaten” (p. 206).

Salary: Many of Buchanan’s respondents experienced a salary reduction upon leaving teaching. Buchanan (2009b) suggests three reasons this may be the case: altruism attracts people to teaching thus salary plays a lesser role in recruitment and satisfaction, desperation to find a different job, and teaching jobs offer competitive salary with jobs requiring similar levels of ability. Further, Buchanan (2009b) found that “none of these teachers, even those who had had very negative and unsupportive experiences in the profession and who were now earning considerably more, were disdainful about teacher salaries. Invariably, they express concern that relatively low salaries were a symptom of a low societal regard for education” (p. 5).

Prestige: Buchanan’s respondents provided varied responses regarding the prestige of teaching. Some thought that “teachers were treated with respect, mixed at times with sympathy for the demands of their work” (2010, p. 208) while others believed teachers were not respected at all for their work. Several noted a decline in the prestige of teaching (2009b). When comparing the prestige of teaching to their current jobs, Buchanan’s (2010)

respondents indicated that their current jobs are afforded higher public esteem than teaching. Those occupations include: nursing, bank teller, museum curator, chaplain, data entry, executive assistant, day-care center manager, librarian, small business retail, and entertainment venue manager.

Many of the teachers interviewed described the process of deciding to leave emerging from complex emotions, circumstances, and contexts. Buchanan (2010) notes that, “It would be incomplete and misleading to portray an image of people disdainfully shaking the dust of teaching from their clothes, and walking into a job where they are better appreciated in a career with higher wages and greater prestige. While this was the case for some, alongside this emerged a parallel pathway of teachers seeking asylum” (p. 202). Some left after losing confidence in themselves, their students, or school administration and support. Others left after an incident raised serious concerns about their own health and safety.

Johnson (2010) found that colleague support was rated as having a high impact on a teacher’s decision to remain in the classroom. Teachers were asked to rate factors they perceived to be important when deciding whether or not to stay in the teaching profession. The study employed a non-experimental survey research design and asked teachers specifically about organizational, support, and monetary factors. Organizational factors included working conditions, instructional methodologies, and professional development. Support factors included support from mentoring programs, principal support, and colleague support. Monetary factors included salary and benefits. Working conditions was the highest ranked organizational factor; collegial support was the highest ranked support factor; benefits were the highest ranked monetary factor. Of all factors, colleague support was ranked as

having the highest positive impact on decisions to remain in the teaching profession. Several factors were noted as having a neutral impact on the decision to remain in the teaching profession. They included mentoring programs, professional development, instructional methodologies, and salary.

Chuong (2008) found that school administration was the most frequently noted negative theme among exit interview responses of teachers who left a district. As part of a larger study, open-ended responses provided by teachers completing an exit survey from one suburban school district over a three-year period of time (2004-2007) were analyzed. The goal was to understand why teachers were leaving the district. Content analysis was completed for written answers provided for three questions: “Question #3 – How would you describe the strengths of your school/department? Question #4 – How would you describe any areas of potential improvement for your school/department? Question #5 – Final Comments” (p. 54). Seven dominant negative themes were reported as playing a role in teacher attrition. A total of 562 comments were analyzed. From highest frequency to lowest they were (frequency count included in parentheses): “Campus Administrators/Leaders (101), District and Parental Support (56), School or School Climate (50), Team or Department (41), Workload (38), Class Size (32), and Discipline (29)” (p. 60).

Generational Issues and Teacher Attrition

In the review of the literature, a trend emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s. A small subsection of teacher attrition and retention literature began to reference a new generation of teachers who had different expectations of the career. This portion of the literature review will reflect those studies, many of which were generated by researchers at

the Harvard Graduate School of Education and their Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. The project began in 1998 and focused on those teachers then entering the teaching profession. These teachers are members of Generation X. As this study will explore why Nationally Board Certified Teachers from Generation X left teaching, this section of the literature review will provide a basis for analysis of interview data.

Peske, Liu, Moore Johnson, Kauffman, and Kardos (2001) interviewed 50 first and second year teachers in Massachusetts. The goal was to learn how these teachers think about a career in teaching and inform recruitment and retention efforts. The authors “set out to explore the possibility that the generation of teachers now entering the profession might bring with them new and varied conceptions of career...to learn what drew them to teaching and what it might take to keep them there” (p. 305). Participants included those from traditional and alternative paths to licensure. These teachers began their careers in 1999 and 2000, making those who followed a traditional path to licensure members of Generation X.

Peske et al. (2001) found that this new generation of teachers was entering teaching in a decidedly different career context. They found that job candidates have “multiple attractive career options, and they hold different expectations about career mobility and job security. New conceptions of career are emerging in our society, and many individuals now regard the notion of a single career or loyalty to a single organization as obsolete. In public discourse and imagination, the archetype of the entrepreneur and free agent has replaced that of the company man or woman” (pp. 304-305). As a result, teachers entering the profession did not think of career as a lifelong commitment. Instead, they entered the profession “tentatively or

conditionally” yet committed to “serving their students well and making a meaningful contribution to public education” (pp. 305-306).

Additionally, Peske et al. (2001) found that this new generation of teachers was perhaps more difficult to retain than generations of teachers before them. Participants in the study “expected more variety, responsibility, and pay than the current career structure promises” (p. 309). As a result, the authors suggest that “a uniform, horizontal career with few opportunities for variety and challenge...and a generic career structure...is not likely to attract and retain enough good teachers” (p. 309-310).

Johnson and Kardos (2005) describe new teachers as members of a generation that “anticipate having several careers over the course of their working lives” (p. 11). They found that new and young teachers are often surprised by the isolation and uniformity they find in teaching, having hoped to enjoy “varied responsibilities and increasing influence over time” (p. 11). These teachers want an opportunity to “assume roles that extend their influence beyond the classroom—for example, as instructional coaches, curriculum coordinators, cluster leaders, department heads, or induction coordinators” (p. 13).

Moore Johnson (2004) argues that the next generation of teachers is quite different; “They expect to be paid well...for the important work that they do. They expect variety in what they do with differentiated roles and opportunities to advance in the profession. They want the chance to collaborate with colleagues and to work in organizations that support them” (p. xii).

Margolis (2008) found that early in their careers, teachers experience an “odd mix of staleness and stress” (p. 185). By the fourth year, members of this new generation of

teachers are “searching for roles/activities that are: regenerative (keeping them learning and excited about their teaching); and also generative (widening their sphere of influence, sharing their gifts to others in the profession” (p. 174).

The literature suggests that teaching as a career needs to change in order to attract and keep teachers from a new generation. Margolis (2008) submits that this new generation produces teachers who come to work with “high expectations of self and employers, and seek ongoing learning and high levels of responsibility” (p. 188). To keep these teachers, Cochran-Smith (2004) suggests the need to redefine what staying in the classroom means if keeping teachers in the classroom is the goal of retention. She questions “whether it makes sense to argue that teaching is a profession at the same time that we claim the ultimate goal is keeping teachers in the classroom and thus maintaining a flat career trajectory where entrants do essentially the same work as effective and experienced teachers” (p. 391).

A New Career Model for a New Generation

The literature suggests that a new model of the teaching profession is required for this new generation of teachers, a model built on new career expectations, with new definitions of career paths and schools as organizations (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Moore Johnson, 2004). Such a model would “reward and financially compensate long-term teachers for the knowledge and skills they acquire in both preservice training and subsequent professional development, such as certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. It would provide differentiated roles for them as they master their craft, take on varied assignments, and assume broader responsibilities in their schools” (Peske et. al, 2001, p. 310). Many of the roles described have only recently started to emerge in public schools,

and they are valuable ones. Johnson and Kardos (2005) submit that such roles “are valuable, not only in the support that they immediately provide for less experienced teachers but also in what they signal to new teachers about the promise of a differentiated career in teaching over time” (p. 13).

What happens if such a model does not emerge or develop? Teachers will continue to leave the profession. Buchanan (2010) explains, “A concurrent truism, alongside that of the multiple careers, is that younger workers – the Gen X-ers and Y-ers – have an increasing capacity to vote with their feet in terms of their careers. Increasingly, the teaching profession needs to be competitive to attract, value-add to and retain quality staff” (p. 209). Cochran-Smith (2004) concludes “to stay in teaching, today’s—and tomorrow’s—teachers need school conditions where they are successful and supported, opportunities to work with other educators in professional learning communities rather than isolation, differentiated leadership and advancement prospects during the course of the career, and good pay for what they do” (p. 391).

Summary of the Chapter

This study seeks to explain why National Board Certified teachers from Generation X are leaving the classroom. The theoretical framework provided a foundation for exploring teacher perceptions and generational characteristics. A review of literature on Generation X described the history and generational attributes of Generation X and provided the foundation for exploring generational characteristics among the case studies.

A review of literature on National Board Certification provided an overview of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the process of National Board

Certification. Research suggests that National Board Certification is an indicator of teaching quality as defined by an improvement in student achievement. And while research is sparse, the literature indicates that National Board Certification has an impact on teacher retention.

A review of literature on teacher attrition provided an overview of empirical studies that examined teacher, organizational, and professional characteristics that are associated with teacher attrition. In addition, studies that provide a more narrative approach to exploring teacher attrition were included. Finally, an emerging generational problem of attrition was discussed and a corresponding new career model of teaching was described.

The next chapter will discuss the methodology and research design that will be used to answer the research questions of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three explains why a qualitative approach and case study method are appropriate for this study. The study's research questions and research design are detailed. Data collection and analysis procedures are explained, and issues of validity and reliability are addressed. The researcher's subjectivity and ethical issues are explored, and study limitations are discussed.

Selection of Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative research seeks to understand how people make sense of their experiences and assign meaning to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) captures the nature of qualitative research succinctly: "The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience" (p. 14). This study explored how National Board Certified teachers from Generation X make sense of leaving the classroom, how they interpret the event, and what meaning they assign to the experience. The overall purpose of this study was to understand why National Board Certified teachers from Generation X leave the classroom.

Qualitative research is known by several key characteristics. It is naturalistic; it studies behavior as it occurs naturally in its natural setting because it believes human behavior is influenced by the setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2002; Hatch, 2002; McMillan, 2004). It also employs the researcher as the primary data collection instrument (Hatch, 2002; McMillan, 2004; Merriam, 2009). Stake (2006) cites

Lincoln and Guba (1981) to underscore this belief: “In situations where motives, attitudes, beliefs, and values direct much, if not most of human activity, the most sophisticated instrumentation we possess is still the careful observer—the human being who can watch, see, listen, question, probe, and finally analyze and organize his direct experience” (p. 4). Even if mechanical assistance is used to gather data with video or audio recordings, the data have no significance until processed and analyzed by human intelligence (Hatch, 2002).

Qualitative research harnesses subjectivity rather than seeking to limit it (Hatch, 2002). Qualitative researchers do not claim objectivity, but rely on subjectivity to understand participants’ motives. Hatch (2002) notes that, “Instead of pretending to be objective, the stance of qualitative researchers is to concentrate on reflexivity, applying their own subjectivities in ways that make it possible to understand tacit motives and assumptions of their participants (Hamilton, 1974; Jacob, 1987; Lincoln & Guba, 1985)” (p. 9).

Qualitative research is characterized by rich, descriptive data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 2009; McMillan, 2004). These data are words or pictures (rather than numbers) that provide in-depth understanding of behavior or context. Data are often presented in the form of quotes from interviews, field notes, and observations to support the findings of a study. Qualitative research is also characterized by a focus on process – on understanding how and why behavior occurs rather than on outcomes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; McMillan, 2004).

Qualitative research is inductive (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Hatch, 2002; McMillan, 2004; Merriam, 2009). A qualitative study does not start with a null hypothesis that is to be accepted or rejected. Rather, a qualitative study begins with as many specific details as can

be collected that are then sorted, categorized, and analyzed for patterns and relationships. A discipline-specific theoretical framework aids the qualitative researcher to focus the study and analyze data (Merriam, 2009). Findings in a qualitative study are generated from the bottom up and are said to be “grounded in the data” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 6).

Qualitative research is focused on meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Hatch, 2002; McMillan, 2004; Merriam, 2009). In this, qualitative research focuses on how people make sense of their lives, construct meaning to understand the world they live in, and attribute meaning to their experiences. To accomplish this, qualitative research prioritizes the participant perspective and works to present it as accurately as possible (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Hatch, 2002; McMillan, 2004; Merriam, 2009). The goal is to provide an insider’s perspective (emic) rather than that of the observer’s outside perspective (etic) (Merriam, 2009). Hatch (2002) holds that, “Qualitative studies try to capture the perspectives that actors use as a basis for their actions” (p. 7) and cites Erickson’s (1986) two key questions that qualitative researchers ask that help provide the participant’s perspective: “What is happening here, specifically? What do these happenings mean to the people engaged in them?” (p. 7).

Finally, qualitative research often has an emergent design which changes and develops as the study progresses (Hatch, 2002; McMillan, 2004; Merriam, 2009). The emergent design reflects a belief held by many qualitative researchers that it is not possible to anticipate all that a researcher may encounter. Such flexibility affords the researcher every opportunity to accurately depict participant perspective and context so valued by the field.

Because the purpose of this study was to understand why National Board Certified teachers from Generation X are leaving the classroom, the qualitative research approach was appropriate. The study design focused on process – the how and why – of these teachers’ decision to leave. It utilized the researcher as the primary data collection instrument and made use of researcher subjectivity rather than seeking to limit it, as the researcher shared this specific experience with the participants. Rich, descriptive data gathered through in-depth interviews provided the data for analysis. Participant perspective was paramount in this study because it provided insight into the meaning these participants created to make sense of their experience of leaving the classroom.

Rationale for Case Study

Case study is one qualitative research approach. Schram (2006) suggested that case study is more a focus on what is studied rather than how something is studied, and that its value “lies in facilitating appreciation of the uniqueness, complexity, and contextual embeddedness of individual events and phenomena” (p. 107). Yin (2009) suggests that the case study method is preferred when “(a) ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, (b) the investigator has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” (p. 2). The case study method is appropriate for this study because the research is focused on a “why” question (why are NBC teachers from Generation X leaving the classroom?). The researcher has no control over whether or not these teachers leave; and the phenomenon is a contemporary one.

Merriam (2009) defines case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system...a unit around which there are boundaries...The case then, could be a

single person who is a case example of some phenomenon, a program, a group, an institution, a community, or a specific policy” (p. 40).

Case studies typically have three distinctions: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (Stake, 1995, 2005). This study will utilize the collective, or multicase, study. The multicase study is an instrumental case study where a collection of cases is studied to provide understanding about an issue or larger collection of cases (Schram, 2006; Stake, 2005). The goal of this study was to understand why NBC teachers from Generation X are leaving the classroom. It investigated this phenomenon by focusing on several cases – individual teachers – who were a part of this large group.

Stake (2006) refers to the phenomenon or target being studied in a multiple case study as a “quintain” (p. 6). The quintain is the bounded system described by Merriam (2009). Stake (2006) notes that, “Multicase research starts with the quintain. To understand it better, we study some of its single cases—its sites or manifestations. But it is the quintain we seek to understand. We study what is similar and different about the cases to understand the quintain better” (p. 6). In this study, the quintain was all NBC teachers from Generation X who have left the classroom. Multiple cases (individual teachers) were chosen for study to better understand the quintain.

Research Questions

The following research question and sub questions were explored in this study:

Why are National Board Certified Teachers from Generation X leaving the classroom?

1. What characteristics of the teaching profession lead National Board Certified teachers from Generation X to leave the classroom?

2. What characteristics of the National Board Certification process lead teachers from Generation X to leave the classroom?
3. What generational characteristics of Generation X influence National Board Certified teachers to leave the classroom?

Site Selection and Sample

Purposive sampling was used to identify cases for inclusion in the study. Merriam (2009) notes that “a typical [i.e. purposive] sample would be one that is selected because it reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 78). Parameters of Generation X (born between 1965 and 1976) define an age span and experience span in the cases chosen to represent the quintain. Cases were individuals who are between 36 and 47 years of age, have between 14-25 years of teaching experience, have attained National Board Certification, and are no longer teaching. This assumed a traditional path of a four-year degree immediately following high school graduation and a teaching career that begins immediately after college graduation.

A variety of purposive sampling, the snowball sampling method, was used to identify additional potential cases. In the snowball sampling method, the researcher asks participants to recommend others who match the profile description (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 1998; McMillan, 2004; Merriam, 2009). The snowball sampling method is typically used in qualitative research and is often used when the number of possible initial participants is limited (McMillan, 2004). As an NBC teacher from Generation X, the researcher has personal knowledge of several potential cases matching this description and invited one or

more of these individuals to participate. These individuals were asked to recommend others they knew who fit the profile of the quintain.

