ABSTRACT

WEAVER, JULIA DAVIS. Exploring Teacher Burnout among Beginning
Teachers: Applying Attribution Theory to Understand Teachers' Reasons for Leaving the
Profession. (Under the direction of Margareta Pop).

The purpose of this study is to use a phenomenological approach to look at factors

contributing to beginning teachers leaving the profession. The qualitative study looks at

these factors through an Attribution Theory interpretive lens. There is little research on

Attribution Theory in terms of teacher burnout and turnover. The study investigated eight

teachers under the age of 35 who quit or seriously considered quitting teaching within their

first five years of service. Findings suggest that salary is a main concern for young teachers,

along with demands of the profession and politics. In regards to Attribution Theory,

participants described effort as being stable in the teaching profession rather than unstable,

which differs from current models of Attribution Theory. Results of this study could impact

policymakers, administrators, and teacher preparation programs in terms of helping them

understand how they can better serve their young and beginning teachers. This would, in

turn, lead to better teacher retention and more highly qualified teachers staying in the

profession long-term. Since there is a looming teacher shortage in many countries due to

aging populations and teacher turnover, studies like this one must be conducted in order to

analyze teachers' reasoning for leaving the profession. This study aims to portray the lived

experience of beginning teachers and the reasons behind their decisions to leave the

profession within the first five years. Findings are discussed, and recommendations are

given.

Exploring Teacher Burnout among Beginning Teachers: Applying Attribution Theory to
Understand Teachers' Reasons for Leaving the Profession

by
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DEDICATION

This Master's thesis is dedicated to my loving Granddaddy, who delighted in learning and

always pushed his children and grandchildren to be curious and active pursuers of

knowledge.

BIOGRAPHY

Julia Weaver is a North Carolina Teaching Fellow. She attended Meredith College for undergraduate studies, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Family and Consumer Sciences and a licensure to teach middle and secondary grades in 2009. She served as a public high school teacher for three and a half years, teaching Teen Living, Food Fundamentals, and Food Technology Honors classes. In 2012, she began her studies as a Master of Science student at North Carolina State University in the Curriculum and Instruction degree program with a focus in Educational Psychology. In 2013, Julia left the classroom to become a full time student. She experienced the beginning teacher burnout that so many research studies investigate and is very interested in why young successful teachers leave the profession so early.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Introduction

Why would an individual who loves to teach leave the profession early in his or her career? Much literature suggests that there is a fairly new phenomenon of teacher shortages and turnover (Hong, 2010; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003, 2004; Thornton, 2004). Research findings report that in particular, young teachers who are in the beginning years of their teaching careers are choosing to leave the classroom in pursuit of other endeavors, known as career changing (Cuddapah, Beaty O'Ferrall, Masci, & Hetrick, 2011). In fact, Hong (2010) reports shocking attrition rates for teachers in the U.S.: 14% of teachers leave the profession by the end of the first year, 33% by the end of three years, and an alarming 50% within five years of teaching. Similar high attrition rates are reported for other countries around the world, including Australia, England, and China (Hong, 2010, p. 1530). Research must go beyond the 'what' of the beginning teacher turnover problem and investigate the 'why.' This study aims to describe reasons young teachers leave the profession.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to use a phenomenological approach to look at factors contributing to beginning teachers leaving the profession through an Attribution Theory lens; in doing so, the researcher hopes to describe the essence of the lived experience of beginning teachers who quit teaching within the first five years. There is little research on this particular theory in terms of teacher burnout and turnover, and few studies, if any, have been conducted specifically on beginning teachers' attributions for leaving the profession. Research on Attribution Theory in education stems mostly from teacher attributions for

student behavior, class management, students with learning disabilities, students who are culturally diverse, and attributions for not participating in policies such as a high-stakes teacher evaluation system (Johansen, Little, & Akin-Little, 2011; Kauppi & Porhola, 2012; Kulinna, 2008; Rae, Murray, & McKenzie, 2011; Tornero & Taut, 2010; Woodcock & Jiang, 2013; Yang & Montgomery, 2011). There are a few studies conducted on teacher burnout and attributions (Manassero, Buades, Torrens, Ramiz, Vazquez, & Ferrer, 2006; McCormick & Barnett, 2011; Santavirta, Solovieva, & Theorell, 2007), but only two of these actually use Attribution Theory to drive the research study. The researcher could find no studies where beginning teacher turnover was explored through an Attribution Theory lens. By using an Attribution Theory interpretive lens, the researcher aimed to find the true personal accounts of teachers who left the classroom in order to pinpoint definitive reasons for leaving.

This study aims to add to Attribution Theory literature on beginning teacher burnout and turnover. The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What factors contribute to teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of teaching?

2. How can these factors be explained in terms of Attribution Theory?

This study aims to truly understand the essence of the phenomenon of being a new teacher who chose or who is considering choosing to leave the profession of teaching. Because of the increasing issue of beginning teachers changing careers in the United States and around the globe, there have been many debates about how to help support new teachers to keep them in the profession. Using the Attribution Theory lens for this study will give policymakers, stakeholders, and administrators a view into the personal attributions for

leaving the profession; the researcher has hope that with more studies like this one, the data will speak directly to why young teachers are leaving and how we can make improvements to help them want to stay.

Summary

Research indicates that there is a high amount of teacher turnover and beginning teacher attrition rates in particular. Many studies have been conducted on teacher burnout, but there is an underwhelming amount of research on teacher burnout in terms of Attribution Theory. The researcher could find no studies on beginning teachers and Attribution Theory in connection with leaving the teaching profession.

This study serves to fill a gap in the existing literature. Results could impact policymakers, administrators, and teacher preparation programs in terms of helping understand how they can better serve their young and beginning teachers. This would, in turn, lead to better teacher retention and more highly qualified teachers staying in the profession long-term. Since there is a looming teacher shortage in many countries due to aging populations and teacher turnover, studies like this one must be conducted in order to analyze teachers' reasons for leaving the profession so quickly. The following chapter discusses a review of the literature.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This study aims to analyze beginning teachers' reasons for leaving the classroom within the first five years of becoming a teacher in order to understand the lived experience of the phenomenon. There is a large amount of existing literature on teacher motivation (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Ramirez, 2010; Richardson & Watts, 2005, 2006; Schutz, Crowder, & White, 2001; Watt & Richardson, 2008; Watt, et al., 2012); however, with the current problem of teacher shortages, more research must be conducted in order to find out why teachers are leaving the profession. Teacher turnover is a documented problem in education, traditionally focused on the increase of student enrollments and teachers who retire, but Ingersoll (2002) discusses the more recent issue of beginning teacher turnover. This chapter will discuss existing literature in terms of teacher turnover, burnout, emotions, politics of teaching, beginning teacher turnover, and the theoretical framework for Attribution Theory.

Existing Literature

Teacher Turnover

Teacher turnover is a huge problem that is costing the United States and other countries billions of dollars. Hong (2010) reports that public schools spend more than 2.6 billion dollars every year on hiring new teachers due to the ones who leave the profession (p. 1530). Ingersoll and Smith (2004) indicate that the problem with the teacher shortage is not due solely to a lack of teachers being recruited and trained, but mostly due to the fact that an alarming amount of teachers are leaving the classroom before retirement, and, even worse,

very early on in their careers (p. 28-9). Cuddapah, Beaty O'Ferrall, Masci, and Hetrick (2011) reiterate Ingersoll and Smith, stating that the issue lies not with training enough teachers, because we have plenty of teachers who are trained every year, but the issue lies with keeping the teachers we already have.

Themes in literature based on drawbacks to the teaching profession include the cost and time of earning teaching credentials, inadequate salary, lack of respect for the position, working conditions, and government regulations or 'politics' of teaching. Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd (2012) discuss "inadequate support from administrators," "inability to balance work with non-work commitments," and "drop in the status of teaching as a profession," echoing what other researchers have reported (p. 21). Research addresses the conflict of the 'good' vs. 'bad' qualities of teaching (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Backes & Burns, 2008; Bullough & Baughman, 1997; Ramirez, 2010; Schutz, Crowder, & White, 2001). The conflicting benefits and disadvantages to teaching are also discussed in the findings of this study. The following passages discuss the reasons for teacher turnover in the profession, followed by research on beginning teachers who leave the profession and a description of the theoretical framework.

Burnout and emotional exhaustion. Burnout is a huge contributor to teacher turnover. Much research has been conducted on teacher burnout; in fact, teaching is possibly the most studied profession in terms of occupational burnout (McCormick & Barnett, 2011). A major source of burnout research stems from Maslach and colleagues' Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which measures burnout through the three dimensions of "emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment" (McCormick &

Barnett, 2011, p. 280). Teacher burnout may hold different meanings for different people, since it is "somewhat emotion-laden," and can be caused by many factors; it is important to note that in order to burn out, one must first feel a passion and be ignited by that passion (McCormick & Barnett, 2011, p. 279-280). Thus, teachers who experience burnout are generally described to be disillusioned by the reality of their experiences. Emotional exhaustion can stem from feelings of failure and decreased self-accomplishment from teachers' depersonalization or loss of care for students (McCormick & Barnett, 2011).

  Bullough and Baughman (1997) express the challenges of teacher burnout in an impactful statement about one teacher's journey:

The reader comes to understand that Kerrie's journey is really two stories. One story is of her mastery of a complex craft, including classroom routines, management, discipline, and curriculum; the development of her finely honed moral sensitivity; the implementation of her mothering skills in her classrooms coupled with her ability to "love the kids along"; her pride in her growth of expertise; her achievement of the level of professionalism she set out to attain. But the second story…is of collegiality rarely offered; of rejection from children who do not know how to love back; of shared governance gone amok, burdening teachers with a never-ending series of tasks to accomplish until they nearly burst; of social class warfare among the students in the classroom and the school; of the irresponsibility of a system that requires teaching children with special needs by teachers without special training; of the wearing down of teachers due to the never-ending demands that are made on these good people, who are ethically committed to serve a system with absolutely no end of needs. (p. xi)

Much of teacher burnout can be explained by emotional exhaustion or what is known as "compassion fatigue" (Chang & Davis, 2009). Compassion fatigue deals with emotions teachers experience in relation to taking on their students' problems, leading to feelings of exhaustion, hopelessness, and disconnect. Other emotions associated with teacher burnout include anxiety, frustration and anger, and guilt (Chang, 2009). Chang (2009) studied teacher burnout in terms of emotions, primarily noting that teacher judgments made about student behavior could lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout (see Appendix A), and that coping strategies, among other things, could be beneficial to teachers. Bullough and Baughman (1997), in their ten year longitudinal study of a teacher's development, explain the stressful emotions that come with being responsible for students with special needs without training (p. 143). Stress is also mentioned as a factor of role ambiguity and conflict (Bullough & Baughman, 1997, pp. 180-181). Teachers have a huge responsibility to care for and teach students, and that responsibility oftentimes comes with emotional turmoil.

Teachers have many roles and have several types of interactions with students on a daily basis, causing opportunities for emotions ranging from happiness and pride to frustration and rage. The professional also calls for a great amount of emotional labor, defined as "what employees perform when they are required to feel, or at least project the appearance of feeling certain emotions as they engage in job-relevant interactions" (Chang, 2009, p. 204). Teachers perform an immense amount of emotional labor, leading to exhaustion and burnout in their jobs. In addition to being exhausted, teachers feel they are not compensated enough to make up for the demands, which is discussed further in the following passage.

One study in particular calls the term burnout to attention and proposes that the term 'demoralization' may be better suited to describe the real issue behind good teachers leaving the profession (Santoro, 2011). The study explains that many teachers go into the profession for altruistic or moral reasons, wanting to do good in society or the community and to feel that their work is meaningful. However, with increases in demands of teachers, high stakes accountability from policies like No Child Left Behind, and emphasis on standardized testing, Santoro (2011) suggests that teachers may find that they can no longer access the moral rewards that they joined the profession for, resulting in a demoralization of the individual's career. The study reports that the terms burnout and demoralization have been used synonymously but should be seen as separate experiences; burnout fails to recognize that teachers may be leaving the profession because of situations out of their control, such as teaching conditions and demands, which lead to the feelings of burnout due to no longer being able to access the moral rewards of teaching.