The researcher proposed to include no fewer than six and no more than eight cases for inclusion in this study. Stake (2006) suggests that, “The benefits of multicase study will be limited if fewer than, say, 4 cases are chosen, or more than 10. Two or three cases do not show enough of the interactivity between programs and their situations, whereas 15 or 30 cases provide more uniqueness of interactivity than the research team and readers can understand” (p. 22). Merriam (2009) notes that, “What is needed is an adequate number of participants...to answer the question posed at the beginning of the study” (p. 80).

In addition, the researcher included two interviews of individuals who are from Generation X and have earned National Board Certification but have remained in the classroom. The inclusion of these two cases increased the study’s validity and reliability.

Stake (2006) lists three main criteria for selecting cases: “Is the case relevant to the quintain? Do the cases provide diversity across contexts? Do the cases provide good opportunities to learn about complexity and contexts?” (p. 23). The researcher attempted to provide cases that were diverse in gender, ethnicity, age, and years of experience. In addition, diversity among grade levels (elementary, middle, high) and subject areas taught was sought. For reasons of feasibility and cost, geographic diversity was not sought; the researcher focused primarily on cases within Wake County, North Carolina. While not a requirement for participation, it was expected that participants have taught in the local county public school system. Stake (2006) believes that, “For multicase studies, selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority. Balance and variety are important;

relevance to the quintain and opportunity to learn are usually of greater importance” (pp. 25-26).

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred through open-ended interviews and follow-up questions via phone. Interviewing is an appropriate method of data collection in qualitative research. Merriam (2009) notes that, “Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them...when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate” (p. 88). Questions were asked about teachers’ experiences of leaving the classroom; these events took place in the past. Further, Merriam (2009) points out that, “Interviewing is the best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few select individuals” (p. 88). For these reasons, collecting data by interview was appropriate and necessary for this study.

Interview Method

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to collect data from the cases in this study. The researcher took minimal notes during the interview in order to focus on participant responses and follow-up questioning. In qualitative research, interviews often have less structure and are more open-ended (Merriam, 2009). This is in keeping with the qualitative tradition, in which researchers attempt to understand the distinct ways people assign meaning to experience. In a semi-structured interview, a researcher seeks specific information from all participants and uses a list of questions to guide the interview, though perhaps in no particular order (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) notes that, “This format

allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (p. 90).

Interview Guide

An interview guide was used to ensure that all cases responded to the same questions. This allowed for data that was analyzed across cases and added to the validity and reliability of the study. Questions were as open-ended as possible, as they yield thick, rich description of experiences and narrative accounts (Merriam, 2009). Questions that were asked are listed below in various sections that correspond with the particular interests of this study as described in Chapters One and Two. These questions were derived from the researcher’s professional and personal experience, as she is a National Board Certified teacher who left the classroom. They are also informed by existing research on teacher attrition, where teachers who left the classroom were interviewed (Buchanan 2009a, 2009b, 2010).

Questions asked in the interview include:

1) Choosing Teaching

When did you know you were going to be a teacher?

What was your perception of the profession during high school?

What was your perception of the profession while in college?

2) Early Career

What were your first years of teaching like?

How did your perception of the profession change?

3) Pursuit of National Board Certification (NBC)

Why did you choose to pursue NBC?

When in your career did you pursue NBC?

What was your NBC process like?

What did you expect your teaching career to be like post-NBC?

4) Deciding to Leave

When did you first think about leaving?

What factors lead to the decision you made?

What are you doing now?

What are your reflections on having decided to leave?

What is your perception of the profession now?

Do you regret leaving teaching?

Data Analysis

An audio recording of interview responses was made during the interview and each recording was transcribed verbatim. Two recording devices were used to ensure optimal audio quality and protect from equipment malfunction or operator error. The researcher transcribed each interview, as she believed this would result in deep familiarization with each case. Each transcript was handled in an electronic format, and was analyzed with a word processing program and by hand.

Merriam (2009) notes two stages of data analysis in a multiple case study; within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. The researcher first completed within-case analyses; each case was treated as a unique case and was analyzed individually (Merriam, 2009). The researcher then completed a cross-case analysis; findings from each case were analyzed

within the context of all the cases with the goal of generating insight into the quintain (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006).

The interview guide, developed within the research framework of Generation X, NBC teachers, and teachers who have left the classroom, was used to aid analysis. Analysis of each case was organized around these elements, and similarities and differences across cases followed. Emergent and recurring themes were noted.

Research Validity and Reliability

Issues of validity and reliability are addressed in this study. In qualitative research, internal validity refers to whether or not the researcher's findings reflect reality (McMillan, 2004; Merriam, 2009). The researcher's experience is identical as those of the cases; this provided valuable insight in ensuring the findings reflect reality. Additionally, multiple measures can be taken to increase internal reliability. Member checks ask participants in the study to review the researcher's analysis to make sure it is plausible (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). Triangulation uses multiple sources of data to compare and confirm findings (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2005, 2006). This study triangulated across multiple cases and researcher memos. Researcher reflexivity also contributes to internal validity (McMillan, 2004; Merriam, 2009). The researcher's knowledge of her own dispositions and assumptions allowed her to watch for and protect against any influence on the study's findings, and research memos during data collection and analysis aided in this endeavor. Research memos provided the researcher a space to record thoughts and connections to her own experience. The researcher's subjectivity was discussed thoroughly in Chapter 1 and is addressed again in the next section of this chapter.

McMillan (2004) notes that reliability in qualitative research refers to recorded data accurately reflecting what occurred in the study and findings that are consistent with the collected data (McMillan, 2004; Merriam, 2009). An audio recording and verbatim transcription of interviews ensured the reliability of the data that was collected. Research memos that provided a space for the researcher to capture connections to her own experience and triangulation across cases ensured that the findings were consistent across the collected data, rather than with the researcher's recollection of her experience. Two interviews of members of Generation X who have earned National Board Certification and have remained in the classroom provided additional reliability. They allowed the researcher to confirm that findings were consistent within the collected data by providing a contrast to the data collected in the targeted cases.

External validity typically refers to whether a study's findings can be generalized to other situations beyond the study (McMillan, 2004; Merriam; 2009). Merriam (2009) goes on to explain that in qualitative research "a single case or small, nonrandom, purposeful sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (p. 224). This study's research design (multiple case study) offered insight into the quintain – NBC teachers from Generation X who have left the classroom. Individual cases were presented in the study because they offered opportunities to learn about and understand the quintain. Findings of each individual case were compared across all cases and were generalized to the quintain, but not beyond it.

Safeguards Against Researcher Bias

As described in Chapter 1, the researcher's experience is the genesis of her interest in this topic. She is a member of Generation X; she pursued and earned National Board Certification in 2002; she left the classroom after completing 12 years of teaching. Rather than safeguard against the influence of this experience, she capitalized on the insight and framework it provided this research effort.

A qualitative research approach allows a researcher to capitalize on personal experience, rather than limiting its influence. Schram (2006) noted that subjectivity can become “something to capitalize on rather than to discipline or exorcise, a means to enhance, not distort, the credibility of your study” (p. 136). Further, Schram (2006) offered that, “Direct personal experience plays into nearly every facet of conceptualizing a qualitative study” (p. 15). McMillan (2004) agreed, noting that a qualitative research approach is “characterized by the assumption that the researcher's biases and perspectives must be understood and used in interpreting findings, whereas in a quantitative study researcher bias is a threat to internal validity” (p. 256).

The researcher's experience provided a base from which she approached this research. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) submit three activities that define the qualitative research process, and the researcher's biography defined each of the three. The researcher “approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis)...Every researcher speaks from within a distinct interpretive community” (p. 21).

Ethical Issues

Interviewees were invited to participate by email. No compensation was offered for participating in the study. The research process was described in writing and included an estimate of the time required by the participant. A signed informed consent was obtained and included permission to record the interview session and allowed the researcher to contact the participant by phone to ask and receive answers to any questions that rose after the completion of the interview or during data analysis. Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed, and original audio recordings and any copies will be held in the researcher's home for a minimum of one year following successful completion of this study. Initial findings were shared with participants to ensure agreement. Participation in this study did not pose any threat of harm, either physical or psychological, to participants.

Limitations of the Study

Qualitative research has limitations. The researcher is the primary data collection instrument, and thus subject to unique sensitivities in data collection and reporting (Merriam, 2009). The researcher alone must make decisions about depth of detail to provide for each case and cross-case analyses (Stake, 2005). For these reasons, it is very important that the researcher be aware of biases and subjectivities (Merriam, 2009).

There are also case study limitations of generalizability. This study focused on a small number of individuals who met very specific criteria: members of Generation X, who have obtained National Board Certification, and have left the teaching profession. These individuals represented one county school district in one region of a relatively low paying Southern state in the United States. Results provided insight into the experience of these

individuals (individual cases) and to the quintain (the larger group). Results should not be generalized beyond the focus of this study. Findings about this small sample of teachers from Generation X cannot be generalized to all teachers from Generation X. In addition, findings about these Nationally Board Certified teachers cannot be generalized to all Nationally Board Certified teachers. Finally, findings about these teachers who left teaching cannot be generalized to all teachers who left teaching. However, results of this study may be useful to those interested in attrition of National Board Certified teachers from Generation X.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter described the methodology and techniques that was used to conduct this research study to understand why NBC teachers from Generation X leave the classroom. A qualitative, multiple case study design was used. Semi-structured interviews were the primary data source. Data was analyzed looking for elements of Generation X, National Board Certification, and the decision to leave the classroom. The next chapter presents findings within and across each case.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

Chapter Four introduces the eight cases in this research study. All cases have been assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. The cases, seen in Table 2, are presented and analyzed individually in two sections: leavers and stayers. After each section a cross-case analysis is provided that discusses emergent themes revolving around the interview guide. A comparison of these two groups then follows.

Table 2

Overview of Cases

Leaver/Stayer	Pseudonym	Age	Level
Leaver #1	Robert Frost	36	High School
Leaver #2	Edgar Allan Poe	41	High School
Leaver #3	Harper Lee	41	High School
Leaver #4	Kate Chopin	46	Middle and High School
Leaver #5	F. Scott Fitzgerald	45	Middle and High School
Leaver #6	Zora Neale Hurston	41	High School
Stayer #1	Pearl S. Buck	38	Elementary School
Stayer #2	Nikki Grimes	44	High School

Leaver Case #1: Robert

Robert is 36, on the young end of the Generation X age span (36-47). He taught high school math for eight and a half years at a large high school in the Wake County Public School System. He earned his National Board Certification in 2003 during his fifth year of teaching (having completed the process during his fourth year). His certificate is Mathematics – Adolescence and Young Adulthood. He left midway through his ninth year of

teaching. He is currently the director of a North Carolina Teaching Fellows program on a university campus.

Choosing Teaching

Teaching was not the first profession Robert thought he would pursue. As a high school student who excelled in math and was the valedictorian of his high school, his plan was a career in engineering. This wasn't only Robert's plan; it was the expectation of his community:

I had been groomed, I had been you know in the community, he's gonna go to NC State, he's going to be an engineer, no one I think had ever really thought I was going into education. They did know I could do it well – that was an interesting little fact that I learned later. A lot of people knew I could do it but they said we still see you going, kind of like I was above being a teacher. So let's go be an engineer, go be an accountant, go be a mathematician.

During Robert's senior year in high school, he was asked to tutor a few of his peers in math. This was a pivotal activity. Robert became familiar with the relational aspect of teaching, and he found it a very powerful experience. He applied for and received a North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship which provided a four-year scholarship to North Carolina State University. The Teaching Fellows scholarship was designed to recruit North Carolina's best and brightest students into the teaching profession. It provides a four-year scholarship in return for four years of service by teaching in North Carolina's public schools.

While in college, Robert kept his engineering options open. He followed closely his friends who were engineering majors and watched their progress. He observed that the

professional activities his friends participated in did not match up with the relational aspect of teaching he so enjoyed. When chatting with his friends after the release of the movie *Office Space*, they told him that was what their day was like – life in rows of cubicles in front of a computer. Robert recalls:

“...I watched my buddies who were engineering majors, and I said that’s not what I want...I did not want to be in a cubicle you know...later on the movie *Office Space* came out and they said yeah, that’s what we do during the day. And I’m like, no thank you.”

Robert knew then that he would not be an engineer. He would be a teacher.

Robert always had a positive perception of the teaching profession. He had been taught by his parents to respect his teachers and he was always grateful for their work and interest in his success.

Early Career

Robert’s early career was fast-paced and full of activity. He was hired at a very large high school in Raleigh, North Carolina that was very different from the small high school he attended in rural North Carolina. The size of the school made a strong impression on Robert. At the small rural high school he attended, there was one Algebra teacher, one geometry teacher, and so on. If you followed a particular sequence of math courses, you knew which teachers you would have. However at Robert’s new school, he was one of eight algebra teachers and six geometry teachers.

Robert felt supported by his colleagues. He enjoyed the camaraderie of having multiple teachers close by that were teaching the same classes. These teachers worked together to provide the best possible instruction to their students:

I had a great team to work with... There was a group of like six of us that taught within 100 feet of each other and we were like our own little network and our buddy system and that was what was tremendous.

Robert also felt supported by his administration. While he did not always agree with their every decision, he did find his principal to be supportive and reliable. He believes that she was actively engaged in his success and worked to provide opportunities for him.

During this time, Robert's perception of the profession became more complex. He describes it as having a better understanding of the broad nature of the education system. This broader understanding also brought some clarity for Robert's future. He believed early in his career that he would always work in the field of education:

I saw education like a set of machines that has so many intricacies... all the little pieces that make that machine run, and how it can run efficiently when all the pieces are working together and when they don't it starts to fall apart, shut down, and you need to go into maintenance mode. How do you fix the school assignment plan... EOC results, how do you fix those... and that was where I clearly saw that I'm not going into private industry, I'm not going anywhere else. I knew I wanted to be in some role in education.

Pursuing National Board Certification

Robert chose to pursue National Board Certification during his fourth year of teaching. He did so because he believed it signified the highest achievement of teaching (a national certification) and gave him the distinction of being a master teacher:

...at the time I heard about National Boards, you heard about it being at the top of your game. And it was what I saw as an attempt to nationally recognize teachers at a common level...to say I earned National Boards because I met a national set of guidelines and am at the top of my game in comparison to other teachers across the entire country...that's what I want to strive for. That's what I want to be, a master teacher.

It also provided further challenge for Robert. The certification process offered, "additional experiences, additional questions to ask myself, additional focal points that I hadn't considered before."

The bonus pay that National Board Certified teachers receive in North Carolina was attractive to Robert. But he found his own personal and student growth more compelling. Also, Robert believes that earning National Board Certification brings some respect and clarity about the teacher as a professional:

Um, sometimes maybe you think it's like if you're National Board Certified you're more respected, because you have that title, that award. Kind of like when you're teacher of the year or when you're department head or something like that. ...it gains some level of um clarity on who you are...

Achieving National Board Certification also provided validation for Robert. The certification placed him in a cadre of individuals who had achieved a great thing, and he liked what that meant for him, his inclusion in this group.

...it just validated for me that I was at that national level, that I was among my peers across the country...a group to be involved in, that camaraderie that says we've done something special. We've clearly demonstrated that we are doing something right in our craft...

Robert completed the National Boards process during his fourth year of teaching. He had just finished his Master's degree in mathematics education with a thesis, and he found completing the National Board Certification process to be a fairly smooth endeavor. The writing required for his thesis enabled the certification process to flow smoothly. He worked closely with a few other teachers at his school. They met frequently to read over each other's entries. He enjoyed the collaborative nature of going through the process.

Robert found one of the most impactful things about the process to be the amount of reflection in which he engaged: "I think that's the biggest thing that the National Boards does is that it makes you more reflective of your craft." He believes that the focus on data driven processes and individual student learning made him a better teacher.

While Robert did not expect to see his teaching career change as a result of achieving National Board Certification, he did expect to see a change in student learning. He expected to be more effective in the classroom, and to see his students more engaged and learning more. "I just expected...that I would see better results from my students...that I would see them engaged more in the classroom, engaged more in their success."

Deciding to Leave

Robert never experienced a first time he thought about leaving teaching. When he began his career he knew that he would not teach for 30 years. By year three of his career, he had earned his Master's degree and had a plan to earn his doctorate and move into higher education and teacher education after earning National Board Certification. He entered his sixth year of teaching with a plan to begin visiting graduate programs to determine where he would earn his doctorate.

I knew I wanted to keep going, and I wanted to keep using my gifts and talents in teaching to the fullest extent, and I knew National Boards had helped me with that. But at the same time, it was like, um, you know I think I wanted to go to the higher ed route or it was time to move on to a different experience. And um, I just wanted to keep expanding.

During Robert's sixth of teaching, he met and married his wife. Shortly after, they began a family. At the start of his eighth year in the classroom, they began the conversation of what next steps they each might take with their careers. The opening for the position Robert holds now was published – an opportunity to lead the Teaching Fellows program on a local college campus – and he saw it as an opportunity to have a greater impact on education. Being in teacher education allows him to have an impact beyond the kids he taught yearly in his classroom:

I was impacting 30 to 150 students a year. What happens when I impact 30 preservice teachers? Well then they're going to impact their anywhere from 30 to 150 students.

So it just, the way you impact students at that point just seems to exponentially grow...

Robert cites several factors that played a role in his decision to leave the classroom. As he and his wife started a family, he wanted to be available for his children if he was needed, or for his spouse. His strong commitment to his classroom made him feel bad about leaving them for any length of time. He rarely took a sick day and hated to leave for professional development because he wanted to avoid the time it would take to get his students back on track: "I hated leaving my students. I didn't want to have a gap day take place."

He also felt pressure to be his family's financial provider and seek positions that have greater earning potential: "...being a male, to me, there's still a mentality and it's hard to get over, you know, you still want to be viewed as the breadwinner. People still look at you like that."

The length of time Robert spent in the classroom was also a factor. After eight years, he was ready for the next step in his career:

...it was eight years, and for some reason eight started to resonate. I made a commitment to the school that I would at least be there a few years. I made it eight years...I didn't see myself leaving education, I just saw it as leaving a public school classroom for a new opportunity and the chance to just leave a different mark or a new mark on education that could then maybe propel me...to the next step in my career.

Upon reflection of his decision to leave, Robert states that he misses teaching. He does some private tutoring and spends time tutoring students in his Teaching Fellows program, especially those in math education:

I should be reflecting on best practices, reading research journals...I'm more worried about my students...I don't want them to fail...and I think that's my substitute if you want to call it that, for not teaching math anymore...it's been hard every day not being in the classroom - every day.

Robert still sees teaching as a very respectable profession, one to which he would return. But he believes that the rate of change current classroom teachers are experiencing with education reform movements places an undue burden on them:

I feel like we need to, when I say lessen the demands, not the rigor, not the expectations, but all this paper pushing, all this, man, you know, let a teacher teach...let them be the creative innovative individual and take down some of these barriers that are hindering them from that creative outlet.

When asked if he regrets leaving the classroom, Robert answers yes and no. He regrets that he left mid-year, and believes he has unfinished business there. But he does not regret leaving because he is achieving his goal of having a greater impact. He is working with pre-service teachers and, "I still get to teach. I am impacting more lives..."

In a continued reflection of the male gender role of being the financial provider, he notes that if his wife would be the breadwinner, he would go back to the classroom immediately:

I mean, I've always said if my wife wanted to be the big, big breadwinner I would go back. And I hate to bring it to money, but I mean I would jump back in the classroom and I would stay there...

Leaver Case #2: Edgar

Edgar is 41 and is in the middle of the Generation X age span (36-47). He taught high school math for thirteen years. Edgar taught at a small private school and also at a large, public high school in the Wake County Public School System. He earned his National Board Certification in 2003 during his tenth year of teaching. He left midway through his thirteenth year of teaching in February 2006. He is currently the Senior Director for Educational Programming at a health education non-profit.

Choosing Teaching

Edgar explains how he “fell into” the teaching profession rather than why he chose it. After graduating from college with an undergraduate in the humanities, he spent the summer as a program director for a summer camp. He met many people and at the end of the summer he had several job offers; one was to teach at a private school:

And, so, I put them in a bag (the job offers) and drew out of the bag and kept drawing the same one. So I took that as an indication that that was what I was supposed to do. So I went and started teaching at the private school...speech and math. And I loved it...at that point I knew that was kind of what I wanted to do with my life.

Edgar found that he really enjoyed teaching; so much so that he found it hard to believe he was getting paid to do it. Though he only earned \$17,000 a year, he was, “actually

shocked that I got paid to do what I was doing...it was so much fun...it was phenomenal that I would get anything to do this.”

When asked about his perception of the profession in high school, Edgar recalled his experience as being predominantly positive, and that most of his teachers were caring adults. He especially remembers his math teachers fondly. During this time, Edgar did not perceive teaching as “being that same kind of profession as like a doctor or a lawyer...And maybe that had something to do with the way that I fell into it.”

Early Career

Edgar began his career as a middle school math and speech teacher in a small private school in West Virginia and soon after became the high school math teacher in that same school. He was also exploring enrolling in seminary to do scripture translation. A seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina was recommended as having a strong languages program, so Edgar applied and planned his move to Wake County. He also began applying for teaching jobs in Wake County so he could work as a teacher and pay for seminary as he progressed through the program.

He was hired to teach high school math in a large high school after the school year had already started. He continued to find teaching very enjoyable: “...I came in and started teaching at a public school and...even more than at the private school, I was like, this is where it’s at!” During this time and for several additional years, Edgar continued to take classes in seminary.

One additional opportunity that Edgar pursued was working in an afterschool program at his high school. He found it provided an additional way to work with students

that really filled a niche for him. He enjoyed working with students in his classroom, but found the afterschool program to be, “this other playground to work with the young people that really, that’s where my heart was, with them.” The program reached students who struggled with achievement and discipline and were more inclined to drop out of high school.

During this time Edgar received some advice from an elder at his church that lead him to rethink his seminary plans. He said, “...you know it’s very rare that your passion and your career intersect. If that happens, stick with that...and my passion and my career were right there together...it was working with those kids.” Shortly after, Edgar dropped out of seminary.

Edgar’s perception of the teaching profession changed during the early part of his career. He began to consider the “professional aspect of being a teacher” and what successful teachers accomplish. He began to observe that some teachers held themselves to a higher standard than others:

I definitely saw some people that I considered professionals, that definitely had that high level of, um, proficiency in their academic field, uh, that were high performers in the classroom. But at the same time, I saw a vast number that in my opinion were – and I mean, I’m just being honest – I thought that they were subpar. I thought that they were less than what that that level of professionalism should be.

Pursuing National Board Certification

Edgar chose to pursue National Board Certification for a number of reasons. The first he mentions is the financial incentive in the State of North Carolina; teachers receive a twelve percent raise for the life of their certificate. Additionally, Edgar believed that attaining

National Board Certification would provide a “status of marketability” and that he would be a marketable teacher applicant in any other state.

More importantly, Edgar says he liked what he saw happening among his peers at school who were choosing to go through the certification process. He saw those teachers holding themselves to a higher standard and raising their level of professionalism to closer to what Edgar thought it should be:

My colleagues were...choosing to hold themselves to this framework and really critically evaluating what they were doing. And um, I felt like that was kind of a level of professionalism that I wanted to pursue...That cut above, and I like that, and it was that level of professionalism that I thought professionalism should be, rather than kind of what was the norm.

Edgar sought National Board Certification during his tenth year of teaching. He found the certification process to be a very positive experience. Edgar earned his undergraduate degree in humanities and had gone on to earn a master’s degree in math education, and neither program provided a student teaching experience. He found the National Board Certification process to be, “a whole other school...as I was reading the standards and the other relevant documentation and then as I was evaluating and reviewing myself.”

Edgar believed that his teaching career would not change much after achieving certification. He saw himself continuing to teach math and continue his work in the afterschool program. In fact, Edgar found Entry 4 (Documented Accomplishments) lent credence and priority to those things he enjoyed most about teaching – identifying and facilitating collaboration and partnerships with families and communities:

...they really looked at those things that weren't necessarily encouraged in the setting at the time...those partnerships, collaborations, uh, all of that kind of stuff that really got me juiced up and going and figuring out how I could plug my young people into opportunities with these employers and making all those connections. I mean, that stuff got me fired up...And, National Board was looking for that kind of stuff.

While this was a very positive thing for Edgar, he found a difference in the priority his school placed on these same kinds of activities: "...ultimately that clashed with what the expectation was at the school at that time...that was the rub for me...it left me wanting to continue that Entry 4 kind of stuff and there wasn't room for that."

Deciding to Leave

Edgar first considered leaving the profession in the fall of 2005. The afterschool program he had become increasingly involved in was very successful. Though it had originated via a federal grant that had ended a year earlier, Edgar had engaged the school's community to continue funding for the program during the 2004-2005 school year. At the start of the 2005 school year though, the program was no longer being supported by the school's administration because, "...at this point the principal at the time um was pretty much an absent principal...and deferred greatly to the assistant principals." The assistant principal in charge of afterschool programs was no longer interested in supporting the program at the school level.

Even though Edgar had again engaged financial support throughout the school's community, and had a youth development group interested in providing a sizable grant to support the program, there was no support at the school level to continue. Various

community supporters of the program spoke with the school administration and students and parents expressed their interest and support. Edgar even approached school system personnel outside of the school to ask for their assistance. He told them, “We have all the resources here – they’re lined up waiting at the door just to be poured in.” He got no response.

While waiting for some resolution, the youth development organization attempting to fund the program with a grant offered Edgar a job: “And so the same folks who had brought the substantial grant fund opportunity to the door said, do you want a job? And I said, yeah. I’m ready to go...and that’s how I left the classroom.”

Edgar states that he did not feel like his efforts were valued, and that was the major factor that contributed to him leaving the classroom:

I felt not valued, you know? And I felt like I had accomplished a lot. And I was really proud of my accomplishment and it seemed like everybody on the planet acknowledged it except for the administration in the building that should have been the most proud and should have been the most supportive...I wasn’t trying to rock any boats. But at the same time – and I tried going up the chain of command appropriately. But I felt like every level was just nothing. Nothing. Nothing. And so, um, as hard as it was for me to leave...I felt like, you know, if I don’t take a stand...like to me it was almost this principle. And I actually took a pay cut. I left taking a pay cut. But it was on principle. And I thought, you know...there are kids...I can name for you kids today that ended up dropping out and are working at fast food restaurants today because that was ripped out from under them. I can tell you others who are in college and successful today because they were a part of it. So, I know

how powerful it was. And I know that...very specific decision to do nothing had negative long-term impacts on the young people that supposedly we served, and supposedly it was all about them. It was all about convenience...”

Edgar worked with this youth development organization managing multiple afterschool programs and other youth programs for several years. This job lead to an offer for the current position he holds now as senior director for educational programming for a health education non-profit organization.

Edgar misses the classroom, and he states that he would go back. He has maintained many of the relationships he had with students in that afterschool program and is still a very relationship-oriented person: “Would I go back to teaching in the math classroom? Yeah, I would do it. I loved it that much.” He does not regret leaving the classroom because his choice was, “very much an issue of justice, that it was wrong, it was flat out wrong to take that, pulling the rug out from under the kids.”

Edgar’s perception of the profession has not changed much since he left the classroom. However, Edgar does have ideas about teacher education that are based on his own experience. He entered the classroom as a lateral entry teacher and thinks that, “the way I came into the profession was a pretty doggone good way. I feel like there are a lot of people who come through our teacher education college...far less prepared than I was.”

Leaver Case #3: Harper

Harper is 41 and is in the middle of the Generation X age span (36-47). She taught middle school language arts and high school English. She earned her National Board Certification in 1999 during her fifth year of teaching. Her certificate is English Language

Arts –Early Adolescence. She left after her eighth year of teaching and is currently the publisher of a magazine.

Choosing Teaching

Harper enjoyed a positive experience with her teachers in high school, and grew up in a family environment that encouraged respect for teachers. She chose teaching as a profession while she was in college. She was passionate about reading and writing, and chose English as a major. She recalls that, “teaching seemed natural because I wanted to inspire other children and students to be inspired about reading and writing and everything that encompassed that.”

While she completed the student teaching component of her degree, her respect for the profession grew as she gained a better understanding of the work it took to be a good teacher:

...the work it took to be in the classroom for 45 minutes or 50 minutes – I definitely did not realize how much preparation went into that until I actually had to do it...it seemed like a lot of work compared to what I had in my mind.

Early Career

Harper enjoyed her first years of teaching. Though the amount of work was often overwhelming, she found that she enjoyed the challenge of organizing and preparing material for students:

I really enjoyed it and I was really excited to have my own classroom...to be able to organize it, figure out, you know, how I was going to do my lesson plans. I was really excited about all of that but it was definitely a lot of work.

Harper's perception of the teaching profession changed in that she began to understand the broader role of parent interaction in teaching. In fact, she expressed a desire for more training on that in teacher preparation. The parental interaction piece became a stressful part of teaching for Harper:

I found it stressful...personally I feel that I'm pouring my heart out to do the right job and do things the best that I know how and to make sure that these children are learning what they need to know...there are parents out there that aren't supportive and who are very critical if their child doesn't do exactly what they think they should, or if you have to say something that's not positive...it's very hard to take because...teaching is very personal.

Pursuing National Board Certification

There were many reasons Harper chose to pursue National Board Certification. First, she was ready for a challenge: "I knew what I was teaching. I needed a new challenge." She also knew that earning certification would enable her to earn more money, and believed that the certification would help her stand out among her peers.

She completed the certification during her fourth year of teaching and recalls the process as very stressful and all-consuming:

I remember just being crazy that year (laughs). I'd feel like I couldn't remember things I should remember. I would just lock myself out of the house...it was just so consuming...I just remember doing ridiculous things and forgetting things that I should not forget. It was just completely consuming.

Harper does believe that the certification process made her a better teacher. She found the constant analysis of instructional decisions and reflection on what you might do differently to be helpful. However, she did not give any thought to what her teaching career would be like after earning certification.

Deciding to Leave

Harper first thought about leaving at the start of her eighth year of teaching. She believes that she is different from other teachers in that she did not enter the profession with a plan to stay for the entirety of her working career:

I never thought that I would teach for the rest of my life. Which, I didn't know what else I would want to do, but I didn't go into teaching with the mentality like, this is it.

I went in, this is what I want to do right now, and I love it, so I'm happy right now.

But I just never had this feeling like this would be it forever.

Harper did arrive at a point in her career when she felt she needed something new. She was comfortable in what she was doing in the classroom and was ready to move on. There was a need to take on other work.

This was not the only factor Harper considered when she left the classroom. Among the most important she described was that the profession did not offer a differentiated way to look at teacher performance and compensation:

...(it) was very upsetting to me when I saw other teachers that, from my perception, were not doing everything they were supposed to be doing and it did not matter. So there was an inequality there, and we're all getting paid the same amount of money... so and so doesn't show up for their duty, so and so doesn't follow whatever you're

supposed to do...you feel you're doing all these things you're supposed to be doing and these other people aren't and yet nothing happens.

Another major factor in deciding to leave was that she found responsibility for student performance or student actions wasn't held to the student by the parent. Instead, parents looked to, and placed the blame with, her. This was particularly hard for Harper because as an English teacher, she spent many hours after school grading student essays and working to provide meaningful feedback to each of her students. She felt as if she lacked parent support for the work she was doing:

...I spent many nights grading papers, and rereading papers, and writing in comments, and trying to be positive and motivating. You know, tie it back to the students, how writing is important no matter what...career they want to go into...it was something that was really important to me and I felt like the only way you can really do that is if you constantly read their essays, you constantly...have them rewrite it and you make comments and that personal relationship growing their writing. And you'd be up late doing these things, and then you'd come in the next morning and you'd have a conference about a child who made a poor choice, which they're going to make, they're in high school – poor choices are going to happen. But when you make a poor choice you have to deal with the consequences. And a lot of the times the parents would just want to blame me for their child's poor choices. And it was just infuriating after eight years.

Finally, the financial factor played a role in Harper's decision to leave. Like many teachers, Harper worked multiple jobs to support herself. While she admits she could have

lived more frugally, she tired of the need to support herself with additional employment. “I was always working two jobs...and so basically by leaving the profession I only had to work one job. And, within I want to say four years I tripled my salary, which is crazy.”