Salary. Ramirez (2010) found that a low salary was ranked number one for reasons people would not consider teaching. Current teachers see increases in salary as a solution of sorts: In a study on accountability and policies, Berryhill, Linney, and Fromewick (2009) reported that 35% of teachers in the study suggested an increase in salary as the top way to make teaching seem more professional. Manassero (2006) found that low salary is a stress factor for teachers, and that the stress from low salary increases with intensity as age increases (p. 70). Salary is also listed as a drawback to the profession in several other studies (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Backes & Burns, 2008; Curtis, 2012).

Teacher pay varies across states and districts, causing higher turnover rates in some areas than in others. Garcia, Slate, and Delgado (2009) found that teacher turnover rate was twice as high in school districts that paid teachers the lowest and over the three years of data collection, salary was consistently and directly linked with teacher turnover. Their study also concluded that in 2004, jobs requiring the same skills as teaching paid from $4,546 to $8,038 more per year than actual teaching jobs (Garcia, Slate, & Delgado, 2009, p. 5). Knowing that another job could cause less stress and offer more compensation causes many teachers to leave the field, which might be even more costly than increasing teacher salaries due to hiring costs of new teachers (Garcia, Slate, & Delgado, 2009). Perhaps, as some research suggests (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003), more attention should be paid to retaining current teachers rather than to fixing the teacher shortage, in which case a more attractive salary might make a great difference.

Respect for the position. Perhaps more prevalent than issues of salary, another main factor listed in teacher turnover is lack of respect for the position. One participant in a study explained, "Teachers, although good, are not looked upon seriously if they wish to make change within society" (Ramirez, 2010, p. 32). Schutz, Crowder, & White (2001) also mention the lack of societal respect for teaching, mentioning that in many ways, teachers will be viewed as working in a low-status job.

Bullough and Baughman (1997) reiterate the lack of respect for the teaching profession, describing the problem of teaching being seen as having a semi-professional status. They explain that teachers "desire the respect of their students, their students' parents, their colleagues, and administrators, first and foremost," although lack of respect from the

community can be particularly damaging (p. 173-4). Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2010) conducted

a study that found similar results: teachers feeling that they are not "trusted by the parents,

that parents are critical, or that cooperating with parents is difficult reduces the teachers'

beliefs in their ability to plan, organize, and carry out activities that is required to attain given

educational goals" (p. 1065). Without feeling like their work is respected in society, teachers

may leave the profession due to feelings of inadequacy, failure, and the lack of response from

the community to their hard work.

Work conditions and politics. There is a considerable amount of politics that comes

along with the profession of teaching. Bullough and Baughman (1997) express their beliefs

that "we have created school environments…that push [teachers] out of the profession" (p.

x). In a study on burnout and job satisfaction, it was reported that autonomy was directly and

indirectly related to job satisfaction, offering evidence to the idea that autonomy is a basic

human need and the lack of it can lead to strain, whereas the presence of it can lead to job

satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009, p. 523).

Other work conditions include demands and time. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011)

found that "time pressure" was a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion (p. 1034).

Likewise, Santavirta, Solovieva, and Theorell, (2007) reported: "Workload both in terms of

excessive demands under time pressure, and as a mismatch between the demands made upon

a teacher and the teacher's ability to cope with those demands, has repeatedly been reported

as one of the leading stress factors" (p. 214). Other work conditions contributing to burnout

and turnover include student failure to work or behave, weak professional relationships with

co-workers, a lack of support from central government, few resources, and constant changes

to keep up with (Santavirta, Solovieva, & Theorell, 2007). Berryhill, Linney, and

Fromewick (2009) propose that education policies such as high stakes testing, accountability,

and abundance of measurable goals can have unintentional negative effects. These types of

policies can induce stress and work strain, which can, in turn, lead back to exhaustion and

burnout.

Beginning Teacher Turnover

Alongside research on teacher turnover comes research on the specific population of

beginning teachers. Attrition rates have long been incredibly high for newcomers to the

teaching profession, with as many as 50% of new teachers quitting the profession within their

first five years and with almost 3 out of 10 new teachers leaving their schools or the

profession by the end of their first year (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Another interesting

finding is that there is a significant correlation between high scores on exams such as the

SAT and new teacher turnover – the "best and the brightest among the newcomers appear to

be those most likely to leave" (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004, p. 29). Science and Math beginning

teachers seem to have a higher attrition rate than other groups of beginning teachers;

Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2012) reported that teacher preparation programs strongly

related to teacher attrition in the first year, and that in their study, 18% of science teachers,

14.5% of math teachers, and 12.3% of other teachers left the profession (p. 32). Likewise,

teachers who had taken more pre-service courses in methods and pedagogy were less likely

to leave the profession after the first year.

Why are these beginning teachers leaving the profession? According to Ingersoll and

Smith (2003), data analyzed from the Teacher Followup Survey indicated that 39% of new

teachers left to find a better job, and 29% due to dissatisfaction in the teaching career. In

terms of dissatisfaction, 78.5% of responses were due to low salaries, followed by student

discipline problems and lack of administrative support. Other reasons for new teachers

leaving could be due to emotional exhaustion. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) compare the

beginning teacher experience to a sink or swim, trial, and boot camp experience. It is

believed that many beginning teachers do not understand the "profound all-encompassing

emotional work involved in teaching until their first year" (Chang, 2009, p. 204).

Suggestions exist for helping with this new teacher attrition problem. Mentoring and

induction programs are in place for beginning teachers, but they vary in requirements, depth,

and support; Ingersoll and Smith (2004) indicate that having more components from some

type of induction program was related to a lesser predicted turnover rate for beginning

teachers (p. 36). Better mentoring programs could help keep teachers in the profession

longer. A suggestion for teacher retention made by Hong (2010) is that retention tactics

should focus on establishing beginning teachers' professional identities since they are being

shaped early in the career, and "creating better plans that are truly related to teachers'

professional lives" (p. 1541). Regardless, in order to understand what actions need to be

taken to help, more research must be conducted on reasons or attributions for new teachers

leaving the profession of teaching.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis for the interviews in this phenomenological approach study stems from

using an Attribution Theory interpretive lens. Heider (1958) is credited with being the father

of the theory, and Weiner (2010) has done much work on Attribution Theory development.

Attribution Theory deals with people's causal explanations for events, particularly successes and failures. The theory is based on the idea that people, referred to as naïve psychologists, need to understand and control their environments, so they try to develop causes for events (Martinko, 1995). Attributions can influence expectancies and, in turn, influence behavior. There are three types of attributions: attributions that identify the cause of an event, attributions that identify responsibility for an event, and attributions that refer to personal qualities like leadership or trustworthiness (Martinko, 1995).

In Attribution Theory, what is known as the locus of causality refers to whether one believes the cause of an event resides within or outside him or herself (internal or external). Stability refers to whether or not the cause is anticipated to change. If one believes the cause is anticipated to change, it is considered unstable; if not, it is considered to be stable. Finally, the cause of the event has four factors one can attribute success or failure to: ability, effort, task difficulty, and chance, or luck. Each factor is seen as being either internal (inherent within the person) or external (coming from a force outside of the person), stable (expected to remain the same), or unstable (expected to change). See Appendix A for Martinko's (1995) Attribution assignments.

Kent and Martinko (1995) explain that there are five underlying causal dimensions to Attributon Theory, two of which have already been explained. The five dimensions are:

1. Locus – internal or external. (not inversely related to each other).

2. Stability – variability of cause over time. (e.g. mood varies, but ability is stable).

3. Controllability – whether cause is controlled by individual. (e.g. mood and effort are both internal and unstable, but one can control effort and not mood).

4. Global/specific – is the cause cross-situational or specific to a situation? (e.g. poor performance in job training attributed to intelligence would be considered global, but attributed to math skills would become specific only to math situations in other contexts).

5. Intentionality – property that best describes the difference between effort and strategy. One can intentionally choose not to give effort but generally will not intentionally choose the wrong strategy. (e.g. a manager who does not spend enough time at his job vs. a manager who tries and puts in time, but is still ineffective).

For example, a teacher in his or her first five years of teaching may feel that he or she has changing effort levels each year or semester, based on students, job demands, outside commitments, etc. The locus is internal, since the teacher chooses to give more or less effort, and it is seen as unstable because it can fluctuate. Effort in this situation is seen as controllable, because the teacher decides whether or not to give more of him or herself. If this effort is restricted to teaching, it is seen as specific, but if the teacher treats effort this way in other aspects of his or her life, it can be seen as global. Effort to be a better teacher would be seen as intentional. However, if a teacher felt that he or she was giving great effort but was not becoming a better teacher, ability would be seen as internal, stable, uncontrollable, specific to teaching, and unintentional (generally a teacher who was giving effort to be more successful would not intentionally choose to perform poorly and this result would perhaps be the cause of poor strategy or lack of ability).

There is an underlying cognitive dimension that is key to motivating properties of attributions, and attributional styles are associated with motivational behavior. For instance,

Martinko (1995) explains that those with optimistic attributional styles with internal, stable

attributions for success have higher levels of expectancies and higher achievements than

those with a more pessimistic attributional style.

Attribution theory is appropriate to be applied to this study of beginning teacher stress

and burnout. It has been used in order to understand performance satisfaction and has been

mentioned in use with studies of turnover (Kent & Martinko, 1995). The researcher used

Attribution Theory to find the causes and reasons for the phenomenon of new teachers

leaving the classroom before the fifth year of teaching. The literature is missing studies like

these; the researcher aims to help fill that gap.

Summary

In this chapter, literature and the theoretical framework have been described to set up

the foundation for this study. In the following chapter, the methodology for this study is

discussed and described in detail. Reasons for using a qualitative approach are given, as well

as research that describes and supports the need for a phenomenological approach method.

The study is explained, and data collection and analysis procedures are described and

justified.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter details how research was conducted in the present study in order to examine beginning teacher burnout. Of particular interest to the researcher was Attribution Theory as it relates to teacher burnout; the researcher aimed to pinpoint the exact reasons teachers left the profession within the first five years as perceived by the teachers themselves. In order to explore this information, the researcher chose to conduct a qualitative research study with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenon described in this study was the alarmingly high amount of beginning teachers who leave the profession within the first five years of teaching. For the purpose of this study, the researcher's goal is to conduct research that examines teacher experiences and attributions as they relate to their reasons for leaving the profession.

Methods

Design

Designing the research study comes from choosing a topic, developing research questions, and then choosing a method to investigate the main question or questions most appropriately (O'Leary, 2010). One must decide between a quantitative or qualitative approach or a mixture of both. O'Leary (2010) reminds researchers that the "goal in developing methodological approaches is working towards what is most appropriate for answering [the] question," and urges researchers not to consider one method better than another (p. 91). The researcher of this study chose to design a qualitative study with a

phenomenological approach. The following passages describe qualitative research and phenomenology.

      Qualitative research. Qualitative methods have become an increasingly more popular method of research; this increase has shown itself in a variety of avenues, including conference presentations, doctoral projects, psychology courses teaching qualitative methodologies, peer-reviewed articles, etc. (Smith, 2008). Qualitative research is described by Smith (2008) as aiming to provide "rich" descriptions of what the research is investigating (p. 1). Qualitative research collects its data "in the form of naturalistic verbal reports – for example, interview transcripts or written accounts – and the analysis conducted on these is textual. Thus, the concern is with interpreting what a piece of text means rather than finding the numerical properties of it" (Smith, 2008, p. 2).

      A fundamental principle of qualitative research is that it does not aim to test a hypothesis, but to "discover what people think, how they act, and why, in some setting," which is the case in this research study on beginning teacher burnout (Nestor & Schutt, 2012, p. 355). A qualitative study is also most useful when there is a need to explore new issues or find meaning that people give to experiences (Nestor & Schutt, 2012). The researcher of this study wanted to specifically analyze the individual reasons beginning teachers gave for leaving the profession of teaching within the first five years; since there are few studies on this experience, a qualitative study was an appropriate choice.