Harper looks back on her teaching career with appreciation. She believes that she learned skills that prepared her for a career in the business world. She finds herself glad she did it even as she is glad that she left:

I’m 100 percent glad that I was a teacher...the things I learned in teaching have definitely made me a better business person, and just a better person overall. And the abilities you learn as a teacher are phenomenal – that they cannot teach you anywhere in business. So I’m grateful for the path that I took. But I’m still glad that I left, even though I’m glad that I chose to do it.

Her perception of the career has not changed much since she left the classroom ten years ago. She notes that the manner in which it has changed is mostly owed to now being a parent with a child in elementary school. She now works as a magazine publisher with the majority of her duties falling in advertising sales.

Leaver Case #4: Kate

Kate is 46, on the upper end of the Generation X age span (36-47). She taught high school English for eight years at a large high school in the Wake County Public School System. She earned her National Board Certification in 1999 during her eighth year of teaching. Her certificate is English Language Arts – Adolescence and Young Adulthood. She left after her eighth year of teaching and currently works for a curriculum and assessment development company.

Choosing Teaching

Kate always knew she wanted to be a teacher while growing up because she loved school and loved learning. She wonders if she never thought about any other careers because as a female, she wasn't exposed to many others. She was discouraged from pursuing teaching as a career because it didn't pay much: "Teaching seemed to be a good fit. But...my parents, including my father, were not particularly happy with the idea of me becoming a teacher. And so I was discouraged from doing it for a while."

She graduated from college with a major in English and a minor in political science. Her first job was working on Capitol Hill for a congressman for two years, where she actually made less money than she did when she became a teacher.

She returned to school for a master's degree and teaching certificate after becoming engaged to be married. The financial ramifications of being a teacher were somehow softened in the context of a marriage with an additional income: "...as a second income teaching didn't seem like such a bad deal to me or to my family so...I was not discouraged from going back to get my...teaching certificate."

At that time, Kate believed that teachers worked very hard, though she admits she, "had no idea how hardworking" they really were. As a student, she enjoyed talking with teachers outside of the confines of the classroom and liked the way they often challenged her to accomplish more.

As she thought about teaching as a career while she was in college, she worried about it limiting her future career prospects:

... it wasn't so much that teaching became something unattractive, I just felt like I needed to give myself time to make sure, knowing that the pay would be less and knowing that it would be hard...if I got started in a teaching career, would I be able to do as much? ...would I be so...pigeonholed into teaching that...I wouldn't feel like I could get out...would there be choices in the future?

Early Career

Kate was not hired immediately after graduating with her master's degree due to cutbacks and reduced hiring in classrooms. She learned of a position through her graduate school advisor and took a job in a large suburban high school in Wake County in November, several months after the start of the school year.

She describes her early years as being “very melodramatic. The intensity of being a new teacher was (laughs) was very, very tough.” She was newly married, had recently relocated, and began her career late in the year – all of these things in addition to the shock that is being in a classroom for the first time. Kate also found herself in a school with very rigorous expectations for teachers of honors classes: “...the expectation was...the kids read a lot, they wrote a lot. Um, and I was being mentored by some people who really had skewed ideas about what a lot means (laughs).”

One of the most significant challenges Kate faced early in her career was developing relationships with students:

...I'm a very introverted person, so, giving all the energy out to students all day long could absolutely drain me. So I had to learn how to just, you know develop a nice relationship with all these kids with all these different interests. And so the academic

part was challenging and keeping up the work was challenging but the hardest, the most difficult part was this, the emotional (challenge) of, you know having 150 kids every day that I wanted to have a good relationship with...

Kate also found herself without a classroom – she was a roamer. She was assigned to an office and made her way to different classrooms throughout the day to teach her classes. But there was a benefit to this for Kate. She shared her office with other teachers who were more experienced than she was and she learned a lot from them.

Kate also encountered what she describes as a large amount of politics within her department. Teachers in her department divided themselves into three groups. There were the 9th and 10th grade teachers who taught honor classes and worked hard to challenge the students. These were teachers who were pursuing graduate school, additional outside educational projects, and professional development. Then there were the 11th and 12th grade honors and Advanced Placement teachers who taught classes much like they were college classes. She describes them as “isolated” from each other and they challenged students through rigor as defined by quantity. Finally, there were teachers who taught the average classes in much more traditional ways. She believes these teachers used less innovative classroom methods in order to manage classroom behavior problems rather than as a choice of best practice to enhance how those students might learn.

Finally, Kate encountered teachers in her department and in other departments who had different standards for their own performance:

...I was amazed at how little some people could do. How much time they could spend with their honors kids coloring and...standard students filling out

worksheets... was just amazed, you know, that that could, I didn't know that that went on, that that was so prevalent.

Pursuing National Board Certification

Kate pursued National Board Certification the first year the certificate for English Language Arts for Adolescent and Young Adult was available during her eighth year of teaching.

She chose to pursue it for many reasons. The first was an opportunity to increase her salary: "the first reason is if there was a way to get paid more for what I was doing I thought I'd be a fool not to try it (laughs)." She also had a colleague who wanted to go through the process and knew she wouldn't be going it alone. That element of collaboration was an important component for Kate. Finally, Kate was attracted by the academic challenge. She enjoys learning, and said – "...the learning process...the challenge, I like academic challenges".

Kate found the process to be an addition to an already challenging job and an evolving family life; she now had a young child. She and her colleague "set up some really pretty strict parameters and deadlines for ourselves so that we could manage the workload which we already thought was impossible to manage (laughs) along with the National Board stuff." They met a couple of days each week after school to work through the portfolio questions together and help each other dissect their videos for analysis. Near the end of the process, they scheduled their assessment center appointments on the same day and met a few Saturdays before pulling everything and before mailing the completed portfolios.

Kate did not expect her teaching career to change after National Board Certification. She considered herself to be in a good, steady place. She finally had a classroom, and was teaching classes that were interesting to her. She was keeping the same teaching preparations from year to year, and considering the politics within her department, she was satisfied.

Deciding to Leave

Kate thinks the first time she ever thought about leaving the classroom was – “Probably the first year...and the second year...(laughs)...” She gave more thought to leaving during her third year. Her spouse was in graduate school, however, and Kate was the primary wage earner for her family. If she was going to leave, she needed to do so with a position where she earned at least as much money as she was earning as a teacher.

The issue that gave Kate the greatest reason to think about leaving was a growing sense of imbalance between the demands of work and home. She had always found the interpersonal aspect of teaching to be very demanding, and now she had greater demands at home with her own children. Coupled with the high standards she held for herself in the classroom, she found herself in the unenviable position of having to decide where to spend her emotional energy – at home, or at work:

...I was having to make compromises in terms of how much time I could spend on my work, because I now had a child to take care of. And I was having to make compromises in terms of the amount of energy I had left for my child when I um got home. And I, it was really hard for me to find the balance that teachers who stay in the classroom have to find. But I have very, I mean, this sounds snobby or arrogant, I have very high standards for myself as a teacher. And to, to try to compromise those

standards so that it became a life where I wasn't working every night 'til 9:00 at night and getting up the next morning and being at school at 7, um, was difficult.

It was during this same year that Kate saw a position she gave serious consideration to applying for – an English Language Arts content specialist position with a large state agency. She enjoyed the curriculum development part of her job most, and this job would be solely that: "...it would probably be more curriculum and less working with students in the ways that drained me." She consulted a few professional colleagues, and they encouraged her to apply. Kate was surprised and delighted to be chosen for the job.

One of the first things that appealed to her was that she would be able to fulfill a life plan she had developed when she was 25. Her husband earned his doctorate first while Kate worked, and then later he would work while Kate earned her doctorate. Kate still had the desire to further her education with a Ph.D., and the agency would pay for her coursework. She was not interested in becoming a school administrator, and she knew there were few, if any, other options to further her career in education:

I...realized I probably didn't want to be a principal...and that was really the only other choice if you wanted to, you know, if you had any career ambitions to be something other than a teacher. I don't want to say more than a teacher, but something other than a classroom teacher. There aren't many options.

When Kate reflects on her career in the classroom, she misses being engaged directly at the student level with curriculum. She believes the profession has changed since she left the classroom. In some of her work with teachers, she has found that the emphasis on

assessments and standards has not empowered teachers to “employ innovative strategies that would improve the literacy” of students.

Kate uses the word cynical to describe how she currently feels about teaching. She believes that there are wonderful teachers out there, but worries about whether or not those types of individuals will continue to choose teaching. She believes that teachers aren't paid very well in comparison to other professionals with similar credentials and that income disparity will decrease the number of good candidates. In addition, she worries about those who are entering teaching having grown up in an education system emphasizing standardized testing:

...there's all that research on, you teach the way you were taught. They don't even have the experience of remembering different things from when they were in the classroom (as students). ...I don't know how much of a chance they've got to really be independent thinkers and really be, um, creating the kinds of nurturing but challenging classrooms that I think, I think we need to have.

Kate's greatest fear is that the current emphasis on assessment and teacher evaluation will ultimately do great damage to the teaching profession: “the emphasis on the assessments and this idea...that we can evaluate teachers on the students' performance on these assessments which are not designed for that in the first place...has the potential to destroy...teaching as a profession.”

Kate expresses conflicting opinions about whether or not she would go back to the classroom. She does consider returning at some point in the future and wonders what it

would be like to work for a school administrator with a strong curriculum background and in a smaller school.

But she also states that:

I wouldn't go back right now...I mean if I could at all avoid it, I wouldn't go back...all over the place, right now teachers are being bashed from so many different angles that it's really getting pretty horrible. So, I really just wonder who would want to go into the profession at this point, especially if you're not someplace where you are allowed to be, you know, a little innovative and have a little bit of space?

Kate states that she sometimes regrets leaving the classroom. She speaks fondly of those teachers she knows who are still teaching, and remarks that in some way, teaching may be the key to a simpler, more fulfilling life than the one she enjoys now: "in some ways life...would be simpler if I were still there...simpler and even more fulfilling in some ways."

Leaver Case #5: Scott

Scott is 45, near the upper end of the Generation X age span (36-47). He taught high school chemistry for several years at multiple high schools in the Wake County Public School System and a rural county in the eastern part of the state. He earned his National Board Certification in 2001 during his eighth year of teaching. His certificate is in Science - Adolescent and Young Adulthood. He left after twelve years of teaching and currently works for a large state agency in the area of science curriculum.

Choosing Teaching

Scott was always interested in education and the teaching profession. He always loved school and had two family members who were career educators. Though he had a

longstanding interest in the profession, he was not encouraged to pursue it by his teachers: “a lot of my teachers told me you’re too smart to be a teacher. You need to do something else.” He says he knew for sure he was going to be a teacher, “when I didn’t get into medical school (laughs).”

Scott had a very positive perception of the teaching profession while he was in high school: “Oh, I idolized teachers...They do so much, and they had their stuff together...the good ones were just incredible. You know, they juggled so many different things at one time and never let the balls drop.” One teacher in particular made an impression on Scott. She never graded Scott solely on the work he submitted. She also considered his potential.

Scott’s perception of the profession did not change much while he was in college. He began to build an understanding of what good teaching was, and believed that he could do a better job than his instructors of explaining things to students if he had the content knowledge. The focus he experienced was not on bringing knowledge to students, but rather a sole focus on content:

...I can teach science all day and science will make an A. But my job is to teach children science so they can understand it and make meaning of it. They taught science, or whatever subject. I was just in the room when they (college instructors) were teaching it.

Early Career

When Scott began his teaching career, the job market was not favorable. With a science certificate in hand, the only job he was offered was a half-time position teaching computer skills in a K-8 school in a rural county in the eastern part of the state. This followed

teaching chemistry, honors chemistry, and AP chemistry during his student teaching assignment. Scott describes the two months he spent in this position as, “a good experience, having to manage kids, having to um, explain things so they could understand what was going on...that was the start of a real education.”

Scott was then hired in a full time position for the remainder of the year. He took the place of a 7th grade science teacher who left during the first week of school. He describes what he walked into in this manner: “...in 6 weeks they had covered 8 pages in the textbook. And I walked into a 7 period day and 157 students in a carpeted science lab. With no air conditioning (laughs).” The experience was a formative one. Scott received significant positive instructional support from his principal, a former science teacher:

He would actually come in and do demo lessons for me, to show me how to work with middle schoolers. And it was the longest year of my life...I made a lot of deals with my higher power if he would get me through that year...and um, I did.

Scott was able to land a position teaching high school biology, physical science, and AP chemistry during his second year. When he speaks of this year, he speaks very little of what happened in his classroom. Instead, he talks about “behind-the-scenes” politics. During this year, Scott went through a grievance process after receiving an unfavorable evaluation which endangered his teaching certificate. He states that he had two mentors that year, and one, “basically was instructed to do a complete hatchet job on me. My final evaluation was written in her handwriting which was totally inappropriate and illegal.” He describes that what he learned that year was “how to deal with bad people.”

Scott took a year off from teaching and went back to graduate school to earn a master's degree in science education. When he returned to the classroom a year later, he did so in Wake County at a large, rural high school. He describes the school as much larger than those he had taught at before, and as having much more bureaucracy. During his time there, he really grew as a teacher via his experiences with his colleagues. Some "showed me what I didn't want to be, but some who helped me be(come) what I wanted to be." Scott also grew instructionally. He did not have adequate textbooks to teach his chemistry classes, and the teacher before Scott had used AP Chemistry textbooks to teach regular chemistry classes:

I learned, after browbeating my kids for a semester trying to use those books. I became one of the teachers who only used the book for a reference and I made my own materials. And I think that really started my progression to being an excellent teacher.

During this time, Scott's perception of the profession did change. He had, "more admiration for the good teachers that I had and all that they had to do behind the scenes. Um, and I had a little bit of contempt for the lazy teachers who I saw were wasting kids' time." Scott also realized that "a little cynicism had crept in" from his early negative experiences, and he learned that "you have to look out for yourself and work for yourself some." He was given some advice by another teacher during this time that captures this sentiment nicely:

...you have to do your own PR when you're in the classroom. And that if you don't do that, a lot of times people will see you as an easy target to get their way even when you're right. So you build that reputation, you build that PR, and you tend to have more support. And people let you do what you do.

Pursuing National Board Certification

Scott pursued National Board Certification for the first time around his 8th or 9th year of teaching. He chose to do so because he believed earning it would bring “validation for my teaching and the beliefs that I espoused in the classroom...I wanted to prove to people that I was a really good teacher, even if I didn’t teach exactly like they did.” He stated that the increase in salary for North Carolina teachers who’ve achieved certification was a motivator as well.

Scott did not achieve certification on his first attempt. The loss of his father during that school year prevented him from working on the portfolio until very near the submission deadline in the spring. He recalls that “my box sat unopened for a long time...and I basically did everything the two weeks before spring break, wrote it on spring break, and mailed it.”

He did not make an attempt to resubmit any entries for another year. He had just gotten married and his wife at the time, also a teacher, was attempting to earn her certification. She passed on her first attempt. Scott then asked her to review his materials and help him make choices on which entries to revise, and provide suggestions for revisions. After resubmitting two rewritten entries, Scott earned his certification.

Scott was seeking validation through the certification process, and he believes that he received that. He believed that after earning certification, he “could come in and say I have my National Boards, so, an objective organization with standards that are accepted have said that what I’m doing is fine. Because a lot of times I feel like I’m not a typical science teacher.”

Scott believed that after earning certification he would encounter more opportunities and that the certification would be an advantage. He did find that it “helped get the foot in the door a little bit.” He was invited to participate in special programs and was invited to several special events. Scott also found that earning certification brought additional recognition. One system that he worked for “even made plaques for the doors of the National Board Certified teachers. So, your classroom door had a plaque proclaiming that.”

Scott also believed that the certification made it possible for him to hold roles beyond that of trainer with the North Carolina Teacher Academy; he was also a team leader and curriculum writer. However, he is not convinced the certification process made him a better teacher:

I'll be real honest with you...do I feel like I'm a better teacher because of going through National Boards? Not really. I think it opened doors for me to become better. I think it gave me opportunities. It did help me to focus a little more on being reflective in my practice. But, to be brutally honest, these people who say I've been through this program and it has made all the difference in my life, I'm not buying what they're selling. Because any good professional should be trying to improve their practice throughout.

Scott has invested time and effort in earning and renewing his National Board Certification and believes the certification has provided benefits to him professionally. He believes that “for my current job it added to my street cred...when I talk to teachers, I can say I'm National Board Certified and I've been through the process and the renewal process.”