      As Smith (2008) describes, there are a number of different approaches to qualitative research, as it is not all done in the same fashion. Smith (2008) stresses that because of the increasing popularity and prevalence of qualitative research, students "need to know which

particular type of qualitative method they are reading or working with, what its theoretical commitments are, and how it differs from other qualitative approaches they might encounter" (pp. 2-3). The researcher of this study chose to use a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is described in the following section.

Phenomenological approach. Research conducted through the phenomenological approach "aims to clarify situations lived through by persons in everyday life. Rather than attempting to reduce a phenomenon to a convenient number of identifiable variables…phenomenology aims to remain as faithful as possible to the phenomenon and to the context in which it appears in the world" (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008, pp. 27-28). Gibson and Hanes (2003) give a similar definition of phenomenology, explaining it as "the uncovering and showing of things as they truly are" (p. 184). The researcher of this study hopes to show the true lived experience of beginning teacher burnout and turnover. Another element of phenomenology is discussed by O'Leary (2010), who explains, "Rather than ask what causes X, or what is X, phenomenologists would argue that 'objective' knowing or truth should be 'bracketed' or put aside so that the focus can be on internal processes of consciousness," and that perception is the main focus (pp. 119-120). The primary goal of a research study with a phenomenological approach is to discover the essence of the experience of a phenomenon through the perception of the subjects and the perception of the researcher (O'Leary, 2010); the essence has been described as "the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced" (Gibson & Hanes, 2003, p. 187). The researcher chose phenomenology because she wanted to find the essence of this fairly unstudied area of Attribution with beginning teachers.

Phenomenological studies build off of a question the researcher has commitment to investigating in terms of the meaning of participants' experiences of a phenomenon (Gibson & Hanes, 2003, p. 183). As a former educator, the researcher of this study has an unwavering commitment and a serious interest in the future of education, particularly in terms of securing highly qualified teachers who will remain in the profession. By examining the attributions for leaving the teaching profession from a sample of beginning teachers who either left or seriously considered leaving, the researcher's hope was to truly describe their individual and shared experiences; a phenomenological approach seemed most appropriate. Through this study, the researcher hopes that a deeper understanding will develop of the phenomenon of young beginning teachers leaving the classroom within the first five years of employment.

Subjectivity statement. I was a high school teacher for three and a half years before leaving the profession. Since I met the same criterion I was investigating, it is necessary to inform the reader of any biases or prejudices that I have. I knew the statistics of young teachers leaving the profession, and I knew my own reasons for leaving. I wanted to find out if other young teachers were going through similar experiences that I was. I knew I was good at teaching, I knew I loved teaching and the student contact, but I also knew that I hated the emotional stress of the job, the demands, and the politics of it, combined with a salary that could barely cover my monthly bills. I quit teaching primarily due to emotional exhaustion, school politics and bureaucracy, and salary; however, I did not share this information with any of the participants of the study. In an attempt to safeguard against researcher bias, I kept personal experiences and leading information out of interviews with

participants. I did not want to feed participants information; rather, I wanted to truly understand their experience of the phenomenon, so it was vital that all responses come directly from participants.

Participants and Context

Site selection/sampling strategies. The study was conducted through a major southeastern U.S. university. Emails were sent to graduate students through listservs to recruit participants (See Appendix E). Creswell (2013) sheds a bit of light on sampling strategies in qualitative and phenomenological approach studies, saying, "It is essential that all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied" (p. 155). The researcher of this study used purposive sampling of a homogenous group after criterion sampling to choose participants. In criterion sampling, all individuals meet some criterion (Creswell, 2013); in this case, the criterion was teachers who either left the profession within the first five years of teaching or were seriously considering it. Snowball sampling was used in order to secure all eight participants needed for the study; snowball sampling consists of participants referring individuals who they know will have rich experience descriptions (Creswell, 2013, p. 158).

Eight was the chosen number for participants. Creswell (2013) describes the trend for having small sample sizes in qualitative research because the point is "not to generalize the information…but to elucidate the particular, the specific" (p. 157). Creswell (2013) reiterates the recommendation from other researchers that three to ten subjects is sufficient for a phenomenological approach.

Participants. The current study had eight participants. Participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities, and all identifying information has been removed from data reports. All participants met the same criteria: they left or considered leaving the teaching profession within the first five years of being employed. All were enrolled in a graduate degree program at a major southeastern U.S. university during the research study. Participants ranged between the ages of 25 and 32 and had been teaching either three or four years. Five participants received traditional teacher preparation training, and three participants came into the classroom nontraditionally. See Appendix F for a table of participant demographics.

Procedures and Analysis

After choosing the design of the study, the researcher chose procedures for collecting data, analyzing data, and ensuring trustworthiness of the data. Methods for procedures and analysis are detailed in the following sections.

Data Collection Methods

Phenomenology calls for rich and descriptive data to fully saturate or exhaust the experience, and interviews are generally used to do so (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Interviews were the source of data for this study. All participants agreed to be interviewed about their experiences as a beginning teacher and why they chose (or were considering choosing) to leave the profession. All interviews were conducted in person or over the phone. Eight different participants were interviewed; interviews were then recorded and transcribed. Interviews included twelve questions and took between 30 minutes to a little over an hour. Transcriptions were thorough, not leaving out "false starts; significant pauses, laughs," etc.

that Smith and Osborn (2008) describe as "worth recording" (p. 65). Each participant signed a consent form in order to be interviewed (See Appendix C).

The questions that were chosen by the researcher were designed to elicit responses that captured experiences of the beginning teachers. In addition, the questions were geared toward attributions (See Appendix D). Interviews were semi-structured, which gave the interviewer a format to use without having to be "dictated" by the script; this type of interview allows original questions to be "modified in the light of the participants' responses," and the researcher can probe areas as they become evident (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 57). The design of the interview questions was fashioned to be open-ended and to elicit detailed and concrete descriptions of the participants' experiences in an effort to capture the essence of being a beginning teacher and to explore attributions for choosing to leave the profession.

Data Analysis Procedures

    Coding. Coding is an integral part of analyzing data in a qualitative research study. The researcher must manage and analyze data in order to make sense of what the research questions produced. Johnson, Dunlap, and Benoit (2010) describe the reality of the "mountains of words" that qualitative research produces (p. 648). The thousands and even millions of potential words in a qualitative study must be documented and analyzed. The researcher of the present study transcribed all interviews verbatim into an electronic version to be viewed and analyzed by the researcher. In order to keep track of the many words of the study's participants, the researcher had to analyze and categorize the data through coding. White, Oelke, and Friesen (2012) describe the need for "organization and attention to rigour"

when managing large qualitative data sets, so the researcher in this study attempted to be very organized, thorough, and detailed in coding and analyzing the phenomenological data (p. 246).

Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) reiterate the common belief that in qualitative research, at least some type of informal data analyzing occurs as soon as the researcher enters the field. The researcher of this study took notes during and after interviews and reviewed each interview as the responses were being transcribed electronically; the interviews were informally analyzed with an Attribution Theory interpretive lens before open coding began.

Creswell (2013) describes the coding process, saying that the researcher must move from the "reading and memoing in the spiral to describing, classifying, and interpreting the data" (p. 184). Forming codes, or categories, takes place at this part in the qualitative research spiral (Creswell, 2013). During and after coding, the researcher makes descriptions and interpretations of the data in the context of the study at hand. This includes what Creswell (2013) defines as "winnowing" the data; some data items will be used, and some data items will be thrown out (p. 184). In coding, the researcher develops a list of categories or patterns that the data can be categorized into, called codes. Coding techniques and themes for the present study are described in the following section.

Coding techniques. In this study, attributions for leaving the teaching profession are described and analyzed as a current phenomenon in public education. Lean coding and preexisting or 'prefigured' coding were used to analyze the data from participant interviews, and the researcher did not count codes or report counted codes. Descriptions and reasoning for these coding methods follows in this section.

The researcher coded the participant interview set using what is described as "lean coding" – where the researcher chooses a few overarching categories and then expands those categories with notes or labels (Creswell, 2013). The researcher used this approach due to the specificity and sharp focus of using the Attribution Theory framework in the study. Creswell (2013) mentions using preexisting codes for a qualitative research study and reports that there is a mixed reaction to using this method of coding. Generally, however, using preexisting codes occurs when the researcher is using a theoretical model, which was the case in this research study. Creswell (2013) reports that using the preexisting codes can limit the researcher's focus, rather than "opening up the codes to reflect the views of participants in a traditional qualitative way," but the researcher's focus in this study was to have a very narrow view, so using prefigured coding was chosen as the best method for categorizing the qualitative data (p. 185). While the researcher borrowed principles and concepts from Attribution Theory, she also followed what Creswell (2013) defines as "emergent design:" knowing that the research process in qualitative research might not always follow the original plan (p. 47). In so doing, the researcher used codes related to Attribution Theory as well as emergent themes from the qualitative data.

When the researcher considered counting codes, she decided against it, agreeing with the views of Creswell (2013) that it "does provide an indicator of frequency of occurrence, something typically associated with quantitative research or systematic approaches to qualitative research" (p. 185). Furthermore, counting codes serves to suggest that all codes are of equal importance, and in qualitative research that is not the case. Finally, counting frequency of codes disregards the description of each of those frequencies, and some of the

coded passages could potentially contradict each other. Without frequency description, the study dances on the line of being perceived as using quantitative methods. Codes were not in vivo codes or codes that come verbatim from participants, as the participants were not aware of the Attribution Theory framework being used in the interview questions. Rather, the codes were named based on the prefigured coding of the Attribution Theory framework; then, emergent themes were also identified.

The data analysis is coded into main categories based on using Attribution Theory as an analytic lens, as well as emergent themes. The main Attribution Theory lens themes are named internal and external and are broken down into the categories of ability, effort, personal factors, task difficulty, lack of respect for the position, and salary. Emergent themes are named emotional nature of the profession and role conflict. Significant statements were pulled from interviews based on each coding category in a tactic called horizonalization (Creswell, 2013). See Appendix G for a table of the coding scheme.

Validation, Reliability, and Credibility

Creswell (2013) notes that there are distinct validation practices for qualitative studies and describes eight different procedures, recommending that the researcher perform at least two in a study (p. 253). The researcher employed member checking, rich, thick description, peer debriefing, clarifying researcher bias, and external audits. Member checking was utilized in order to get participant feedback on rough drafts of data analysis for accuracy; member checking is considered to be a critical procedure towards gaining credibility in a study. Rich, thick description is utilized in the findings chapter with extensive details and interconnections so that readers can see if the findings can be transferred to other contexts

(Creswell, 2013, p. 252). Peer debriefing was conducted with a peer of the researcher who played "devil's advocate;" peer debriefing was documented via email conversations (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). The researcher gives a subjectivity statement in a following passage in order to inform the reader of her position on the phenomenon being studied, commenting on personal experiences and biases that could shape perceptions and approach of the study. Finally, an external audit was conducted to have someone who had no connection to the study make sure "findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252).

In terms of reliability, the researcher used intercoder agreement to analyze interview transcripts. Three researchers coded two transcripts each to finalize code names and themes. Attribution Theory code names were already predetermined and coded for as well. The three researchers sought to have an 80% agreement of coding on the transcripts, following Creswell's (2013) recommendations (p. 253-4).

Ethical considerations. Nestor and Schutt (2012) describe ethics in behavioral research, describing institutional review boards, fidelity, responsibility, integrity, and justice. The researcher aimed to be loyal to her participants and responsible for all aspects of the study. The researcher protected research participants by avoiding harmful questions, obtaining informed consent, avoiding deception, and above all, maintaining privacy and confidentiality at all times throughout the study (Nestor & Schutt, 2012).

Summary

The researcher has explained the purpose of the study and the methods of the study. Background information on how the qualitative data was collected and analyzed was given in

this chapter. Study design, participants, procedures, analysis, and trustworthiness were discussed in reference to the study. The next chapter will illustrate findings from the qualitative data described in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter discusses data from the study. The researcher aims to carry the phenomenological approach structure through the findings and show meanings, themes, and an "exhaustive description of the phenomenon" focusing on the "what" and the "how" of the lived experience of the participants to give the "essence" of the experienced phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, pp. 193-194). The "essence" is reported in the final chapter, along with a discussion of the overall findings and implications for research and practice.

This study looked at the problem of beginning teacher attrition and burnout and looming extreme teacher shortages through an Attribution Theory lens. Since much literature already exists on teacher satisfaction and motivation, the current study focused on teacher burnout through teacher attributions and the lived experience of being a beginning teacher. The reason for using an Attribution Theory lens was to focus the study more narrowly and to fill a gap in the existing literature. The study posed one main research question with one sub-question. The research question for this study on beginning teacher burnout was as follows:

1. What factors contribute to teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of teaching?

2. How can these factors be explained in terms of Attribution Theory?

Attribution Theory was the foundational framework and interpretive lens of the research study. Themes from participant interviews related to Attribution Theory and emergent themes were also identified in the data analysis process. This chapter describes

themes found in the qualitative data for this study and gives rich information on participants'

lived experiences of being beginning teachers who considered leaving the profession of

teaching or who actually left within their first five years. Top reasons for leaving the

profession as given by participants were salary, demands of the profession, and politics of

teaching. Participants voiced across the board that they felt underappreciated or respected for

all of the hard work that they do, and that salary is a huge reason for feeling that lack of

respect. A majority of participants also stressed that no matter how hard they try or how

much they grow as teachers, demands of the job keep increasing and salary does not. Four

participants were no longer teaching, and the other four were seriously considering leaving;

of the four who quit teaching, three came from nontraditional teacher preparation

backgrounds. In interviews, participants discussed effort, ability, and task difficulty as being

different from the traditional descriptions given in Attribution Theory; effort was seen as

being stable, ability was seen as being unstable because it got better and better with time, and

task difficulty was seen as unstable due to a constant increase in demands.   Detailed findings

are described in the next sections.

<div align="center">**Findings**</div>

Themes

After coding, the researcher looked for several patterns or emergent themes in those

categories. Study findings are summarized into broad themes describing internal and external

attributions, and are broken down into several categories, namely ability, effort, personal

factors, task difficulty, lack of respect for the position, and salary. The patterns that were

discovered outside of the Attribution Theory lens were categorized as emergent themes

discovered through data analysis. Emergent themes included the emotional nature of the

profession and role conflict. Descriptions of participant responses are given throughout the

following theme categories.

Internal Attributions

Internal attributions included responses from participants that indicated that success

or failure came from within themselves. Internal attributions were categorized in terms of

personal ability for teaching, effort put into the job, and personal factors affecting reasons for

leaving the profession or considering leaving the profession. Internal factors are explained in

the following sections.

Ability. Participants indicated across the board that the first year of teaching was

very difficult, but that ability increased with each year. Some participants suggested that

their ability to teach increased through collaboration or leadership opportunities. Ability

successes were also discussed in terms of student relationships, content knowledge, and

ability to help students achieve or grow intellectually. Failures, or struggles, were mostly

attributed to a lack of ability in teaching strategies like classroom management or managing

and balancing time.

Sophia, one of the study participant mentioned that in her first year she had to learn

on her own, "I kind of had to learn on my own…it was a lot of stuff to get adjusted to…but

after the first year, it seemed to be better." She also believed that she had a good ability to

relate to students, saying, "I think overall because I'm young…they see me as young, so they

see me more as somebody who they could relate to. So I think I have that – I'm easy-going,

I'm kind…overall I have good relationships with students." In terms of helping students

grow, she mentioned:

I've definitely had some students…I've had them one year and then the next year they come

back to me and say, 'Oh, I really wish I could have you again,' or, 'You really helped

me.'…and so you have that, where you maintain that connection…and the year after is when

it really hits home for me, because they actually remember me for – something I did with

them was meaningful.

Sophia discussed the ability to help students grow as a personal success, saying that

"it's nice to see those little successes, not just weekly or in the classroom every day, but

moving from year to year, those successes that are long-term…those successes are always a

bright spot."

In terms of her lack of teaching ability, Sophia cited classroom management as a

weak spot. She said, "My biggest issue is classroom management. I'm not the most…um,

authoritative voice there, and when I teach kids that aren't the best behaved, I don't have it in

me to really take control." She said that her relationships with students was a huge help for

compensating for her lack of an authoritative voice, but also commented that "when kids

don't even take that, they don't even make that relationship with me, that's when I have

trouble with the classroom management part."

Heather, another participant also mentioned a perceived lack of ability to teach; she

said, "I was applying for jobs, and I was looking mostly at, like, editing jobs,

actually…because I thought I was too…introverted to be teaching people." Her perceived

lack of ability to teach also came from not having a traditional educational background:

Even though I have a master's in my subject area, I felt ill-prepared in the sense that I didn't have all the education classes that people who come out of education schools have. So just like little things, like lesson planning, classroom management. All that stuff I learned on the job. And it was…the first year was just insane sometimes.

Classroom management came up again in Heather's interview. She noted, "I was a young teacher at that point, so it was hard to…take control of the classroom or be an authority figure, because I wasn't used to doing that." Later, she reiterated her troubles with classroom management the first year: "Classroom management was a *big* issue my first year…it was just hard…I had to figure out how to develop models that worked in terms of classroom rules…just every little thing. It was tough." Like Sophia, though, Heather agreed that with time, her ability improved, saying, "It was fine, kind of by the second semester teaching, but the first semester was really rough…I did start getting better at it…by the third and fourth year I felt like, okay, I got this down." Heather also discussed that with time, she got better at learning how to assess students in different ways.

Heather mostly attributed her abilities in student relationships and content knowledge to her successes as a teacher. She said in her interview, "I think what made me successful…was that I was able to sort of develop a good rapport with my students, from pretty early on. And maybe some of that had to do with the fact that I was a young teacher, so I understood youth culture." She described being able to joke around with students and connect with them on a daily basis as ways to develop rapport and help students want to be in the classroom.

In terms of content knowledge, Heather perceived her abilities to be high. She had a master's degree in her subject, and felt that gave her a huge advantage to teach. She explained, "I think you do have an advantage when – it's going to sound bad, but like because I was a master of my subject area, it was like I had authority in that aspect, too. They couldn't really question me. I knew my stuff. So I felt confident in that part, for sure." Heather felt like she could adequately challenge students due to her mastery of the content.

Finally, Heather discussed collaboration with a colleague as a way she increased her ability to teach. She worked with another English teacher and recalls her experience as a growth opportunity: "I got to collaborate with her on developing some of the junior curriculum…so I learned a lot from her about what was going on behind the scenes and I really think that helped me be a better teacher." She gave credit to her colleague, saying, "I couldn't have necessarily done all of that on my own. On my own I might not have been able to appropriately challenge kids as well."

Charlotte, another study participant, attributed her successes to her abilities to adapt to new experiences, her classroom management, and her bilingual skills. In the interview, she discussed having to learn new techniques and models due to moving from middle grades to elementary grades. She said, "This year has been definitely a learning experience…the whole elementary class has been a learning experience…getting to learn new strategies, such as decoding and phonics – things that I didn't necessarily get to use at the middle school model. It's been really fun learning about it." In terms of classroom management, she mentioned, "Classroom management has always been a strong point of mine. I feel like my kids have always respected me." Charlotte perceived her bilingual abilities as helping her to

be successful with families: "I feel very successful with that because it's super helpful to my families. They don't feel as frustrated and they know that whatever they have is going to be communicated in some way. So I feel very glad to have that." Charlotte's only perceived lack of ability mentioned in her interview was her skills in balancing life and work. She said, "Even now I feel like I struggle with that in year three, and I'm still trying to figure out how to balance everything."

Jennifer, another study participant, echoed Sophia and Heather in terms of ability growing over time. She taught in an early college setting, which was different from her student teaching. She said of the experience, "Going into the classroom, I felt like I was completely unprepared in the aspects that…I didn't know any of the strategies that I was getting into, and I started off really nervous." After getting into the classroom, though, she explained that with support she felt more able: "I was reassured that I had the principal and an instructional coach to come in, and they prepared us to the extreme. I felt very comfortable once I actually started going into the classroom."

Marie, another participant in the current study, attributed her successes to her ability to help students grow, help students gain higher test scores, and her ability to excel in leadership roles in the school. She describes student growth: "When my students do a project and their projects really do show what we've been doing, they actually listened and actually followed directions…those are really like my high moments…I feel like, okay, I clearly communicated what I was supposed to communicate with them." She also mentions long-term success with students, saying, "I had a student who got into the Art Institute of Chicago…I felt like I had been successful because I had either inspired her or helped her, or

taught her something…that made me feel really good." In terms of test scores, Marie explains how the previous teacher for her course had test scores averaging in the 60s and 70s. She recalls her experience, saying, "Of course we measure everybody by their test scores. So my first year teaching, when my scores came back…I had averages in the 80s and I had 75% proficiency. I felt like I had just climbed a mountain. I had done something worthwhile."

Marie also attributed successes to her ability in leadership roles, saying:

A lot of my successes have come with leadership roles at my school. Being a PLT leader, being a leader in my department…being a coach, was very rewarding...When I look at my teaching career, I really think about my leadership roles and working with adults more so than working with students. And that doesn't mean that I don't love my students and working with them, because I have felt successes there, too. But when I look at what I have achieved…I have been a leader in my schools and I have helped other teachers become better teachers.

Marie attributed her perceived lack of ability to inadequate mentoring and a lack of classroom management skills. Of mentoring, she says, "This is my fourth year teaching, and I have never felt like I've had a true mentor. I feel like I've always been put in situations where I was a mentor to someone older than me…it made me feel very stressed and that I was lacking in a lot of ways." Marie also listed classroom management as her biggest struggle in teaching. She explained, saying, "I feel like I have not yet found a system that works that I want to stick to. I feel like I'm still doing stuff different all the time. And I'm trying to figure it out." She included issues like varying activities and talking too much as

problems in her classroom management abilities, again saying, "I never had a mentor that really helped me figure out some of those things."

Carrie was another teacher who came into the profession untraditionally. She had a perceived lack of teaching ability from the beginning: "I think part of it had to do with the fact that I graduated with a degree in what I was teaching, not a specific teaching degree. So I had never taken classes for those skills…I didn't know what to do." She described her first year of teaching as "very difficult" and explained, "I learned a lot that year about classroom management, because I didn't have a lot of it and my students were pretty rowdy and tough to deal with." Carrie, like other participants, mentioned getting better as time went on: "I kind of had a bad taste in my mouth from teaching from that first year experience. It was definitely better as I went through, after a few years and just growing up a little bit myself, I learned different things…I got better as I went through." Later in her interview, she explained more about her classroom management abilities: "I just in general have a hard time – I just don't want to ever be disliked by anyone…I had trouble needing to be the one to be tough and give any type of discipline. It's just not my personality. I don't enjoy it." Carrie also struggled with time management and said that she had a problem with managing grading and waiting until the last minute to do things that needed to be done.

Successes experienced by Carrie were attributed to her ability in her content area. She said, "I felt pretty good about the material I was teaching my students…my students did really well on their tests from the very beginning; that made me feel good, and made me feel like I was able to really get to them and teach them the material." She reiterated her confidence and touched on an ability to see long-term growth, saying, "I felt good about what

I was teaching. I felt confident in that. I felt like my test scores showed that…some of my students I know have done well since I taught them, and I would hope that I was a little bit a part of that."

Samantha, another participant recalls her first year teaching with a perceived lack of ability, like most of the other participants in their first year experience: "I was a four person team…we were sort of on our own. And we didn't know who to go to, we didn't have support, and being new, you don't know what to do anyway. So that was really frustrating." She reinforces that time helps, saying, "This year has been a lot better. My team has been really welcoming, my principal has been really supportive…I'm starting to feel more confident in my ability to know how to teach things better…as a whole, I'm getting better in my profession."