Deciding to Leave

When asked when he first considered leaving the classroom, Scott replied, “When I started (laughs).” He quickly noted that he had a “master plan” in mind when he started teaching. Scott knows that when he has been at something for a while, he needs a change. He also considered from the start that after a number of years in the classroom, he would be ready to have a greater impact: “I figured 10-15 years in the classroom I could move up and be of help to more people working in the central office or a consulting type thing.”

After working for many years in the classroom, and in additional roles with the North Carolina Teacher Academy as a trainer, he was ready for a new challenge:

I had the teaching down pat. My kids were all doing what they were supposed to do. I didn't have any classroom management problems. They were learning. They were thriving. They were succeeding, even the ones who thought that they weren't learning because it was easy for them to learn. So I figured I needed to find other opportunities.

He interviewed for several positions before he was hired to be a science curriculum consultant at a large state education agency. He currently still holds that position.

When asked about what factors lead to his decision to leave, Scott does not cite any specific ones. He knew he was ready for a change. In his last classroom position, one of Scott's coworkers had an openly negative view of him as a teacher. She shared it freely with other teachers and the school administration. He notes that “things like that...made it very easy for me to walk out.”

Scott believes that leaving the classroom was a good decision for him. He appreciates that in his current position, he has a greater impact on the classroom: “I feel like I can help more teachers and therefore help more students to gain an appreciation of science and for science to be more accessible to kids.” Additionally, he believes that changes that have occurred in the profession since he left would not have been good for him as a teacher. He specifically mentions the new teacher evaluation instrument, and believes that his focus would have been diverted from his students to “making sure every list that someone gives you is checked off.” He is not bothered by the assessment and the growing emphasis on assessment: “my classes were always the tested ones, and if you teach the standard course of study and teach children how to know what to do when they don’t know what to do, that takes care of itself.”

Scott sees the teaching profession today as one where teachers “have a hard row to hoe.” He sees that teachers are treated like “people that can’t be trusted to do what’s expected of them,” often face “irrational demands,” and “have people making decisions for them who don’t understand the profession.” Additionally, he doesn’t believe that teacher preparation programs are doing a very good job of preparing teachers.

Scott does not regret leaving teaching. Though he does miss working directly with students, there are many things he does not miss:

...the irrational demands and having to work at hearing things that made my blood boil, like, teachers get three months off in the summer. No – that’s comp time for grading papers and coaching teams and doing tutoring, all the things that you do at home and on the weekend.

He believes that he would regret leaving if he were not still involved in education: "...even though I'm not in a classroom per say, I feel like...my finger's on the classroom. And, the positive results I see with teachers and supervisors is enough to satisfy that educator desire."

Leaver Case #6: Zora

Zora is 41, in the middle of the Generation X age span (36-47). She taught high school English for eighteen years in one large high school in the Wake County Public School System. She earned her National Board Certification in 2002 during her ninth year of teaching. Her certificate is English Language Arts - Adolescent and Young Adulthood. She left after her eighteenth year of teaching and currently owns and works at a test preparation agency.

Choosing Teaching

Zora considered many areas of study while she was in high school. As an avid reader, she knew her profession would likely have "something to do with words." She was a member of the Future Teachers of America (FTA) club at her high school, and her parents were very supportive of education. Her father was a member of the local school board and served as chair for a number of years. They encouraged Zora to apply for the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship and provided some safety around her choice to pursue it:

You know, so my parents...really felt like, you're thinking about this, go ahead and try for a scholarship. You can always turn it down...even Daddy had said that, you know, if you get in, if you start teaching and realize you don't want to do it, you know I'll talk with you about paying your loan back. But give it a shot.

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows program is a scholarship program that is repaid by four years of teaching service in the state of North Carolina. Students who do not complete the years of service are able to pay back the scholarship as if it were a loan.

Zora's perception of the teaching profession in high school had much to do with the many influential teachers during her K-12 experience. She most fondly recalls her second grade teacher who built a "book nook" in her classroom where students could go read every day once they had finished their work. This teacher gave Zora a book at Christmas, one she treasures to this day:

It was Nancy Drew's *Mystery of the Staircase*. And on the inside she wrote – Dear Zora, I hope you will always love to read. Fondly, Ms. Staton – and that was it right there. That sealed the deal with me and books right there.

Zora's perception of the teaching profession in college was shaped by the many experiences she enjoyed as a Teaching Fellow. It functions as a formal program on the college campus, and requires students to complete hours of classroom observation beginning during their freshman year of college. She reports that these observations gave her a more accurate view of what teaching would be like as a career.

Early Career

When Zora started her career, she believed she would only teach for the four years that the Teaching Fellows Program required. "I had... Teaching Fellows, and even then I figured I'd only do it for about four years... even daddy said, honey bunch, just do your four and, four turned into five, and five turned into 18 (laughs)."

She was initially struck by how many additional things teachers were responsible for beyond their teaching duties:

It's such a responsibility – I think that's what really (draws breath) kind of got me in the beginning was...there's a lot of responsibility. Not just for teaching – but for so many other things, you know...and that was tough. That was hard. I think that's what really weighs a lot of new teachers down.

Zora is specifically referring to annual training teachers receive on subjects like blood borne pathogens, administering medications, and school lockdown procedures. She recalled, “Woah. This is stuff beyond – and I know it's all necessary – but it's all beyond, you know, reading books and making subjects and verbs agree. Way beyond that. It's such a responsibility.”

Zora was also astounded by the “mounds and mounds of paperwork.” Some of the paperwork was grading. During her early career, the Wake County Public School System had a formalized writing program in all English classes that included a list of writing assignments for every class. English teachers were afforded two planning periods during a six period day to help with this. However, with 32 students in each class and four classes, every assignment provided up to 128 papers to grade. She recalls that, “I needed every waking moment I could have to grade papers.”

Other paperwork included things like interim grading reports that were sent home with students between the formal grading periods. When Zora started teaching, these were non-carbon copy paper reports that were completed by hand. They consisted of three sheets of paper that transferred copy through pressure sensitive paper. One copy went home, one

copy stayed with the teacher, and another copy was kept for teacher records. Teachers provided an update on student progress in the class, and an up-to-date report required that all grading had to be done before accurate class averages could be provided. Zora recalls clearly one night during her first year of teaching when she had to call on her friends to help her complete those reports: “I had two of my best friends with me on the floor of my bedroom in my apartment helping me...do those. Crying through it. Gosh it took me a long time! If it hadn’t been for them...”

What made the paperwork even more overwhelming was the number of meetings that Zora was required to attend. Even during professional development offerings required for first year teachers, she found herself grading papers: “I was back there making what I thought was the best use of my time, you know? And I thought it (the training) was the most colossal waste of time...” Zora believed that she would have been much better served by time to grade and work with other teachers.

You want to help me? Let me have some time talking to the two veterans down the hall who’ve been doing this for 10 years and doing it damn well...I felt that, especially in the beginning...that my time would have been better served working directly with other veteran teachers or having some time just to plan and grade. That would have helped me out a whole lot. I felt I was just dying under the paperwork.

Zora’s perception of the teaching profession changed in that she began to appreciate that a teacher needed to protect her own time in order to get her work done. “I learned to say no (laughs).” She also began to see the profession as one that does not take advantage of having experienced teachers share their knowledge with beginning teachers. With all of the

additional demands, those “pointless meetings,” good teachers don’t have an opportunity to “work with teachers who are just coming on board because there are just so many other things....”

Pursuing National Board Certification

When asked why she chose to pursue National Board Certification, Zora is plain in her response: “The money....that was big...by that time I already had my Master’s degree...and I thought it was, honest to goodness, I’m thinking you know I’ve been doing this for almost ten years. How hard can this be?” She knew several other teachers in her department who had already gone through the process, but she had chosen not to join them in the pursuit. It was another English department colleague who persuaded her to attempt it during her ninth year of teaching.

Zora found that the process was more challenging than she thought. The writing provided a challenge she had not anticipated. Portfolio entries provide a page limit for responses to required questions. It was this challenge that made a significant instructional change in Zora’s classroom approach to teaching writing. She found herself encouraging students to write shorter, more powerful essays rather than longer ones.

The National Board process also encouraged Zora to think about “how things outside of the curriculum really helped students...and that’s when I really began to understand the whole thing about experience...giving kids experience, not things.” She took a group of 10th grade students to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. Many of her students had never left the city of Raleigh before, and the trip was significant for them both in relation to the

curriculum they were studying (10th grade literature is world literature and includes writing about the Holocaust) as well as the travel experience they were lacking.

Zora's National Board process was not without drama. She mailed her box which contained all the written portfolio entries several days before the spring deadline. The week after the deadline passed, she received notice that her box failed to arrive by the deadline and would not be scored that year. A little research on her part revealed that even though she paid for Express Mail delivery (2-3 days), the box was mislabeled as bulk mail: "it sat in a bulk mail truck at RDU for three days before it ever left the state to go to Texas...that crushed me." Fortunately, the mother of one of Zora's students worked for the Post Office. She was able to contact the Postmaster General and a letter was written on Zora's behalf that explained the error on the part of the Postal Service. While traveling during spring break, Zora got good news: "I got the call from Texas saying they were going to take the box for that particular cycle. I cannot tell you how stressful that was...that was an ordeal and a half." Zora cites this event as one of the reasons she chose not to pursue renewing her certification in 2012, "(laughs) I didn't need the stress!"

Zora did not give much thought to how her teaching career might be different after achieving certification before she went through the process. Upon reflection, she says:

I guess, kind of subconsciously I expected it might be a little easier. You know, now I've gone through the process, I've reflected... Things ought to get easier now.

Please....I thought it would be easier and it wasn't...but I think it was better...I was a lot more reflective you know in my practice.

Zora found herself rewriting assignments and recreating units of study rather than using the same units repeatedly. She found herself insistent on not doing the same things over and over: “I wanted some variety. I wanted it to be different for the students.” This was in contrast to some teachers who had been “using the same worksheets for 25 years. There was no way I could do that.”

Deciding to Leave

Zora first thought about leaving after the second administrative change at her school. She had seen a change in school climate under the second principal who that she did not like. The creation of an in-school suspension program (ISS) resulted in students with a desire to be assigned to ISS. But the changes she observed under the third principal were even more disturbing for Zora. She states that the school administration prioritized keeping the parents happy: “...there became an even greater concern about parents, you know. Don’t – let’s not piss the parents off. We don’t want parents to be upset. That’s what’s important here.”

There were several incidents that underscored this to Zora. In one, a student at the school put something in a teacher’s drink that resulted in the teacher becoming sick. At a faculty meeting after the incident, Zora states that:

...the whole faculty meeting, the principal wanted...to talk about well, this is going to be a difficult time for the student and his family. He’s a really good student. We don’t even know if he’s gonna be able to participate in graduation. We need to be supportive of the student.

Zora’s outrage is clear:

Supportive of the student? The teacher is a parent herself. What about concern for the teacher? Why are you so worried about this fellow who ought, who ought to have gone down to the station in cuffs? The administrator, he was just that short of saying it was a teenage prank. Are you serious? In 2010 that's...not a prank. That's a crime. And it was just – no, he never uttered one word about, other than saying the teacher's recovering...one word of concern about the teacher...woah. Okay. I see exactly where this is going. So I knew, right then and there...

Another incident confirmed Zora's concerns. She took a cell phone from a student who she caught using it during a quiz. This was the second cell phone infraction for this student, and Zora confiscated the phone and asked the student to have his parent contact her. She believed that this second infraction warranted a more serious conversation with the student and his parent. After school, Zora walked to the elementary school next door to read to her daughter's class. When she returned to her own classroom, she met her principal in the hallway. He was exiting her classroom with the student whose cell phone had been confiscated. The principal had gone in Zora's locked classroom, gone into her desk, and retrieved the phone. Again, Zora was outraged:

I'm walking back up and I see when I'm turning down to go down the hallway to my classroom. The principal is coming down the hallway out of my room. The student is with him. Ms. Hurston – I just went in to your classroom to get so and so's cell phone. You did what? You went in – you unlocked my room and went into my desk and did what? Had he asked me what happened, you know, what were the circumstances? Had you planned to give the fellow his phone back? Had you talked

to his mother? Was he in error or you in error? You know, nothing. It was, only thing he was concerned about was the fact that momma had called him and this fellow wouldn't have his cell phone for the weekend. Do not ask me to enforce anymore of your crazy policies. Do not. Do not ask me to come to any more faculty meetings to discuss a policy that you are not going to back me on. Do not. I'm done.

Zora states that this focus on keeping parents happy was one of the factors that lead to her decision to leave.

Another major factor in Zora's decision to leave was that she did not feel supported by her administration. She provides multiple examples where she was not supported by her principal. One such example was a plagiarism case. She discovered one of her students had plagiarized material for an assignment. She confirmed the plagiarism by finding the source material, and then asked two departmental colleagues to confirm what she found. She went to the administration to follow through on disciplinary action for the student: "Two people in my department, including my chair, said this is indeed plagiarized. And the principal, the principal said – no it's not. And you're going to have to regrade the paper."

Another example occurred during a parent conference where the administrator was in attendance. The parent admitted that the student had not completed his assignments, but still said, "I don't want him to have a D." Rather than the administrator encouraging the conversation to include steps the student could do to recover his grade, he turned to Zora and asked, "Ms. Hurston, what can you do to help Johnny?" Zora recalls her reaction when the question was turned back on her:

Wait a minute, hold on! She just said there was a list of things here that Johnny needs to do and he hasn't done them all. And he doesn't like the grade he's getting. So let's talk about him completing all these things first, you know? But no...

Finally, Zora cites the major factor for her choosing to leave the classroom. "You know, there was a measure of respect for teachers, which I think has eroded greatly. Greatly. And I think that's one of the number one things that just sent me out, honestly." She ties this to parents not expecting their children to respect them at home: "...if Johnny is not listening to his momma and daddy at home he is not going to respect me at school."

The stress of Zora's job was beginning to take a toll on her health. Her blood pressure was up and her doctor had once already recommended she take some time off from work. At that time, Zora rebuffed the suggestion, "I said no, I can't, because if I do that I have to come back to whatever mess the sub is gonna leave me. And I didn't." In April 2011, Zora left the classroom on medical leave. Later that year, she was hired at an area university to work on an online assessment project. She provided professional development to teachers, schools, and districts that were using the product. She worked at that for a year before being laid off due to budget cuts. Since then, she has been working in her own test prep company that she established in January 2011. She provides test prep classes to groups of students in various schools and professional development on new and coming assessments.

When asked to reflect on her decision to leave, Zora states that she misses teaching and she misses the students. She does not miss the administration. And she does not miss parents, especially those who, "are always in the way. At every step. Hovering. You know, making excuses. Lying for their kids, that kind of stuff." She realizes that she may have to go

back to the classroom to support herself financially. And if she does, she will look for a different environment completely: "...if I could go back and my hands be untied and a whole bunch of stuff...I would really love to go back in a very nontraditional situation."

Zora's perception of the profession now includes several aspects that trouble her. Though she is supportive of merit pay for teachers, she is convinced that assessments without student impact do not provide a good measure of teacher quality. If students do not have any "skin in the game," then she believes teachers are being assessed on how effective they are at getting students to actually take the test.

She also sees a profession where "...common sense kind of things...seem to be lost on those in charge." She wonders why teachers are not allowed to grade papers from home on teacher workdays:

Why do I have to come into the building to grade papers? You gon' give me credit for the time I stayed up until midnight grading papers? I don't think so...I could get so much done. I wouldn't mind bringing home that stack of papers on my desk if I could...if my kids could stay at home with me that day and I could sit at the table and grade papers.

Or why teachers are not allowed to ask a colleague to cover the last 15 minutes or so of their class so they might leave school a bit early to make a doctor's appointment. Instead, they must take sick leave, which is taken in half or whole day increments.

She laments that teachers are not trusted to choose their own teaching materials that are "engaging and meaningful" for students:

It was always this mad rush at the beginning of the year to, you know, well...in what order are you going to teach these books this semester? So we're going to rotate these sets of books...so you're always rushing to finish up because Ms. Brown has signed up to have them on the 15th and, oh my God, it's the 13th and we're only halfway through the book...I hated that! You know...but the minute you asked what magazine subscription or subscription to the newspaper or whatever, is always, we don't have the money for that. Really? But we have how many hundreds of thousands of dollars to adopt a textbook that my students are not going to crack this year?

She sees a solution to this in e-readers where many various titles can be downloaded and used repeatedly.

She also sees that the teaching profession is not considered as much a profession in some of the basic ways doctors and lawyers are. In some way, teachers are not even seen as people with lives outside their working hours:

People tend to forget that teachers are parents too...and you know parents would say, can you call me at 7:00 tonight? What do you think that I'm doing at 7:00 tonight...or they show up at school you know, so and so's parents are here to see you. I don't show up at my attorney's office and say I wanna see my lawyer right now. You know? I don't show up at my doctor's – I wanna see my doctor right now. Well, we'll fit you in if we can, or you can go to the emergency room. That's not the way it works with other professionals or professional situations. But people tend to forget that. People tend to forget that.

Zora sometimes regrets leaving teaching; she misses interacting with her students. She's often reminded of this when she connects with former students. However, there are moments for Zora when her job seemed much larger than anything she could ever accomplish. In those moments, Zora does not regret leaving teaching at all. She tells the story of one student and her reaction to the novel *Ellen Foster*, a story that left Zora in tears that evening at home. Students often ask whether or not the protagonist in the story, a young girl, is black or white. Zora recalled that it's often a great discussion question. On this day in class, the question was asked, and the student's response struck Zora to the core:

So we're uh, maybe about two chapters into the book, and she raised her hand. Yes? Is this girl black or white? I said y'all that's a good question. And I said, what do you think? And she says well I think she's black. Really? I said, well why is that? She said, now, there had been very few moments, you know, in my later career that I came home and cried. But this night I did. I said why do you think that? And she says, well she's poor and her father's an alcoholic. She's coming from a bad family. That's all the black families I knew. And she's a black girl...I came home and I cried in my pillow that night because I'm thinking, I see this young lady for 90 minutes a day and if that is what she thinks of herself and her community, you know, what can I do in 90 minutes a day in 3 ½ months that gonna make her see that the world is so much more than that? Oh God I came home and I cried that night...I don't know how to help her see things differently...that student (is)...the reason I don't want to stay, you know?

Cross Case Analyses - Leavers

Choosing Teaching

Analysis of data revealed a variety of reasons participants chose teaching. Two chose the profession while they were in high school and were recipients of the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship. One participant chose the profession while in college, and three chose it after college.

One emerging theme is active discouragement to pursue the profession. Three of the participants were not encouraged to choose teaching as a profession. Robert and Scott both were told they were too smart to be teachers. Kate was not encouraged to pursue it because it didn't pay well. However, the choice of the profession was acceptable later after she married and her salary was seen as a supplement to her husband's.

Another emergent theme was positive experiences with teachers during the K-12 experience. Five of the six participants reported specific positive experiences with a teacher or teachers.

A related emergent theme was a positive regard for the profession while the participants were in high school. Four of the participants reported having great respect for the profession. Some of this was directly related to the positive experiences they had with teachers and some was related to beliefs held by their families. At least two participants (Robert and Harper) spoke directly about being taught to respect their teachers.

It should be noted that the remaining two participants also had a positive regard for the profession, but they held that positive regard with additional conditions. Edgar had a positive regard for teaching but did not see it as a profession in line with medical doctors or

lawyers. Kate had a positive regard for the profession but worried that if she pursued it, the choice would potentially limit her future career options.

Early Career

Participants described their first years of teaching as fast-paced, intense, and overwhelming. Four of the participants remembered these as very positive years. Robert and Kate specifically noted the camaraderie they experienced and enjoyed. Harper described enjoying figuring out the puzzle of how to make it all work. Edgar couldn't believe his luck at having uncovered the intersection of passion and career. Two participants described negative experiences during their early careers. Scott was targeted by other teachers and had to deal with a grievance process at his first school. Zora describes endless and pointless meetings and having no time to work with veteran teachers so she might learn from their experience and success.

Perceptions of the profession reveal the effects of experience. Three participants (Edgar, Kate, and Scott) began to recognize a dichotomy within the profession. Some teachers were holding themselves and their students to higher standards while other teachers were not. Edgar and Scott described having greater respect for their colleagues who were holding themselves to high standards and less respect – or even contempt – for those who did not. Edgar described it as beginning to have a better idea of what professionalism meant within the career. Two participants noted a growing appreciation of the complexity of the career. Robert described this as having better knowledge of the working parts of the education system. Harper focused on understanding the role of parental interaction.

Pursuing National Board Certification

The number one reason that these participants chose to pursue National Board Certification was an opportunity to earn additional money. All participants provided this as rationale for their choice to pursue it. Three of six participants reported that they were seeking additional challenge in their careers. Three of six participants also noted that they believed achieving National Board Certification would differentiate them among their peers (Robert wanted to be a Master Teacher; Edgar wanted to hold himself to a higher standard; Harper wanted to stand out among her peers.) Finally, two participants noted that they believed National Board Certification would provide validation of their work – that achieving it would show that they met widely accepted standards of teaching practice.

Five of six participants did not believe their careers would be substantially different after earning National Board Certification. Of those, three believed they would be better teachers – but none of those five thought that earning National Board Certification would change their careers in the classroom. Only one (Scott) believed earning it would provide additional opportunity for him as a classroom teacher, and better position him for additional positions later in his career.

It should be noted that one of the five participants who did not believe their career would be substantially different after earning National Board Certification left teaching immediately after earning National Board Certification. Kate learned of and applied for a job during the time span between turning in her portfolio for scoring and receiving her scores.

Deciding to Leave

When describing when they first thought about leaving, three of the six participants spoke about having a “master plan.” They knew they weren’t going to stay in teaching for their entire career at the start. Robert always knew he wouldn’t teach for thirty years and had a plan for advanced degrees and a move into higher education. Kate and her husband had a master plan when she was 25 regarding how they both would earn their doctorates. Scott also referred to a master plan, and spoke about how he figured that ten or fifteen years in the classroom would prepare him for whatever role would come next. Two of the participants thought about leaving in response to an event or change in school environment (Edgar and Zora). Harper first thought about leaving when she realized she needed something new.

A few common themes emerged among responses to the question about factors that lead to the decision to leave. Two participants were interested in having a greater impact. Two participants were really affected by the lack of a work/life balance. Two participants spoke of wanting to earn a larger salary. Two participants spoke about feeling unsupported and/or unvalued. And two participants spoke about a being held unfairly responsible for student behavior and learning.

Five of six participants are currently working in the field of education, but not at a school or school district level. One is working in a health education non-profit, one is working at a large state education agency, one is working for a company that develops curriculum and assessment, and one works at a local university with preservice teachers. Only one – Harper – is not working in the field of education. She is working as a magazine publisher.

When asked about their reflections on having decided to leave the classroom, five of six participants noted that they missed teaching. Most specifically, they missed working with students.

Three themes emerged from the responses provided to describe their perception of the teaching profession now. Three participants reflected on a desire to change teacher preparation. Robert, Edgar, and Scott all noted their concern about teacher preparation and a desire to engage in changing it. Two participants expressed their concerns about the current role of assessment in teaching. Kate is concerned that new teachers all attended school during an era of high stakes testing and assessment, and don't know any other way to teach but in an assessment driven environment. Kate is also concerned about the role student assessments will play in teacher evaluation because she doesn't believe the assessment were designed to measure the teacher. Zora is also concerned about the role of assessment and believes that until the student has some "skin in the game," all an assessment measures is whether or not the teacher can successfully get the student to take the test. Finally, two participants spoke about teachers not being trusted to make pedagogical decisions. Scott noted that it seemed as if teachers weren't trusted to do the job they were hired to do, and Zora discussed how teachers were not trusted to make decisions on what materials would best engage their students.

When asked if they regretted leaving teaching, two participants answered with a very clear answer of "no." Neither Harper nor Scott has any regret at all about leaving the classroom. For Scott, he believes he's having greater impact in his current role. Harper appreciates the skills she acquired while teaching and how they help her in her current role.

Robert and Edgar both answered “yes” and “no.” Robert believes he has “unfinished work” in the classroom, and notes that if his wife would be the primary wage earner for their family, he would gladly go back to the classroom. However, Robert enjoys the greater impact he believes he has in his current job working with preservice teachers. Edgar spoke of how difficult a decision it was for him to leave, but firmly believes he made the right decision. His choice to leave was a choice to call out and bring attention to what he believed was an injustice to children.

Kate and Zora were ambivalent in their responses. Kate responded both that she would not go back into the classroom because she believes there is no creative space, no room for teachers to innovate, and that teachers are under fire from many angles. However, she also states that she sometimes regrets leaving and considers going back to the classroom. She believes that teaching may be the key to a simpler, more fulfilling life. That characteristic is very attractive to her. Zora also sometimes regrets leaving. She misses what she refers to as “people moments” in her work with students. However, Zora does not miss the challenges that seem larger than she is able to tackle.

Stayer Case #1: Pearl

Pearl is 38, on the younger side of the Generation X age span (36-47). She has been teaching elementary school for 17 years in the Wake County Public School System and has spent them all at a large elementary school. She currently teaches 1st grade. She earned her National Board Certification in 2004 during her seventh year of teaching. Her certificate is Generalist – Middle Childhood.

Choosing Teaching

Pearl believes she always knew she wanted to be a teacher. Her mother was a teacher, and Pearl's observations of her mother's work shaped her perception of the profession: "I saw how hard she worked...tirelessly and hours after the school bell rang." These observations generated a respect for the profession, "I've always respected what teachers do...I think it's a very admirable profession and one that is very hard."

While Pearl is sure she always knew she wanted to be a teacher, she notes that her career choice was not borne out of confidence in her abilities:

I think I've always known I'd be a teacher because I've never felt like I was a specialist in any area...I felt like I could do a lot of things well, just nothing great, and I felt like being an elementary teacher was just the path that I was going to take.

Pearl's familiarity with her mother's work shaped her perception of the profession. While in college and preparing to finish her degree and enter the teaching work force, she felt she had a good grasp of the profession and what it would require of her. She did think, though, that "by teaching elementary school I wouldn't quite have the workload that she had."

Early Career

The first few years of Pearl's teaching career were challenging "as are anybody's." She immediately encountered a myriad of tasks for which her teacher preparation program did not prepare her; she felt very unprepared. Fortunately, Pearl was paired with an experienced teacher assistant, a 20-year veteran with the district. She was thankful for her

help and reflects that “it was a good match in that she was able to...guide me with that gentle hand.”

Pearl worked to establish herself in the classroom by keeping a stern demeanor: “I was always told you start...hard and firm.” Pearl became known for how strict she was in the classroom. She states, “I wanted them to fear me because...I thought...that would equal respect.” Pearl’s assistant principal pulled her aside during her first year and gave her some advice:

...basically I needed to get the kids more warm fuzzies...I don’t think at that time I realized...they were just, you know, kids. I felt like I was a kid myself, trying to...teach them and manage them and, you know, also stand up to parents.

Pearl found herself recreating an experience she had as a child. As a kindergarten student, she experienced major school anxiety. Every single day of kindergarten she cried, and her teacher did nothing to assuage her fear. Pearl notes that this is one reason she wanted to become a teacher: “I didn’t want anyone to have to go through that.” Yet early in her career, “I became that kindergarten teacher by being so mean. And I didn’t mean to be mean, I was just trying to establish myself.”

Pearl’s perception of teaching became more complex during this time. She understood that:

...being a teacher is more than teaching kids. There’s so much more involved that, that is not fun. You know, the paperwork...the parents...the lessons changing every few years, administration that you get along with or don’t, peers, teammates...troublesome children...it’s not easy.

Pursuing National Board Certification

Pearl notes two factors behind choosing to pursue National Board Certification. First was money: “the financial piece was a big part of why I chose to do it.” Additionally, Pearl was ready for a challenge: “but also the personal challenge...I wanted to challenge myself.” She knew other friends and teachers who had gone through the process and decided that if they could do it, so could she. She completed the process during her seventh year of teaching.

Pearl found the year she went through the certification process to be “one of the best years I’ve had as a teacher because it really made me reflect on my teaching practice...you had to be on all the time and you were constantly thinking and evaluating.” She also found the year following to be one of her worst “because I was so tired!”

The certification process for Pearl was, “Exhausting! (laughs) Absolutely exhausting!” She states that as she is preparing to go through the recertification process, she “is starting to have flashback of what it was like the first time around.” When asked if the word “flashback” connotes a traumatic experience, she states that:

...it sounds dramatic to say it was traumatic, um, and if traumatic can even be used in a good way...but yeah, I almost equate it to a mother giving birth. Because that’s a traumatic, wonderful experience that’s very painful and yet women do it over and over again.

Pearl did not expect her teaching career to be any different after earning National Board Certification. She expected to be a better teacher because she “put more pressure on myself to always perform and be a better teacher” but she did not think the certification would “take me elsewhere.” She did feel as if she gained respect from her peers. She was one

of the first three teachers in her school to achieve National Board Certification. As others became more aware of the process, and aware of other teachers who did or did not certify, she believes there was a kind of “automatic respect” that was generated over time.

Staying

Pearl reflects that she has thought about leaving teaching “every single year.” Early on, she thought of teaching as what she was doing to “pass time until I found my passion.” As the years have passed, there have been many reasons to examine an exit:

Probably years five and six and seven...I didn't really feel supported by my administration. I've always had some challenging classes but the kids are fine. Parental things...just again not feeling supported by my administration with how I've dealt with parents. Um, the amount of change that the county has put on us and the, just the expectations. You know, it seems like for many years that teaching has become less teaching and more paperwork, and more assessment, and more trying to meet a standard that may not be, that's difficult to reach given everything we're given as far as students and numbers and size and space.

The thought of leaving occurs every year, but Pearl notes that “then I have one moment each year, or multiple moments, that make me go – this is why I'm here, I love my kids. And I love those, those special moments that just erase the bad parts of it.” Those special moments include students coming back to visit with Pearl after they leave her class, and moments shared between student and teacher during class. They also include moments when students are engaged and excited about learning:

I have a little girl who...instead of just spelling sentences, she wrote this whole fantastic story and I shared it with the whole class...I just praised her, and she was so excited she could barely stay in her skin! ...when I have a child who has that pure joy of learning...you can't go wrong. It just puts a smile on my face every time!

Pearl also enjoys working with her colleagues and notes that they have been a persistent positive force. Given the number of years that she has worked with them, she now thinks of them almost like family.

...I've always loved the people that I've worked with. And I think that is what has kept me...when you enjoy going to work and you enjoy with whom you're working, that's the other half of the battle. Because those people are your support while you're there and they understand you more than anyone in your family can because they live every day with you.

Pearl's perception of the profession remains positive. She enjoys the challenge each day brings and believes it deserves more respect than it currently receives. She is glad she stayed in the profession and she believes that she has grown as an educator and as a person: "I feel like I've learned so much. I've become I believe a more empathetic person..."

Early in her career she thought, "this is not for me...I'm not going to do this for 30 years, there's no way. There's no way." After seventeen years though, Pearl remarks, "I guess I am going to do it for 30 years (laughs)!" Even more, Pearl would choose the profession again, "...I think it's something I would do again. I would do it all over again."

Stayer Case #2: Nikki

Nikki is 44, near the upper end of the Generation X age span (36-47). She has been teaching high school Spanish and English as a Second Language (ESL) for 22 years in the Wake County Public School System. She currently teaches ESL at a large high school. She earned her National Board Certification in 2002 during her eighth year of teaching. Her certificate is English as a New Language – Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood.

Choosing Teaching

The first time Nikki thought about teaching was during her junior year in college. She returned from studying abroad in Spain and found she had met all the requirements for her major in Spanish and only needed six more hours to be eligible to earn a teacher's license. One of her professors said, "you only need like six credits left to be a teacher, so you might as well do that. You could always fall back on being a teacher." She completed those requirements, completed student teaching, and found that, "I really enjoyed it and I liked it." After graduating from college in New York, Nikki moved to North Carolina in September of 1990. By January 1991, she was teaching high school Spanish.

Nikki's perception of the teaching profession in high school was very detached and impersonal. She remembers that:

I always thought teachers were not people I guess. You know? Teachers were a lot stricter in high school, when I was in high school. Or I should say the discipline was never an issue like it is now...To me teachers weren't really reachable – they weren't accessible...I don't know...a huge part of what we do is try to build relationships

with kids. And I don't really feel like teachers really did that when I was in high school.

When her professor suggested she consider teaching in college, Nikki remembers that, "I never thought it was anything I wanted to do. And then I was like, oh, okay, I guess it would be a job, you know?" Her student teaching experience provided a very different approach to the classroom than the one she experienced as a student. It was a welcomed difference:

...we were learning very different things about teaching. It wasn't like...when I was in high school the teachers sat you in alphabetical order, you know? Every teacher sat you in alphabetical order. There was no like, moving around, and it was all very (strikes the desk with the edge of her hand to show straight lines) you know? It's not like that anymore.