Ethan discussed his abilities over time, as well. His first year was divided between teaching EC classes and, in his second semester, co-teaching US History classes. He switched again the next year to teaching English. He said of his years:

I came out as a history and political science major, so there wasn't the issue of do I know the content…which is really nice in terms of a first year teacher…it was my second year that I kind of felt like I hit my stride, but it was also really challenging. I got moved into the English department…I didn't know the content, so I had to teach myself. So by teaching myself, I kind of knew the pitfalls my students would run into…my second year, I really struggled with relationships, because it was my own classroom; it was a lot bigger…it was almost like having another year one all over again, except I kind of had the planning down.

Again in his interview, Ethan mentioned his progression, saying that the second year, his students did very well on the English test, but he worried about teaching to the test. In his third year, he said, "I got along really well with my students, but I also just felt a little more strong in the content, so that was kind of the year I felt like I was pushing the most cognitive development. I felt like I moved away from teaching to the test." In summary, he explained, "My first year, I didn't know anything. My second year, I felt like I was a really concrete planner, but I needed to focus on other things. It was my third year where I finally put it all together."

Ethan also mentioned successes in terms of abilities with being able to challenge students academically, abilities to use different teaching strategies, abilities to relate to students through sarcasm and jokes, and the ability to help students grow. He mentioned test scores, saying, "In terms of English, when I first arrived there, we had about 40% passing the EOC. When I left, we had between 75% and 80%...and our school had one English teacher, and that was me." He also attributed his success in raising the test scores to his ability to teach grammar: "I taught grammar very, very well."

Lack of ability for Ethan came in the first year with planning lessons. He said, "I just never felt like I could get in a rhythm. I never got into consistent planning; I had to modify so much." His other struggles came with his ability to reach African American males. He explained, "This is perhaps the one thing I feel like I left with the worst...I was not particularly great with young African American students...I really struggled to get through to them. Definitely boys." He elaborated, explaining that he mostly had female students in his classes: "I just kind of put boys aside for a little while. And I really regret doing that. It

definitely got better in my third year when I was more cognizant that I was doing that, but it was a struggle the first couple of years. I just don't think I did activities that mattered to them."

All participants mentioned successes and failures in the classroom during their beginning years of teaching, most of them explaining that their teaching abilities got better as time went on. Failures, or struggles, tended to come from a perceived lack of ability in terms of pedagogical strategies, mentor support, or classroom management.

Effort. Many participants mentioned attributions for successes and failures in terms of effort.   Sophia explained how her effort declined from year to year, saying, "I don't want to say I've backed off…but with so much to do, I've tried to focus on what I have to do and I'm not doing everything I should do, I guess…comparing the first year to now, I am not the same teacher." She explains that she spent her first year "really trying to get the kids to turn in all their work and say, look, you need to turn this in, you're missing this and this and this." In her interview, she was in her fourth year of teaching, and she described the difference in her effort, saying, "I've just seen the responsibility on their part is not there, so as a teacher, I don't want – I want to focus my time on students that want to learn, and so I've backed off a lot on doing everything that I used to do. So from the first to the fourth year, I've…backed off." Besides students who do not seem to have the responsibility, Sophia attributed her lack of effort to time constraints: "Once you learn what you're spending too much time doing the first year, you learn to not do that – don't waste your time doing that the next year because there are other things you could be doing…because when you have so much to do, you want to invest your time in kids that want to learn."

Jennifer attributed one of her successes to her effort in trying to reach a particular student. She described him as a "trouble maker" and said, "He would just talk back to you, the principal, he would skip classes, he was very rude to other students…I kind of took him on as a special project of mine." She describes how much effort she put into trying to help him succeed: "When he was suspended, I would go during my planning period, I would actually go to his house with him and his mom, and I would teach him what I taught that day…everyone just wanted him to…stop being such a burden on our school…I couldn't give up on a student." Samantha mentioned a similar task of effort: "My EC boy…can't read that well. So I spend a lot of time with him breaking down words, learning what vowel stems are, and I've seen a lot of progress in that…I know it came from all that work I have done with him, at least 30 minutes a day I'm spending with him." Samantha's success with this student is attributed to her effort in spending time with him during school.

Marie, Carrie, and Ethan both mentioned successes in terms of effort with student relationships, and Ethan expands the effort to include parents, as well. Marie mentioned trying "really hard to reach out to those that are very quiet and tend not to speak up," and she said that in the next semester she would see the benefit of that. She explained that the students would come back to visit. Carrie spoke of a similar effort to connect to students; she said that during her teaching career, "I tried to give them good advice, and I hope that they looked at me as someone that they could respect and see as like a young woman who is doing well and having good values…I tried really hard to kind of make sure that they were aware of those things." Carrie touched on how much effort it takes for a teacher to be successful:

It's a lot of effort, I feel like. Especially, you know, working with high school students, you have to keep their attention, and you have to kind of put on a performance, and be your best self at all times. If you're working in a cubicle job, you don't have to be in a good mood all the time. If you're having a bad day, you can have one. But if you're teaching 25 14-year-olds, then you have to be on. All the time. And that can be very draining…and exhausting to be on all the time. When you have a bad day, you can't show it until the bell rings. And you have to deal with it later. Things like that can just get kind of draining.

Ethan's successes with parents were attributed to his effort to go out into the community. He said, "I'm not a big phone guy. And for that being a failure, I think it also was a big success for me, because it forced me to get out in the community and actually do a lot of face to faces." He took an extreme effort to speak to parents in the community: "I knew a lot of my parents shopped at the Food Lion on Tuesdays, so I would go from like 4:30 to 6 o' clock and just do my shopping for the week, and run into parents deliberately. And they knew. I put it on my syllabus. They knew I was going to be there."

Personal factors. Two participants attributed personal factors as main reasons for their decisions to leave the teaching profession. All other participants attributed external factors to their reasons to leave teaching within the first five years, which are described in later sections.

Heather and Ethan both described their reasons for leaving the teaching profession as being personal or internal reasons. Heather explained, "Part of me felt like I could stay, and I was good at what I was doing, but a part of me felt like it was becoming…I was getting a little bit complacent…I didn't want to become stagnant, I guess…part of me wanted to

challenge myself a little bit more." After leaving the classroom, Heather went on to a prestigious school to get her master's degree in education. She mentioned the need to challenge herself later on in her interview, as well: "I've always pushed myself a lot, and I just was like, I can keep going. I want to keep going, and I can." She explained her love for academia in general and how she keeps returning to school as an adult: "Part of me thinks that I just really belong there. Even when I was teaching high school, a couple of my colleagues were like, 'We don't understand why you aren't teaching at a university'…sometimes I think the same thing." Heather also mentioned a couple of external attributions for leaving the profession within five years, but she still listed getting back into academia as one of her main reasons for leaving.

Ethan also cited internal attributions for leaving the classroom. Like Heather, he also attributed leaving to some external factors, but his internal attributions revolved around broadening his horizons. He described how two of his colleagues advised him on whether or not to stay, particularly one mentor:

I had a very good mentor in addition to my assistant principal, who I sat down with and just kind of ran through all of the scenarios with. And she was just like, 'You know…what is left for you?' And that sounds really bad to say, because you're always there for student achievement, but in the teaching profession, there's no ladder. If you're a good teacher, you're just a good teacher. Maybe you move up to department chair…but you don't really have anywhere to go. And so she encouraged me to just look at other schools, other areas, and just kind of seeing what was out there to broaden my horizons and get a different experience. Because then I would have something different to put on my resume.

Ethan expanded on the fact that he wanted to open up more opportunities for himself, including returning to school, like Heather. He said, "It always sounds selfish to say you have to look out for yourself, but…I just thought, if I pigeonhole myself here now, am I going to be happy in two, three, four years, five years, ten years?…And really, a side part of that is I really did want to come back to school." His external attributions are discussed in the following sections, along with Heather's.

External Attributions

External attributions included responses from participants that indicated that factors outside of themselves were the main reasons they left the profession or were seriously considering it. External attributions voiced by participants primarily included difficulty of the profession on various levels, a lack of respect for the position, and compensation for the job of teaching.

Task difficulty. Many participants spoke in their interviews of demands placed on teachers, time constraints, and policies or pressure placed upon them by administration, either in their school or in the district level. Ethan mentioned that being a teacher is "The hardest job on the face of the planet." Often times, participants mentioned demands, time, and compensation as going hand-in-hand; i.e. they did not feel they were compensated enough for all that they were expected to do in the time they were allotted to do it.

Participants felt that they did not have adequate time to accomplish all of the tasks and paperwork they were expected to do. Sophia mentioned the amount of paperwork she encountered in relation to time:

Well, the paperwork…a lot of grading. So, you know, I grade quizzes every other

day, or tests, homework checks every day…we have a planning period for an hour and a half.

Well, I'm planning for the next day. I'm not grading papers during my planning period, so

I'm always taking papers home to grade…also, you know, we're sent things from our

administrators on like EVAAS scores, you know, seeing where your kids are at, and filling

out paperwork on…just looking at their different test scores, and just filling out forms. The

counselors ask for forms sometimes, or if a student is seeing an outside agency, like a

counseling service, they will want us to do checklists and just write down their behavior.

And emails, and I mean, there's a lot of paperwork that I cannot get done in that hour and a

half planning that I will have to take home.

Sophia mentioned insufficient time later in her interview, as well, stating:

My planning period is not enough time to make copies for the next day. We don't have

books in math, the math department, so we have to make copies of things…I'm working on

my website…so they have access to it. I don't have time in that planning to do everything.

So we plan for the next day, but then I have a pile of papers to grade, and then I have this to

fill out, and then I have this leave form to fill out, and a meeting after school, parent/teacher

conference after school, IEP meetings after school, so…you know, the day doesn't end at

three. There's just a lot of extra stuff that you don't have time for in a planning period and

during lunch…students come in for questions or tutoring…I mean, you just don't have the

time.

Heather spoke of the issue of tasks and time, as well. She stated in her interview,

"You don't realize how much work it's going to be…and how much of your time is going to

be taken up with meetings and all the other administrative stuff you have to do." She

mentioned grading as a time intensive task:

I didn't realize…I wanted my kids to write a lot, because I knew that would make them better

writers. But on the flip side, I like, sort of forgot to factor in that I needed to grade them and

assess them and all these things. I kind of ended up, you know, digging myself into a huge

ditch, because then I had all this stuff to grade all the time. I was just constantly…I

constantly felt behind…the grading would keep getting pushed back and then it wasn't

serving the purpose that I needed it to. If I were able to give them feedback in a timely

fashion, they would become better writers.

Heather also mentioned that she did not have time to go observe other teachers to increase

her ability as a teacher, and that there was "barely ever any time to collaborate." Charlotte

mentioned that as an ESL teacher, "there is a ton of paperwork that we have to do for our

kids. Most of the time it takes up a majority of my planning time, so there's not really a time

for me to plan for my students." She explained that she generally does her planning at home

on her own personal time.

Paperwork was also an issue for Marie, who said:

I've sat for two hours doing paperwork for my EC students. You know, checking stuff

off…I spent two hours going through IEPs and just checking off paperwork that was going to

go in a folder somewhere that nobody's probably going to look at. It's just documented for

the sake of being documented in case, ten years from now, somebody comes and wants to

have a problem with it…it's very overwhelming. I know that the administrators are

overwhelmed, I know that teacher assistants are overwhelmed, and I think because of all that,

I think people are very lackluster in this job. I think the students see that. And I think the whole system of education is just spiraling downward.

Samantha's frustrations came from paperwork, as well. She said, "I didn't know how to fill out a PEP…I didn't know what an IEP was. I didn't know how to fill out my PDP. I didn't understand the evaluation tool…it was the paperwork and logistics…I didn't understand how to do all the things I needed to do."