Early Career

Nikki's first teaching job was as a roaming elementary school teacher in a small town in rural North Carolina. She was assigned to three schools and moved between them throughout the day and week. With no breaks, an hour and a half commute each way, and a lack of connection with elementary school students, Nikki only lasted one week.

Four months later, Nikki was hired to teach high school Spanish. She loved the age group but found herself challenged by maintaining discipline in her classroom. As a young teacher not much older than her students, she had to figure out to make it work:

Oh God! (laughs)...I loved teaching Spanish, but I hated the discipline...I was 21 years old and I was teaching students who were 18...when I started teaching there

weren't that many young teachers. Like, a lot of teachers had not retired yet so most of the teachers here were older so it was very hard for me, very hard for me. The discipline was horrible because they weren't used to taking orders from someone almost their age. And it was hard for me then to do that, you know? I've learned a lot since then! (laughs)

Nikki's perception of the profession changed most as a result of working with students during after school activities. She was able to build relationships with students, something she noted was missing from her own high school experience. She found that these relationships enabled her to better reach her students: "...you do need to bond with these kids. And you do need to show them that you care...then you see a result."

Pursuing National Board Certification

Nikki first heard about National Board Certification when she was in graduate school to earn her degree in ESL. A visitor came to a class and shared her certification experience. At that time, Nikki turned to her professor and said, "I will never do that because of...everything she told us she had to go through." After finishing her master's degree, Nikki never paid much attention to how National Board Certification was developing or changing. Several years later, a special programs teacher asks Nikki if she would like to go through the process with her. Both the special programs certification and the ESL certification were brand new that year, and they could do through the process together. Nikki remembers thinking:

...you know what, sure. I'm single. I'm young. I have time. I just finished my master's. I'll go ahead and try it out. So that's why I did it. And it really helped that the state paid for it, so I knew that economically it wouldn't be a hardship on me. Additionally, Nikki missed being in graduate school. She missed the academic challenge. She enjoyed earning her master's degree and recalls that, "I really felt that void, so I thought maybe this would help fill it, you know?"

Nikki reflects on the decision to go ahead and pursue certification at that point as, "a huge mistake. I mean, I had no idea what I was getting into." No other ESL teacher in the district attempted certification that year, so Nikki was completely alone. Though she attended district-provided support meetings with the special programs teacher who issued the initial invitation, she found herself working alone and apart from everyone else. She completed the process and received her scores. She did not pass.

Nikki was at school when she received her scores. She notes that there is only one reason she decided to keep moving through the process:

...when I got my scores I got them at school and I saw that I had failed. One of my students was there and these were his words, and I'll never forget it. He said to me, Ms. Grimes...when we fail a test, when we don't do well, you tell us we have to try again. He's like, so if you failed this test, you have to try again and do it again. Those were his words.

So Nikki set out to do it again.

The process of earning National Board Certification took Nikki three years. After the first year, she split up several entries to redo over the next two years. A teacher can bank

assessment scores and resubmit entries to improve scores. There were benefits available for Nikki during those years that did not exist during her first year. Other ESL teachers in the district were going through the process, and there was opportunity for collaboration. After two more years of resubmitting entries and improving her scores, Nikki earned National Board Certification.

Nikki did not think her career would be any different after earning certification, but she has found herself to be a better teacher. She finds that she often asks herself what she would do differently if she taught the lesson again, a repeating reflection question from the National Board Certification process. She constantly makes notes for herself that will help her better the lesson the next time she teaches it.

Staying

Nikki has never seriously thought about leaving the classroom. When pressed, she says “you know, in the hallway maybe when I have a bad day, but not seriously.” She enjoys teaching ESL and believes she is making a huge difference in the lives of her students. For many of them, she is the only advocate they have: “They need an advocate and some of them don’t have an advocate because number one, they can’t speak the language. Others don’t have an advocate because culturally that’s not known in their country...they’re not supposed to speak up.” She believes her students have amazing opportunities in front of them that extend far beyond the circumstances that brought them here, and that she has an opportunity to help them reach an amazing potential:

...you know when they were five years old they didn’t make the decision to come to the United States. You know, their parents brought them here. It’s not their fault that

they're here...their futures, you know, like I always tell them, the day they graduate high school and can speak two languages, they could be making more money than I do in one year. Because their future is just unbelievable, you know? And, if I can help in that then that's awesome.

Nikki's perception of the teaching profession has changed. She sees the classroom as not so "teacher-centered" as when she was in high school; it's now more "student-centered." She does believe that teachers are expected to do much more now than in the past: "it's an expectation now that you build these relationships and you do these things whether you want to or not as an educator."

Cross Case Analysis – Stayers

Choosing Teaching

Pearl and Nikki chose teaching as a career at different times. Pearl had always known she would be a teacher, and grew up in close proximity to a teacher in her family (her mother). Teaching was a career she respected because she knew how hard teachers worked. Nikki was introduced to the idea as a college junior; having met all the requirements of her Spanish major, a professor recommended it as an add-on degree. She never thought it was something that she wanted to do, but it was a job opportunity.

Early Career

Both Pearl and Nikki recall their early years as challenging and struggled to establish themselves in their classrooms. Pearl was very strict, and was encouraged during her first year to give her students more "warm fuzzies." She recalls feeling like a kid herself. Nikki

also mentions age. As a twenty-one year old teaching eighteen year olds, she recalls not being much older than her students and struggling with discipline in her classroom.

Pearl's perception of the profession developed to be more complex. She understood teaching to be more than teaching kids; it also involved paperwork, parents, and rapidly changing lessons and curriculum. Nikki's perception of the profession changed to be more student-centered; she spoke about the need to bond with her students.

Pursuing National Board Certification

Pearl and Nikki shared one reason for pursuing National Board Certification – the challenge. Pearl was ready for a new challenge professionally, and Nikki missed the academic challenge she experienced while earning her master's degree. Pearl pursued National Board Certification during year seven of her career; Nikki pursued it during year eight.

Both found the process challenging. Pearl described it as traumatic, yet wonderful; akin to childbirth. Nikki describes her initial choice to go through the process as “a huge mistake.” She actively wanted to work with other teachers, and began the process believing she would be collaborating with others. She found the process, however, to be isolating and overwhelming. During the 2nd and 3rd years of her certification process, she was able to collaborate with others. She found those years to be much more rewarding and successful.

Neither Pearl nor Nikki expected their careers to be different after obtaining National Board Certification. Both found themselves to be better teachers in that they were more reflective.

Staying

Though both Pearl and Nikki have remained in the classroom, they have differed in how they have thought about leaving. Pearl has thought about it every year, and early on, thought she would teach until she found her passion. She thought more seriously about it during years five through seven, when she didn't feel supported by her school administration. Nikki has never seriously considered leaving, noting that perhaps on bad days she may give it a glancing thought.

Pearl and Nikki both cite their students as primary factors for staying. Pearl notes that she experiences multiple "this is why I'm here" moments each year, and Nikki refers to her role as an advocate for her students and the difference she knows she makes for each of them. Additionally, Pearl cites enjoying working with her colleagues as a factor in staying. She says that because of the work they do together, they know her better than family. Both Pearl and Nikki have positive perceptions of the teaching profession now. Pearl enjoys the challenges each day brings and Nikki enjoys building relationships with students.

Comparison of Leavers and Stayers

Choosing Teaching

There were no major differences in when the two groups chose teaching as a profession. However, neither of the stayers was actively discouraged from considering or choosing the teaching profession. One stayer was specifically encouraged to consider the profession having completed the requirements of her Spanish degree in college. Three of the six leavers were actively discouraged from pursuing the profession.

Early Career

All participants in both groups found their early career to be intense and challenging. One shared perception of the career was a sense of the career's complexity. For three of the leavers, their early career revealed a dichotomy among teachers; those who were striving to achieve and do more and those who were getting by. None of the stayers spoke of this dichotomy. Finally, four of the leavers found their early careers to be distinctly positive experiences.

Pursuing National Board Certification

The ability to earn additional salary was a stated reason for all six leavers and one stayer to pursue National Board Certification. Three of the leavers and both stayers additionally noted that they pursued National Board Certification for the additional challenge. As for when they pursued certification during their career, most participants pursued National Board Certification between years 7 and 10. The outlier is that two leavers pursued it after their 4th year of teaching.

A strong theme is the lack of expectation for change. Five of six leavers and both stayers did not expect their teaching career to change after National Board Certification. Another theme is the belief that going through the process made these participants better teachers. Three of six leavers stated this, as did both stayers.

Choosing to Leave (or Stay)

Only one stayer reported giving consideration to leaving the classroom. This occurred during years five through seven of her career. She reported that during that time she did not

feel supported by her administration. Lack of support by administration was reported by two leavers as a factor in their decision to leave the classroom.

Upon reflecting on their decision to leave the classroom, most leavers cited missing working directly with students. Both stayers noted that working with students is a major factor keeping them in the classroom.

Leavers and stayers have different perceptions of teaching at present. Both stayers report a positive perception of the profession. One noted that it was deserving of more respect. As a group, the leavers noted major concerns about the profession. Overall, their perception of the profession was less than positive.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provided the analysis of data collected during interviews. Cases were presented and analyzed individually within two groups: leavers and stayers. A cross-case analysis within each group followed. Finally, a cross-case analysis was presented comparing each group. Analysis was organized around the research guide. Emergent and recurring themes were noted. The next chapter will present findings, implications of these findings, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This purpose of this case study was to describe why National Board Certified teachers from Generation X are leaving the classroom. It explored characteristics of the teaching profession, the National Board Certification process, and Generation X. This chapter will provide a discussion of the findings within the context of the research literature, implications for practice and policy, recommendations for further research, and a conclusion.

Findings

The research question for this investigation was: why are National Board Certified teachers from Generation X leaving the classroom? To answer this question, three sub questions were identified.

What characteristics of the teaching profession lead NBC teachers from Generation X to leave the classroom?

Perception of the Profession: Leavers were possibly affected by perceptions of the profession held by others as they considered the profession as a choice. Three of the six leavers interviewed were actively discouraged from pursuing teaching as a profession (two by teachers and one by a parent). No leaver spoke of actively being encouraged to pursue the profession. Only one participant in this study was actively encouraged to pursue teaching as a profession (Nikki). She is still in the classroom.

Leavers also were possibly affected by their own perceptions of the profession. Edgar (leaver) initially saw teaching as a profession not on par with those in the medical or legal

fields. He stated that this might have something to do with how he entered the profession (lateral entry). Additionally, Kate (leaver) perceived the profession as potentially limiting her future career options. Kate stated she felt some trepidation about choosing teaching as a career because she did not want to be pigeonholed later.

Perception theory notes that “no perception can ever be fully shared or communicated because it is embedded in the life of the individual,” thus it is reasonable to question whether exposure to these external perceptions had any effect on the leavers in this study (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996, p. 29). However, perception theory also posits that “what individuals choose to perceive is determined by past experiences as mediated by present purposes, perceptions and expectations” and that individuals “reflect on past experiences and imagine future ones to guide their behavior” (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996, pp. 29-30). Therefore it is possible that the past experiences of these leavers may have affected how they perceived the teaching profession before and during their entrance to the career.

Additionally, perception theory notes that “individuals tend to perceive only that which is relevant to their purposes and make their purposes and make their choices accordingly” (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996, p. 29). Therefore, those individuals considering teaching as a profession would be more sensitive to and receptive of shared experiences regarding teaching.

Lack of Performance Differentiation: Participants shared their frustration about the profession’s lack of ability to differentiate performance of teachers. The teaching profession does not recognize outstanding performance, nor does it penalize poor performance. Three leavers noted observing a dichotomy among teachers in their early careers. Some teachers

were demanding more of themselves and their students. Others were only doing enough to get by. The performances of both groups were seemingly judged by administration as being adequate. Harper captures this sentiment best when she states:

...(it) was very upsetting to me when I saw other teachers...not doing everything they were supposed to be doing and it did not matter. So there was an inequality there, and we're all getting paid the same amount of money...you feel you're doing all these things you're supposed to be doing and these other people aren't and yet nothing happens.

Kate also shared that, "I was amazed at how little some people could do."

In their study of teacher explanations of attrition, Keigher and Cross (2010) found that teacher leavers rank certain aspects of their current jobs as better than their teaching jobs. These include recognition from administration or managers, professional prestige, and a sense of personal accomplishment. The lack of differentiation that Harper, Kate, and other teacher leavers in this study noted makes these desirable aspects difficult or impossible to achieve in the teaching profession.

Positive Early Career: While the researcher found no reference in the literature regarding a link between a positive early career in teaching and teacher attrition, it must be noted that four leavers experienced positive early careers. They described their early years as challenging, and stated that they enjoyed the camaraderie with fellow teachers as well as support from their schools. This seems to contrast teacher attrition literature that notes colleague support as the organizational factor having the highest positive impact on decisions to remain in the teaching profession (Buchanan, 2010).

Unfair Responsibility and Lack of Support: Teachers feel they are unfairly held responsible for student behavior, student learning effort, and student performance. Two leavers (Kate and Zora) spoke specifically about being held responsible for student behavior and student performance. They believe that students and their parents are not being held accountable for outcomes (behavior and learning) over which students and parents have some control. In the review of literature on teacher attrition responsibility for student behavior, student learning effort, and student performance were not noted among the predictors or explanations of teacher attrition (Borman and Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006).

In a somewhat related note, leavers felt a lack of support from their administrators and a lack of value for their work. The lack of support from administration has been identified as a strong predictor of a teacher's decision to leave the classroom (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Buchanan, 2010). In one study, lack of support was noted as the most frequently noted negative theme among exit interview responses of teachers who left a school district (Chuong, 2008).

Salary: Two leavers noted salary as a factor in leaving the profession. Robert felt pressure to be his family's financial provider and noted a gender element at play in the process: "...being a male...there's still a mentality and it's hard to get over...you still want to be viewed as the breadwinner. People still look at you like that." Harper tired of working multiple jobs to support herself, though she admitted she could have lived more frugally. After leaving teaching, she only needed to work one job and enjoyed a substantial increase in

salary. She explained that, “basically by leaving the profession I only had to work one job. And, within...four years I tripled my salary, which is crazy.”

Salary is often mentioned as a factor impacting teacher attrition. Higher compensation is coupled with higher levels of retention; dissatisfaction with salary is linked to increased attrition and lower commitment to the teaching profession (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006). Further, Borman and Dowling (2008) note that salary is more important to teachers later in their careers. The teacher leavers in this study did not leave the classroom during their early careers (first five years), so it is reasonable that salary became more important to them as their careers progressed.

While only two leavers noted salary as a factor in their decision to leave the classroom, all leavers noted salary as a reason to earn National Board Certification. For some, the salary was the primary factor for pursuing National Board Certification. For instance, Zora stated that, “The money...that was big...” Kate articulated that, “if there was a way to get paid more for doing what I was doing I thought I’d be a fool not to try it.” For others, the salary increase shared equal importance with factors such as validation and professional challenge.

The literature has established the importance of salary in explaining teacher attrition. It follows then that teachers interested in earning additional salary would pursue earning National Board Certification in the state of North Carolina. Jackson (2009) points out that the financial incentive is among the reasons teachers seek National Board Certification. In North Carolina, teachers who earn their certification receive a twelve percent salary supplement for the ten-year life of the certificate. The North Carolina General Statute 155C-

296.2 (2010) regarding National Board Certification acknowledges a goal that earning the certification will result in greater teacher retention.

What characteristics of the NBC process lead teachers from Generation X to leave the classroom?

Ultimately, no characteristics of the National Board Certification Process emerged as a factor for why NBC teachers from Generation X leave the classroom. Indeed, five of six leavers and both stayers did not expect their careers to change after pursuing and earning NBC. One leaver (Kate) actually applied for a job in the span of time between submitting her portfolio for scoring and receiving her scores. That she applied for the job prior to learning her scores suggests that National Board Certification played no role in her decision to leave. Only one leaver (Scott) expected that earning National Board Certification would lead to additional prospects for him. He stated that he believed National Board Certification “helped get the foot in the door a little bit” with regard to additional opportunities.