When speaking of demands placed on teachers, many participants voiced that they wished they could "just teach," and not have to worry about all of the other tasks and expectations that come with being a teacher. Charlotte explained:

I feel like every single day, something gets added to my plate. And you know, your plate never gets bigger; it just kind of overflows. I feel like the plate has overflowed and all the food is definitely on the floor. If we could just go in the classroom and teach, that would be awesome. But we can't do that. You have carpool duty, you have lunch duty, you have to be the head of this committee, you have to work with this club, you have to do this, and it just kind of all takes away from what is really important, which is instruction. We don't want to be stuck outside for carpool duty for thirty minutes in the morning where you can be tutoring and helping another child.

Samantha made comments that reiterated what Charlotte mentioned about being overwhelmed with duties: "I honestly don't have time. I feel like I could be such a better teacher if I had time to actually get things planned or accomplished. I feel like a lot of us at school run around like chickens with our heads cut off…things that we shouldn't be doing are taking away from our actual job." She went as far as to say, "If they wanted us to

succeed at the level they want us to, we would have to take the children and raise them ourselves…I just want to be left alone and be able to teach."

In addition to the already high list of demands and duties placed on teachers, many teachers feel pressured to take on extracurricular duties, as well. Sophia took on some of these extra duties; she began advising a club in her fourth year and considered coaching track, too, but decided against it. Jennifer also expressed that she took on multiple extra duties, such as going to sporting events, spending time with her students outside of school, planning prom, etc. She said, "If they could somehow make it where we have more time for all of the extra work that they're expecting out of us, then I would go back to it…I just feel like they have to figure out how to allot more time for us…it's worth figuring out." She said that if someone told her they were going to be a teacher, she would "make sure they knew how much time it was going to take."

Marie echoed what the other participants said about the lack of time to complete tasks: "I was thinking about today alone…I haven't had a planning period…and I started this after school program and I'm here until seven o' clock, and my day, 12 hours, is gone, you know? All that extra stuff, it kind of piles up. That would be my complaint." Marie also explained that she had coached cheerleading and was an adviser for a club at her school. Ethan took on an incredible amount of extra duties, such as coaching soccer, running an after school basketball league for students, being the school's data manager, being English Department Chair, running relay for life, etc. in his three years of teaching. He said of his job, "It took up a lot of my nights. I was working on six hours of sleep, tops, most nights. And that translates into the classroom." He elaborated on the tough job of teaching,

mentioning planning and implementation, ending with saying, "You just have so much going on. And that's like, not even touching the paperwork aspect. Running clubs, dealing with administration, going to staff meetings…you're a 24/7/365 worker, for sure."

In addition to time, politics and bureaucracy also made teaching a very hard job for the participants in the study. Sophia mentioned, "Now in our county, teachers are evaluated on their end of course scores, like the tests. And like I said, if you have half of your class who don't care, or you're teaching a low level class, there's kids that don't care and your scores won't be good, but you're paid based on your scores?" She also mentioned that teachers are held accountable for grades in their class, and that "the teacher is getting that bad grade, as well." She said of improvements that could be made to the profession to make her consider staying: "I'd say the tying your evaluation to your test scores, I'd like to see that change…incentivizing teachers is something that I wish the state would do." Charlotte said of her decision to leave the classroom, "I think my biggest thing with leaving the classroom is definitely the politics. I'm tired of the politics…I don't think that's getting better any time soon." She mentioned laws and initiatives as an extra burden on her job as a teacher.

Jennifer expressed similar concerns about the politics of teaching, saying, "It was the policies and the strategies and everything else that was outside of the human contact that frustrated me…what we were doing was never good enough…I couldn't do anything to their standards…it's the CIF strategies and 21st century strategies." Marie expressed frustration at demands from policies, as well, saying, "Just let me do what I know is right and effective, and I will get you your test scores. Just let me do what I need to do and give me the time to

do it." Carrie said of test scores, "they need to make it more about the teaching and less about the testing. If they could just be more focused on what it's about, it would be better."

Sophia, Marie, Samantha, and Ethan all spoke of administrators and legislators not 'getting it,' and Ethan even admitted that his current job as an instructional coach had allowed him to see how "teachers get rolled under the bus at times" when it comes to political aspects of teaching. He said, "I've seen a lot of people who work for politicians writing education policy who don't know what's really going on." Marie explained, "It's that whole idea of people making decisions about education who are not in education…they're not going to keep any teachers…it just keeps getting worse and worse." Sophia mentioned in her interview:

The state makes these decisions when they don't sit in the classroom, and they don't have to teach 32 students who hate math…the people that make the decisions don't sit in the classroom, and that's the frustration. The school board, who makes these, these initiatives, these drop-out prevention programs, and um, and like all the testing that we have to do. They don't sit in the classroom and know what really goes on, and the policies and the salary…you know, there's no incentives for teachers to do well. They make these policies, but they don't understand and see what actually happens in the classroom.

Samantha spoke of her new principal in a similar fashion: "This year I have a principal who has only taught 6th grade business, and I feel like she is really disconnected from what is asked of us, and she doesn't really understand what a day in our life is like." She expressed concerns about her principal not understanding the demands on teachers, saying, "We have a lot riding on our testing, especially in elementary school. It's a lot riding

on us, and if someone doesn't come from that background, they don't understand how much pressure that really is."

She said that she does not think it is fair to tie her evaluation to her test scores, like other participants: "I teach low level learners. I will never show proficiency with these children, so I shouldn't be held accountable for that, when you have a teacher across the county who does nothing and her children grow on their own. It's just not fair." Samantha explained that she worked in a low performing, high poverty school with 70% English language learners and that the county administrators were frequently in her school, acting as a source of stress:

We are the lowest performing school in the county…so our county office comes in very frequently. We have met with a reading specialist once a week, a math specialist once a week, a science specialist once a week, and a social studies specialist once a week. And it's during our planning time…we find it very difficult as teachers in this school because we feel like we know the children the best…and then these county office officials come in and demand things from us that we don't feel like is best for our students…they have no idea what our day is like.

All of the factors mentioned in the preceding section – time, paperwork, extra duties and demands, politics – were related to the difficult task of being a teacher and were listed as reasons attributed to the decision to leave the teaching profession, or consider it, within the first five years of teaching. Other main attributions were a lack of respect for the position from the community and district or school administration and the salary for the profession.

Lack of respect for the position. Many participants touched on a lack of respect for

teaching when describing reasons for leaving the profession or seriously considering it. Lack

of respect was perceived to come from society as well as school and district administration.

Sophia and Samantha both indicated that they felt a lack of respect in terms of job

appreciation from administration. Sophia mentioned, "There's no incentive, there's no, like,

'You did a really great job this year, I'm really impressed with you.' There's not much of

that." She went on to say, "What I'm really looking for is that boost, that, 'You're doing

really great…what can we do to make you more happy?' or 'What can we do to help you?'

You never hear questions like that." Samantha echoed, "I don't think we're appreciated. I

think if we got more, 'great job, keep it up,' it would go so far, but we just don't get

that…when you do meet with administration, it's like, 'Why is this child not growing?' or

'You need to do this more.' Just say, 'Great job.' That would go so far for us." Samantha

said in order for her to consider staying in the profession, more respect would be needed:

Make it so that…people aspire to be teachers instead of looking down on us. I feel like we

are the bottom level, we're the bottom feeders, when we should be appreciated and honored.

I had a teacher in high school who said, "I wish people would start saying, 'You're so smart;

you should be a teacher,' instead of, 'You're so smart; you should be a doctor.'" You don't

hear that, ever.

Heather and Charlotte touched on lack of respect in their interviews, as well. Heather

said, "It's tough, I think, when it doesn't get the respect that it deserves…when you work

hard for your entire life, you want that, and especially with my family. My family is full of

doctors, and I was like, 'You know what? I want that; I want prestige, too. I want respect."

Charlotte shared, "I see total negativity and a sense of unappreciation coming from them [district leaders]. It makes it so difficult, you know, to go to a place that I love to go to every day knowing that the people in the community are not going to back me up as much as my colleagues are." Later, when asked why she was specifically considering leaving the profession, she listed lack of respect as a reason, saying, "Why stay at a job where you're not valued by the community?" In order for her to stay, she mentioned respect again as a main factor, saying she would need "support from the top – the politicians and the outside community. Not just to be seen as a paid babysitter, necessarily, but to actually be respected as an individual that's touching your child at some point in their life."

For Marie, lack of respect also translated to people not seeing teachers as professionals or taking them seriously. She explained, "There's no respect, I think, for professionalism." She mentioned, "Sometimes I feel hurt, the way people speak to me. Again, there's no respect for people and parents are so disrespectful, students are so disrespectful, and in my working conditions…last week, two days I had zero heat in my room. My room was 35 degrees." She felt a lack of respect from her administration because she was still expected to go on with her normal duties while dealing with nearly freezing temperatures in her classroom: "You could go out and buy some, like…little 30 dollar heater…you could buy me a cup of coffee or some gloves…just do something to make me feel like you understand what I'm going through. But because it didn't affect…people that are in charge, it wasn't a priority." Marie also spoke of attempts to further herself in a professional capacity, but not getting support from her county to do so.

Finally, the lack of respect Ethan felt from his principal was a main situation that he attributed to his decision to leave within his first five years. He explained that since he was so successful moving test scores in English, his principal wanted him to move to teaching Civics to move those test scores, as well. He was unhappy with the inevitable move and said he took some "pretty big offense" to the situation: "I just felt like I wasn't being very respected or heard at that point. It led to a lot of tension." He described meeting with his principal several times to fight for his English position: "I just left a lot of meetings with him feeling like he was going to do what he wanted to do without valuing my input…finally I came to realize, if they moved me once, and I gave in, what was going to stop them from moving me every time we had a problem?" Eventually these feelings of disrespect from his principal made Ethan feel like his relationship with his principal "had really fractured," and he decided not to come back to teach his fourth year.

Salary. Teacher pay was the number one reason that participants attributed to their decision to leave teaching. Seven out of eight participants explicitly stated that it was either the main factor or a big factor in their decision. Sophia explained her reasons for considering leaving the profession: "I want to have a bigger salary…I don't think that this state, at least, is compensated for what teachers are expected to do. Um, the paperwork that teachers have, all the work that teachers have, the salary is what's really hurting me." She went on to explain, "After being in the field for a while, and living on such a low salary…I mean, you're helping the youth find direction in this world, and you're not paid well." Sophia also expressed, "I'm single. I'm not married, it's just me, and I've got to make my way through life. If I don't have a husband or someone who can support me, I can't live on this salary.

This isn't a livable, comfortable salary." She spoke of wanting to buy a new car or a house eventually, and said that she did not see those things happening for her anytime soon. She specifically stated:

It's really the salary. Really. And I love my job. But the salary is not there…that's why I'm looking outside of the field…the salary is the biggest part. If we had a higher salary I would definitely like to stay…we have good teachers, and I just feel like they're not getting what they deserve. If the benefits were there, it just wouldn't be as…money talks. I don't want to focus this whole interview on money, but that's what it is! I promise you. That's what it is for me. It is the salary.

Heather also mentioned salary as a reason she left the profession, stating, "There was a part of me that was like, you know, it's a lot of work for not a lot of pay, and I know that I can go on and get further degrees and be making more." She admitted to feeling guilty for worrying about the pay:

Even my parents were like, you know, 'You've worked hard your whole life, but we have never seen you work *this* hard before. And for little in return.' And…that's one of the biggest struggles of teaching…you're not in it for the money, right? So I think any time that enters your head, you feel like you're not a good teacher because you're thinking about things like money. And I've talked to other teachers about this, too. People will use that against you and say, 'Well, you chose to be a teacher, so you obviously knew.' But it's like, you can change your mind about these things.