The literature on National Board Certification and professional impact does not specifically address to expectations teachers have for their careers following National Board Certification. Johnson (2009) identified frustration as a newly determined theme in research on National Board Certified teachers, but the frustration addressed was regarding recognition and understanding of the process. Lynch (2009) also found that National Board Certified teachers were disappointed with the “limited roles available” for them beyond the classroom which suggests a possible expectation held by those teachers for additional roles (p. 135). Such an expectation, however, is not explicitly conveyed.

Most leavers felt NBC provided professional validation. Robert stated that achieving National Board Certification, “validated for me that I was at that national level...among my peers...we’ve clearly demonstrated that we are doing something right in our craft...” Scott emphasized that he believed earning National Board Certification would bring “validation for my teaching...I wanted to prove to people that I was a really good teacher, even if I didn’t teach exactly like they did.” Further, they believed achieving NBC served as a way to set themselves apart from their peers and identify themselves among the best in the teaching profession. Thomas (2009) noted that earning National Board Certification provided validation for teachers and increased their confidence to try new things.

What generational characteristics of Generation X lead NBC teachers to leave the classroom?

A fair amount of overlap is found when reviewing characteristics of the teaching profession and generational characteristics of Generation X. This makes sense in that this study explores how generational characteristics produce reactions to professional characteristics of the teaching profession. Therefore, there may be some replication of generational characteristics reviewed in this section with those noted among characteristics of the teaching profession.

Definition of Career: More than half of the leavers spoke about having a “master plan” when they began their teaching career, and none of those master plans included staying in the classroom for 30 years. Even the two stayers did not expect to still be in the classroom and spoke of their continued presence in the classroom with surprise. Simply stated, a 30-year single career is not the norm for Generation X.

Zora, a North Carolina Teaching Fellow recipient who was required to contribute four years of service as a teacher in order to complete the fellowship requirements shared, “I figured I’d only do it for about four years.” Robert knew at the very beginning of his career that he would not teach for 30 years; after earning his Master’s degree after year three, he had formulated a plan to earn his doctorate and potentially move into higher education. Perhaps Harper best summarizes how the study participants entered the teaching profession:

I never thought that I would teach for the rest of my life...I didn’t go into teaching with the mentality like, this is it. I went in, this is what I want to do right now, and I love it, so I’m happy right now. But I just never had this feeling like this would be it forever.

The literature on Generation X is clear: this is a generation that thinks differently about careers than those generations preceding it. Generation X expects to have multiple careers throughout their lives and will approach careers like a free agent (Bova & Kroth, 2001; Johnson & Kardos, 2005; Peske et. al, 2001). This finding is also consistent with Peske et. al (2001) who found that teachers entering the profession did not think of a career as a lifelong commitment.

Desire to Maximize Earning Potential: Two leavers (Robert and Harper) noted their desire to earn a larger salary as a major factor in choosing to leave the profession. Additionally, all leavers provided earning additional income as a reason to pursue National Board Certification. This finding is consistent with the literature. Generation X has been described as finding identity through jobs, money, and career (Ortner, 1998). In addition, educators from Generation X expect more pay (Moore Johnson, 2004; Peske, et. al, 2001).

Importance of Work/Life Balance: Two leavers (Kate and Robert) noted a desire to maintain a healthier work/life balance as a factor they considered when choosing to leave the classroom. Robert wanted to be available for his children if he was needed, and for his spouse. Kate found herself having to decide where to spend her emotional and task energy – at home or at work. As a young teacher with no children, there was no dilemma. She could spend all the time she wanted or needed on work tasks. When she had children of her own, however, she struggled to balance among the competing demands on her time and energy:

...I was having to compromise in terms of how much time I could spend on my work, because I now had a child to take care of. And I was having to make compromises in the amount of energy I had left for my child when I um got home. And I, it was really hard for me to find the balance that teachers who stay in the classroom have to find.

The literature describes Generation X as very committed to achieving a balance between work and personal life (Alverson, 1999; Bova & Kroth, 2001; Catalyst, 2001; Jurkiewicz, 2000). In a more simplified statement, Tulgan (2000) charged that while the Baby Boomers were noted to live to work, members of Generation X work to live. They prioritize family goals, and won't compromise with jobs that don't allow them to pursue them (Alverson, 1999).

Need for Challenge: The teaching profession fails to offer an adequate challenge to keep teachers from Generation X engaged. Three of six leavers and both stayers noted that they chose to pursue National Board Certification because they were ready for an another challenge. Robert explained that the National Board Certification process provided,

“additional experiences, additional questions to ask myself.” Harper specified that, “I knew what I was teaching. I needed a new challenge.”

Scott also cited the need for a new challenge as a major factor in his decision to leave the classroom. He provided a description of himself that the literature cites as classic

Generation X:

I’m one of these people, once I have kind of mastered something, I need to move on to something else, because my performance tends to go down, because I figured, I’ve already been there done that, I don’t need to put all the effort into it.

Zemke et. al (2000) and Conger (2001) (in Arsenault, 2003) report that members of Generation X, “like to be challenged and thrive on change” (p. 130). They value the ability to learn new things (Bova & Kroth, 2001; Jurkiewicz, 2000). The findings of this study support this characteristic common among members of Generation X.

Aspiration to Affect Impact beyond the Classroom: The teaching profession fails to offer teachers an opportunity to have greater impact while staying in the classroom. Many leavers noted that they desired an opportunity to have an impact broader than their classrooms, and several noted this as a factor they considered when deciding to leave the profession. Scott explained that, “I figured 10-15 years in the classroom I could move up and be of help to more people working in the central office or a consulting type thing.” When Robert was offered an opportunity to lead a Teaching Fellows program on a local college campus, he described the increase in impact as exponential:

I was impacting 30 to 150 students a year. What happens when I impact 30 preservice teachers? Well then they’re going to impact their anywhere from 30 to 150 students.

So it just, the way you impact students at that point just seems to exponentially grow...

Johnson and Kardos (2005) state that teachers in Generation X desire an opportunity to grow their influence as they move through the profession. Margolis (2008) offers that as early as the fourth year of their career, teachers from Generation X are “searching for roles that are: regenerative (keeping them learning and excited about their teaching) and also generative (widening their sphere of influence, sharing their gifts to others in the profession)” (p. 174). Again, the findings of this study are consistent with the research on Generation X.

Implications for Practice and Policy

New Career Model for Education

Addressing the problematic characteristics of the teaching profession and the generational aspects of Generation X teachers is perhaps best done by considering a new career model for education. Generation X has a different concept of career. They do not enter with the interest or intention to stay for 30 years. They desire change, continuous learning opportunities, and opportunities to expand their influence beyond the classroom. Peske et. al (2001) stressed that a “uniform, horizontal career with few opportunities for variety and challenge...and a generic career structure...is not likely to attract and retain enough good teachers” (pp. 309-310).

A new model of the teaching profession should provide new career expectations and new definitions of career paths (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Moore Johnson, 2004). This model would provide increased salary for teachers as a reward for increased knowledge, skill, and advanced certifications such as National Board Certification, and would provide

“differentiated roles for them as they master their craft, take on varied assignments, and assume broader responsibilities in their schools” (Peske et. al, 2001, p. 310). Johnson and Kardos (2005) suggest a few roles that would allow teachers to expand their influence beyond their classrooms: “instructional coaches, curriculum coordinators, cluster leaders, department heads, or induction coordinators” (p. 13).

Such a model should inherently address the issues that emerged in this study as reasons Nationally Board Certified teachers from Generation X leave the teaching profession. It would provide performance differentiation, as those teachers best qualified would be offered opportunities to advance. It would provide additional salary increases which boost teacher pay. Additional challenges would be available to teachers as they progress through their career, as would opportunities to increase teacher influence beyond the classroom and potentially the school levels. And at its most basic level, it would upend the “flat, horizontal...generic career structure” that has been the hallmark of the teaching profession (Peske et. al, 2001, p. 310).

One such idea would be to model the tenure track often found in higher education. There, a professor enters with the non-tenured classification of assistant professor. Tenure is awarded after a period of four to eight years (set by the college or university) and is dependent upon meeting particular criteria for promotion (such as contributions to research, demonstrated teaching mastery, and administrative duties). If tenure is not granted within the stated window of time, the professor loses her position. The granting of tenure often promotes the professor to the classification of associate professor. The move from associate

professor to full professor also includes meeting particular criteria. However, because tenure has been granted, not achieving full professor does not dictate dismissal.

The adoption of such a model in the teaching profession could create opportunities for advancement and additional challenge, influence, and salary. Moving from one tier to the next highest tier could be associated with additional leadership roles, mentoring opportunities, and contribution to the education of pre-service teachers. The teacher would maintain an active presence in the classroom where their mastery continues to serve students and their learning, as well as extend their influence beyond the classroom walls.

National Board Certification

Teachers from Generation X who sought National Board Certification had little or no expectation that achieving NBC would provide any change to their career. Achieving National Board Certification then serves primarily as a path for personal validation and an avenue to an increase in salary for teachers of Generation X. If National Board Certification is to be seen as a retention tool, which is stated as a goal in North Carolina General Statute, then perhaps achieving certification should be tied to additional opportunity to affect change in their careers and beyond the classroom. A North Carolina rule requiring NBC teachers to serve at least 70% of their time in the classroom to continue receiving the additional salary associated with obtaining NBC hinders these opportunities from being created. Ways that these teachers can maintain their classroom connection and yet be afforded opportunity to have a greater impact must be explored.

Establishing more opportunities for those who earn National Board Certification may combat what the literature reveals about what ultimately happens to teachers who earn

advanced certifications. Many researchers have suggested that advanced certifications are often associated with increased odds of departure from the classroom (Darling Hammond, 2006; Darling Hammond et. al, 2001; MacIver & Vaughn III, 2007; Moore, 2011; Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Borman and Dowling (2008) note that turnover is higher among teachers who are better trained, more experienced, and more highly skilled.

In North Carolina, research had shown that National Board Certification increases mobility out of the North Carolina system (Goldhaber & Hansen, 2009). Even if, as this research shows, these teachers are not leaving the classroom but are seeking teaching positions in other states, North Carolina is still losing return on its investment in these teachers. Indeed, newly elected North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory (Republican) and the Republican majority in the North Carolina state House and Senate may seek to discontinue funding for the salary supplement National Board Certified teachers receive because of the cost and doubts about return on investment. Calavuzzo (2004) found that the effect of National Board Certification on student gains was large, positive, and statistically significant. It follows then that, as Goldhaber and Anthony (2007) have suggested, the impact of National Board Certification in North Carolina will depend on the retention of these teachers.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study suggest a number of areas for further research. The connection between a positive early career in teaching and teacher attrition seems illogical. However, in this study, four of the teacher leavers enjoyed a very positive early career. They enjoyed the challenge of the career and the camaraderie with fellow educators. Why, then, do these teachers leave? Is there a relationship between early success and teacher attrition?

Research in this area may provide a way to identify advanced predictors of teacher attrition among successful teachers.

Similarly, further research might explore the relationship, if any, between self-efficacy, National Board Certification, and attrition. (The nature of this study did not include an exploration of self-efficacy.) Are National Board Certified teachers who believe they are successful more likely to leave? Conversely, are National Board Certified teachers who don't believe they are successful more likely to stay? Such research would also aid in identifying predictors of attrition among successful teachers.

In the review of literature on teacher attrition, unfair responsibility for student behavior, student learning effort, and student performance was not noted among the predictors or explanations of teacher attrition. As the era of teacher evaluation reform progresses and student performance is included in teacher performance measures, the response of teachers as a whole regarding the emphasized responsibility for learning outcomes remains to be seen. Research in this area would inform reform efforts addressing teacher performance evaluation.

Two of the six leavers were recipients of the North Carolina Teaching Fellows scholarship. This scholarship is applied for during the senior year of high school. Such an early consideration and choice of teaching as a career might suggest a deeper commitment to the profession. Research that explores the reasons why Teaching Fellows who have earned National Board Certification leave the profession would provide deeper insight into attrition of these teachers.

Findings of this study suggest that the National Board Certification process functions primarily as a route for teachers to earn additional salary rather than a way to retain teachers. Given that research suggests National Board Certification has a positive effect on student learning gains (Calavuzzo, 2004), retaining these teachers should positively impact student learning (Goldhaber and Anthony, 2007). A cost/benefit analysis of the National Board process in the state of North Carolina is needed to delineate the benefits of National Board Certification. In the current political climate, push for education reform, and focus on budget cuts, such an analysis would inform decision makers regarding future funding for this program.

New models of the teaching profession must be determined. Further, implications of implementing new models must be explored and made clear. Any new model must be developed and described in a real world context including existing state and local policy and financial realities. Such research would offer a starting place for the consideration of new models for adoption.

Finally, generational studies provide important insights into workforce development and retention. Members of Generation Y and the Millennials have entered and are entering the teaching profession. What perceptions do these generations have of the teaching profession and in what ways are they similar to or different from those of previous generations? This may be particularly relevant as the teaching profession has changed over the past decade (since No Child Left Behind), becoming more top-down, more regulated, and more performance-based in a high-stakes accountability context (Fusarelli, 2004; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). Many younger teachers from Generation Y and particularly the Millennials

experienced school as students in the high-stakes accountability context. Their exposure to teaching as a profession, and thus their perception of the profession, was shaped by this context. They know no other context for the profession.

Conclusion

Research suggests that National Board Certified teachers from Generation X should be among the least likely of all teachers to leave the profession (Corbell, 2009; Keigher, 2010). Participants in this study challenge this supposition. Findings of this study suggest that efforts to retain National Board Certified teachers from Generation X must address characteristics of the teaching profession found to be problematic: performance differentiation, opportunities for advancement, salary, challenge, and opportunity for increased influence beyond the classroom.

The development of a new model of the teaching profession offers promise. Such a model might address the issues indicated by the participants in this study. Cochran-Smith (2004) provides a glimpse of how such a model might accomplish the task: "...to stay in teaching, today's—and tomorrow's—teachers need school conditions where they are successful and supported, opportunities to work with other educators in professional learning communities rather than in isolation, differentiated leadership and advancement prospects during the course of the career, and good pay for what they do" (p. 391).

National Board Certification should represent one way that teachers in North Carolina can advance their careers. North Carolina's incentive efforts and retention goals regarding National Board Certification are plainly stated in the General Statute. Yet the National Board

Certification process played no role in the decision of these certified teachers from Generation X to leave the classroom. Participants chose to pursue certification because it represented an avenue to earn additional salary, and provide validation for their work as well as personal and professional challenge. Though the process provided these things, it did not lead to opportunities for advancement or increased influence beyond the classroom. Participants were clear that they did not expect their teaching careers to change after earning National Board Certification. This suggests that the intended retention impact is not being realized for the participants of this study.

The literature is clear: teacher attrition negatively affects teacher quality, student achievement, and school stability (Corbell, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003; Peske et. al, 2001). Taking on the challenge of creating a new career model for the teaching profession is ultimately a step toward ensuring that each child is afforded the opportunity to be taught by an effective and engaged professional. It is also a forward-looking and responsive act that honors those who teach.

The researcher is among those National Board Certified teachers from Generation X who left the classroom. At the end of twelve years in the classroom, she held numerous school-based leadership positions, had engaged in rich experiences like the Kenan Fellows Program, earned National Board Certification, and completed the coursework for a doctorate. With no interest in pursuing school administration, the next eighteen years of a thirty year career looked remarkably the same. When a job opportunity presented itself, she left the classroom with many questions about why it had become necessary for her to do so.

The completion of this study has brought the researcher some answers. As a member of Generation X, she is part of a generation that thinks about career differently. This is not the generation of her mother, aunts and uncles, and grandmother – amazing people who spent thirty or more years in schools as teachers and counselors. Members of Generation X thrive on change and challenge. They want to maximize their earning potential and extend their influence as they move through their profession. Though it was hard to admit, the researcher shared many of the same thoughts her participants had. Her students were learning; she had no discipline issues; she earned National Board Certification to boost her salary and validate her status as a good teacher. What she needed was a change – a challenge.

Such change and challenge did not present itself while the researcher was a teacher. The teaching profession did not offer the roles and opportunities necessary to meet the career expectations to keep this member of Generation X engaged. Advancement prospects other than that of the school administration route were very rare. Roles for teachers who wanted to maintain some presence in the classroom did not exist.

New models of the teaching profession offer promise to members of Generation X and the generations that follow: Generation Y, the Millennials, and Generation Z. There will continue to be individuals committed to the success of children who will willingly bear the responsibility for student learning and development. They will arrive in our classrooms with ever-changing expectations and an evolving concept of career. The evolution of the teaching profession is essential—only then will it best employ individuals of every generation in the service of children.

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