Charlotte mentioned politics as her first reason for leaving, but said after politics, "Definitely the financial side of it." She mentioned that she would like to be able to do

everyday things like pamper herself or start a second savings account without feeling "guilty" or that it was "a burden." She said, "It's nothing else. The kids are great, my colleagues are great. The parents are great. It's just those two things." She mentioned having second, third, fourth, even fifth jobs, mentioning that she took on multiple opportunities to make extra money while teaching full-time. Jennifer, Carrie, and Marie all spoke of having second jobs in addition to their full-time teaching jobs, as well. They all spoke of the time it took away from their personal life or from time they could use to focus more on being a better teacher. Carrie also mentioned that she felt that it was necessary to have a second job: "If I had not had a second job…I could have lived, but I would not have been able to do any type of…extra things for myself. I wouldn't have been able to drive home to see my family, or spend time with friends, go out to eat…it wasn't possible without the other job."

Jennifer cited financial reasons as the main factor in her decision to leave the profession. She said:

I felt like when I was in the classroom and I was teaching, those 8 hours that I was putting in were well worth every cent that they were paying me. But it's the grading and doing the CIF and 21st century strategies and writing up these lesson plans that nobody's ever going to look at, and just…all of the politics behind what they were asking us to do that took the extra five or six hours every single day, um…that just didn't make me feel like it was financially worth it to me anymore and I needed to do something to better my future career.

Jennifer said if she could go back to teaching and make more money, she would go back "in a heartbeat. I wouldn't even second guess it."

Marie had similar feelings to Jennifer's about money vs. time spent working. She said, "My first year teaching…I tracked my hours of actually working in a week, did the math, and it was like four or five bucks an hour that I was making. And that's when I realized, I need to take a step back." It was her main reason for leaving the profession: "I think the biggest thing is teacher pay. Honestly. I think if I got paid more, I would feel like I was worth more, I was valued. And that it was worth everything that I do…I have a degree, I am a professional, but I don't feel like I am compensated like a professional." She mentioned not having money to do things like take vacations in peak seasons and not being able to afford professional development opportunities like conferences and workshops or getting her National Board certification. When asked about future plans if she left the classroom, she said, "Honestly, I want to make money. It's not my primary goal to be rich, but I feel like I need to live…I live life as a college student, and I don't like that feeling. So I will do something that makes more money and is equally as stressful or not as stressful."

Carrie said that "salary was a huge issue" for her. She reiterated Marie's thoughts about being a professional and making too little: "I felt like if I went to school for something and had a degree and had a license in something, then I shouldn't have to also have a side job. My career should have been enough to allow me to live. When you have to work a second job all summer, that's not a break." In terms of coming back to the profession, she said, "It would be nice to get paid all year long, or get paid enough. Enough to not have to work two jobs…if you're single, and a lot of people are, it's almost impossible in today's society to live any kind of a comfortable lifestyle from just teaching." Samantha said, "I don't think we get compensated for how much we work. I work easily ten hours a day and

my pay does not reflect that…I can't imagine raising a family on this salary…it's just not enough. It's not worth it anymore. There's too many demands…we're just not compensated enough."

Ethan was the only participant who did not mention money as a main reason for leaving the teaching profession. He said, "Ironically, the pay never really bothered me…I definitely understand that aspect, but it could stay [where it is] and I still would come back and teach. I would like to come back to the classroom for a little while."

These external factors of task difficulty, lack of respect, and lack of pay were the main reasons attributed to participants' decision to leave the teaching profession within the first five years of teaching. The two emergent themes from interviews, teacher emotions and role conflict, are discussed in the following passages.

Emotional Nature of the Profession

Participants did not explicitly list emotional exhaustion as a reason for leaving the profession, but emotions were shared explicitly and subliminally throughout each interview. All who left the profession within the first five years expressed sadness from their decision to leave. A wide array of emotions was described in participant interviews, ranging from joy, pride, happiness, and love to frustration, sadness, anger, and guilt. Sophia mentioned the ability of the students in her club to bring a "bright spot" in her days; she also mentioned feeling worried or sad in relation to students. She said "you have to really try to separate your emotions and try not to get emotionally involved, because if you do that too often, you're going to drive yourself crazy."

Participants mentioned pride consistently when asked about emotions related to their students. Other emotions mentioned consistently toward students included love, care, worry, enjoyment, excitement, happiness, sympathy, embarrassment, stress, heartache, abandonment and guilt, exhaustion, and frustration. Marie discussed in her interview how the job of teaching is "emotionally stressful" because teachers experience "the full range of emotions."

Emotions related to district or state administration, school politics, and bureaucracy were frustration, unappreciation, uncertainty, negativity, and anger. However, some participants did mention feeling supported and cared for by their specific school's administration. A few even mentioned that their school administrators brought them joy, happiness, and support.

Another emotion that was common in many interviews was love for teaching. Every single one of the participants explained that they loved or enjoyed teaching and loved or cared for the students; all four of the participants who actually left the profession expressed sadness from leaving and many expressed that they "really miss it." Ethan noted that his decision to leave the classroom "had nothing to do with the students, it had nothing to do with the parents, and that was something I really struggled with." He mentioned that having to tell students and parents he was leaving was "heartbreaking…really tough." Heather said, "A part of me really misses…just hanging out with them. Like when they would just come into my room during free period or whatever…I just really miss that sometimes." Jennifer described her feelings of sadness: "I really enjoyed – I still enjoy teaching. I don't look back on my years of teaching and ever regret anything…all I can think about is happiness toward

[the students] and sadness that I'm not with them anymore." Carrie also said that she "did love the students" and "did love what she taught."

Emotions participants described in terms of their experiences with students, the job, and administration included the full gamut of emotions. Many of these emotions also came from taking on the various roles that teachers take on in the profession, which is discussed next.

Role Conflict

Participants of the study expressed that teachers take on multiple roles; many said that teachers "are not just teachers," but that they are also many other things for students, parents, administrators, and the community. Jennifer said that she felt like she was "not necessarily just a teacher, but more a facilitator and a mentor toward these students who are growing up…a lot of them used us as kind of more of a motherly or sisterly figure, fatherly…and so we were putting that in addition to the teaching we were doing…it started to consume me." She later said in her interview, "Being a teacher is not just being a teacher. It's being a counselor, it's being a friend…there's just so much that revolves around it."

Marie explained the job of being a teacher as "multilayered…you're a teacher, you're a counselor, you're a disciplinarian, you're a mom, you're a nurse; you're everything." Samantha also mentioned the various hats that teachers wear:

I think most people think that our job is to instruct children and that's it. And that's like the smallest percentage of our job. We are money collectors, we are time keepers, we are maids, we are mothers, we are nurses, we are counselors. We give hugs, we are nurturing. You know, we do so much for them all day long, and a lot of it's just more than teaching. I can't

even put into words what we do, because it's so much. People just wouldn't understand.

We're literally their parents all day long…we are responsible for their lives, not just

academically, but emotionally and socially.

Finally, Ethan described the roles that a teacher takes on, saying:

You're a babysitter, you're a teacher, you're a mother, a father, a brother, a coach…you just

have so much going on. You're just a caretaker for students. And that's an all-encompassing

term. Because that means that you're responsible for their emotional health, their physical

health, their mental health, and so much more in the classroom. And you're a therapist...it

can be the most rewarding experience in the world, but you've definitely got to look past

some frustrations.

Although none of the participants listed role conflict as a main reason for leaving the

profession, several of them made a point to explain the various roles that teachers have to

play and that it can become "draining" or "stressful". There is an implied feeling of

exhaustion and responsibility from their responses based on the personal roles they took on

as teachers.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher gave findings for each coding category of the

phenomenological approach data and introduced emergent themes discovered through data

analysis. Interviewee responses were described and reported factually, and the following

chapter will give a discussion of the findings as well as implications for research and

practice. The following chapter will also deliver a final statement of the essence of the

phenomenon of leaving the teaching profession within the first five years, which holds true to

the methods of qualitative research with a phenomenological approach.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The final chapter of this study includes a general discussion of the findings, implications for research as well as for practice, and conclusion statements containing the "essence" of the phenomenon studied. The discussion focuses on answering the study's research question. The research question and sub-question were as follows:

1. What factors contribute to teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of teaching?

2. How can these factors be explained in terms of Attribution Theory?

In order to answer these questions, the researcher set up in-person interviews with eight participants who either had left the classroom within the first five years of employment or were seriously considering it. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded by hand using open coding and listing significant statements, also known as horizonalization (Creswell, 2013). Coding themes were categorized based on an Attribution Theory analytic lens and emergent themes. Attribution Theory themes were sorted into the categories of Internal Attributions and External Attributions and were further organized into themes of ability, effort, personal factors, task difficulty, lack of respect for the position, and salary. Emergent themes were named emotional nature of the profession and role conflict. Categorical coding and analysis were discussed in chapter three, and a brief discussion of overall findings is developed in the following section.

Discussion

Research with a phenomenological approach does not test a hypothesis; therefore, there is no way to state whether the present study 'worked' or was 'true;' the researcher simply aimed to answer the study's questions to understand the lived experience of these participants and others like them. The researcher did this by investigating a phenomenon using Attribution Theory to focus the study.

In the following sections, a discussion of the findings in relation to the review of literature and Attribution Theory is presented, followed by limitations of the study and implications for research and practice. Finally, the essence of the phenomenon is described.

Links to the Literature

The literature review on young teacher burnout and turnover focuses mostly on the following areas: Burnout and emotional exhaustion, low salary, a lack of respect for the position, work conditions and politics, and beginning teacher trends in turnover. The next sections will discuss findings from the present study in these terms, making connections and pointing out valuable differences.

Burnout and emotional exhaustion. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) measures burnout in terms of three different areas: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment; likewise, burnout is said to differ among individuals and can be caused by many factors due to its emotional nature (McCormick & Barnett, 2011). Depersonalization was not found to be evident in participant interviews; depersonalization comes from a feeling of disconnect from students, but all of the participants expressed care for their students, even if they agreed they were not putting forth

as much effort anymore. Reduced personal accomplishment was not stated by participants, either; however, several participants did mention that they felt like they were worth more than what they were getting out of teaching. In terms of emotional exhaustion, participants in the study described intense emotions in relation to the teaching profession, such as stress, anger, guilt, and frustration. These emotions match up with ones described by Chang (2009) and Bullough and Baughman (1997) in relation to burnout. Every single participant listed frustration as an emotion, in some cases with both students and work conditions/politics of teaching, and Heather mentioned the feelings of guilt caused by leaving the classroom – she went as far as to say she felt she was abandoning the profession.

Along with negative emotions from teaching, participants in the study also listed positives, such as joy, pride, love, and happiness. Bullough and Baughman (1997) make the case that teaching is a double-edged sword with both good and bad parts to it: on one hand, teachers experience mastery of their craft, love for their students, pride in their growth and expertise, and on the other, they experience a daunting task, high demands, and a lack of support from the system. Likewise, other studies paint this portrait of the 'good' with the 'bad' of teaching (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Backes & Burns, 2008); Ramirez, 2010; Schutz, Crowder, & White, 2001). Participants tended to link the 'good' with their students overall. In fact, all eight participants mentioned an enjoyment from teaching and a general concern for students, differing from the third reasons new teachers were dissatisfied with their jobs in the Teacher Followup Survey (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). All participants who actually left the profession within the first five years expressed a deep sadness for the loss of student relationships, explaining it as being "really tough," "heartbreaking," or "devastating."

This agrees with literature that suggests teaching is an incredibly emotional profession and that teachers are not ready for the emotional turmoil involved in the job (Chang, 2009). Marie explained that teaching is a very emotionally stressful job, and that teachers experience a wide range of emotions in carrying out their jobs.

Chang and Davis (2009) discuss emotional exhaustion in terms of compassion fatigue, which occurs from taking on student problems. Sophia mentioned that teachers have to separate themselves from their students emotionally or else they will drive themselves insane; other participants also mentioned worrying about their students' problems in and outside of the classroom. Chang (2009) explains that teaching is a job heavy in emotional labor: teachers have to feel or appear to feel certain emotions as they perform their jobs. Carrie mentioned this in her interview, stating that it can be draining for teachers to be 'on' all the time and to put their best face forward even when having personal struggles.

Another factor of burnout is described by Santoro (2011), who used the term demoralization to describe the inability to continue accessing the moral rewards of teaching that many went into the profession for. Samantha echoed this sentiment in her interview, stating that the rewards just were not there for her anymore in teaching due to the demands of high stakes testing and accountability in proficiency. Sophia said she saw herself backing off more and more each year because she felt like she was wasting her time on some of the students who did not seem to care about learning, whereas she used to enjoy helping those students.

Low salary. In addition to having feelings of burnout, seven out of eight of the study participants listed low salary as either the number one reason for quitting teaching, or one of

the most important reasons for leaving. The only exception was Ethan, who said salary was

not a concern in his decision process; however, he also said if a pay raise were to come

along, he would not complain and that he understood the reality of low teacher pay. Ramirez

(2010) cited salary as the number one reason that people would not consider going into the

teaching profession, which shows a relationship with the current study's participants. Salary

has been said to be a source of stress for teachers (Manassero, 2006), and the participants in

the study expressed feelings of stress due to salary in terms of not being able to buy a house

or new car, not being able to live comfortably or do anything extra besides paying bills, and

not being able to support a family in the future.

When asked what would make them consider staying in teaching or make them

consider coming back to the profession, six out of the eight participants said that they would

consider coming back if they were offered a more attractive salary, echoing Ingersoll and

Smith's (2003) study that found 78.5% of new teacher job dissatisfaction to be based on

salary. Marie expressed that having a low salary made her feel like less of a professional,

and that she was not worth much as a professional; likewise, Berryhill, Linney, and

Fromewick (2009) found that 35% of teachers in their study mentioned increasing salary as a

way to increase the professionalism of the job of teaching.

Garcia, Slate, and Delgado (2009) reported that in 2004, jobs outside of teaching

requiring the same skill set paid between $4,546 and $8,038 more than teaching positions.

None of the participants in the study mentioned that they believed they would be able to use

their same skill set to make more money, however; Sophia and Marie mentioned feeling like

it would be hard to find a job because of their history as teachers. Marie said that she felt she

had skills she could apply to other jobs, but she felt employers would see that she was a teacher and keep on looking at other candidates.

Lack of respect for the position. Research from several studies has discussed that teachers are seen as being in a low or semi-professional status job that is not taken seriously (Bullough and Baughman, 1997; Ramirez, 2010; Schutz, Crowder, and White, 2001). Participants in the study did agree with these findings; Charlotte even listed it as a reason for leaving the profession, saying, "Why stay at a job where you're not valued by the community?" Marie, Sophia, Samantha, Ethan, and Heather all mentioned feeling a lack of respect for their job; Marie, Sophia, and Samantha all described feeling a lack of respect from both their own school administration and central government, Heather expressed her lack of respect in terms of society, and Ethan discussed a lack of respect solely in terms of his school's administration. Many participants said that even receiving more positive feedback from administration would go a long way to make them feel more respected, and Charlotte said she would like to feel support from central government so she did not just feel like a babysitter. Marie and Samantha both compared being a teacher to being a doctor or a lawyer, expressing that teachers should be respected in a similar fashion and seen as professionals.

Work conditions and politics. Bullough and Baughman (1997) explained that the school system is pushing teachers out, which holds meaning for many of the participants of this study. Study participants listed reasons dealing with central government as determining factors in their decisions to leave. This relates to findings that policies like high stakes testing, accountability and abundance of measurable goals can induce stress and strain for

teachers (Berryhill, Linney, and Fromewick (2009). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) and

Santavirta, Solovieva, and Theorell (2007) expressed work conditions like time pressure and

demands as a source of workplace stress for teachers. All participants in the study discussed

having high demands and little time to fulfill work required or expected of them, expressing

feelings of frustration, anger, and stress.

Santavirta, Solovieva, and Theorell (2007) also mentioned work conditions such as

constant changes to keep up with, weak relationships with co-workers, and having few

resources as reasons teachers were unsatisfied with their jobs; however, participants in the

study did not seem to list those factors much, if at all. Sophia did mention that things are

changing frequently in education, but did not list it as a source of stress or a reason for

leaving the profession. Likewise, other participants mentioned a difficult co-worker or two,

but did not attribute their decision to leaving the classroom to relationships with co-workers,

with the exception of Ethan and his administrator. Sophia was the only participant who

mentioned a lack of resources, saying that there were no math textbooks and that it put more

time and pressure on her to make copies of material or update her class website.

Beginning teacher trends in turnover. Trends for beginning teachers who leave the

profession include what Ingersoll & Smith (2004) refer to as the sink or swim boot camp-like

experience of the first year of teaching. Chang (2009) also mentions that teachers may not be

fully aware of the emotional work of teaching and may not be prepared to deal with it.

Participants in the study all mentioned that they struggled in their first year of teaching; a few

mentioned that they were not aware of how hard it was going to be, how much paperwork

there would be, how much time they would spend on their job, etc. In first year descriptions, participants seem to recall a feeling of being overwhelmed or ill-prepared.

Teachers less likely to leave the profession include teachers who receive more courses in teaching methods (Ingersoll, Merrill, and May, 2012). Three out of the four participants in the present study who left the profession came into the classroom nontraditionally; all four of the participants still in the classroom at the time of the study had received training from a traditional teacher education program. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) suggest that mentoring and induction programs are needed for new teachers; likewise, Hong (2010) suggests that teachers' professional identities should be better established in their first years of teaching in order to retain them as professionals in the field. Participants also mentioned these needs; Marie and Sophia both said they wished they had a better mentoring experience as new teachers, and Samantha mentioned that no one helped her or her team with what they were expected to do when they first came into the profession.

Links to Attribution Theory

Ultimately, participant attributions for leaving the profession or considering leaving the profession were external. Two participants also sited reasons such as broadening their horizons or going back to school, which are internal to some degree; ultimately, though, the end goals for participants leaving the profession were to either gain more money, have less workplace stress, or gain more prestige, with only two exceptions. Seven out of eight participants listed salary as the biggest factor or one of the biggest factors contributing to their decision to leave the profession of teaching within the first five years, which is an external factor outside of teachers' control. A common thread in many interviews was that

the salary was low in terms of the amount of tasks and duties teachers are expected to perform. Time was also cited as a reason for leaving the profession; teachers felt they did not have appropriate time during the day to get all of their expected tasks accomplished, which related to task difficulty. Almost all of the attributions given from participants for leaving the profession were outside of the participants' ability or effort and were, for the most part, not under the participants' control. See Appendix H for an outline of participants' main attributions for leaving the profession.

All participants seemed to have optimistic attribution styles, attributing their successes to internal, stable factors like ability, which are supposed to predict higher expectancies and achievements (Martinko, 1995). Still, all participants left the profession or seriously considered it, which could have a link to those participants who mentioned wanting to achieve more for themselves, like Heather and Ethan.   Across the board, ability was not a reason that participants attributed leaving the profession to. All participants seemed fairly confident in their ability to actually perform the job of teaching, even if they had a perceived lack of ability in their first year of teaching; most stated that a decision to leave the profession would be attributed to or was attributed specifically to the external factors of job difficulty and compensation.

Limitations of the Study

There are certain limitations to the present study. First of all, although the study follows protocol for a phenomenological approach qualitative study, participants did come from a small sample of eight. Studies with more participants, or more phenomenological studies of this nature, might give a more accurate depiction of being a beginning teacher who

left the profession. Likewise, there was only one male participant out of the total sample. Conducting studies with more male participants would be beneficial to see if there seem to be gender differences in terms of leaving the profession, especially since that was the case in this study. Secondly, with interviews as the only source of data, it is always possible that some information is embellished or has been left out; participants might have felt pressured to give certain answers due to the nature of the study, or they may have felt pressured not to say anything too negative so as not to put down the profession, former students, former jobs or administration, etc.

Finally, though the researcher aimed to provide a narrow focus with the Attribution Theory lens, there could be valuable information that had to be left out due to the nature of the study. If data did not fit within the researcher's codes or the emergent themes, it was not used for the study. Without a theoretical approach, the researcher could have come up with themes based solely on what the interviews provided, without the predetermined Attribution Theory categories.

Implications for Research

Many more studies are needed on beginning teacher burnout; qualitative studies in particular are needed in the existing literature of this topic. The literature already has an abundance of studies reporting numerical data about teachers who are leaving; it needs more studies on why teachers are leaving, specifically teachers in the first few years of their teaching careers. Likewise, more research on teacher burnout in terms of Attribution Theory needs to be conducted in order to fully exhaust and saturate this phenomenon. The researcher had trouble finding such articles, indicating a gap in the literature. Based on the

interesting findings in this study that ability, effort, and task difficulty were perceived by participants to be different than what is proposed in Attribution Theory models, further studies based on Attribution Theory and beginning teacher burnout could be crucial to Attribution Theory research.

Other research studies include specific studies relating beginning teacher turnover to salary in particular, or to school politics, demands, or respect for the position. Targeting those categories would prove beneficial, since those are main reasons for leaving that were cited in this study and have been cited frequently in others. Hearing from career changing beginning teachers themselves is the only way to truly understand the phenomenon of new teachers leaving the classroom for other endeavors. Since 75% of participants who left teaching in this study came from nontraditional teaching preparation programs, research on teacher preparation programs could also be beneficial. Finally, research studies investigating Ingersoll & Smith's (2004) assertion that the 'best and the brightest' are most likely to leave the profession would be groundbreaking for teacher preparation programs; if pre-service teachers with high SAT, ACT, and other scores were found to be more likely to leave the profession within the first five years, it would be a huge benefit to investigate their reasons for leaving.   Ways that this research study could be put into practice are discussed in the following section.

Implications for Practice

Part of what drives education evolution is putting theory into practice or using data to produce desired results. Conducting research and leaving it as just that – research – is a detriment to the education system because as researchers and educators, we are always

striving for improvement, no matter how small. Findings from studies such as this one can help policymakers and school administrators continue to support their beginning educators and capitalize on what teachers seem to need the most in their first years of employment: more financial support, fewer demands, more time for administrative duties like paperwork, more support from central government, and more mentoring or development for teaching strategies and professional identity. Likewise, teachers coming out of nontraditional education programs appear to need more support. Studies like this one could prepare administrators at the county and state level to make beginning teachers feel more support and to try to be empathetic to what being a teacher is truly like. High stakes testing and accountability procedures could be amended or lowered considerably. Budgets could be altered to include more salary for beginning teachers with raises as time goes on.

With all of the current research on teacher attrition and retention, it is imperative that policymakers and administrators have something to guide them when trying to battle losing multiple teachers per school each year. Without more studies like this one, change cannot be recognized as a need and new teacher retention and support programs cannot become stronger.

Summary

Creswell (2013) discusses guidelines for representation of data in studies using a phenomenological approach. He states that, as in Moustakas' (1994) explanation of the phenomenological research sequence, a final description must be written up at the end of the study. The guidelines for writing the concluding piece of a phenomenological study are stated by Creswell (2013) and include writing a "composite description of the phenomenon"

that is the "essence" of the experience; Creswell (2013) says that the written essence should tell the "what" and the "how" of the experience (p. 194). The following section is the researcher's attempt at describing the essence of the lived phenomenon of beginning teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of employment.

The researcher found that the lived experience of the phenomenon of leaving the career of teaching within the first five years includes many intense emotions. Participants in the study seemed to feel trapped in their roles as teachers, either in terms of not being able to find different jobs due to their limited expertise, or because they had a passion for the students or commitment to the profession. Leaving the profession of teaching evoked feelings of guilt, abandonment, and sadness, but the feelings of frustration, anger, sadness, and overall generally negative emotions related to the politics and demands of teaching, in addition to emotional exhaustion, lack of respect, and low pay, seemed to outweigh the sadness of leaving the students and the career. Likewise, participants all admitted to experiencing some type of joy from the act of teaching, but the joy was not enough of a reward to stay in the profession. Many participants expressed that they would come back to teaching without any concerns if there was higher pay, fewer demands, or more respect for the profession. Attributions for leaving the profession were mostly external, with only two participants listing internal attributions of going for new challenges and going back into academia; however, those two participants also listed external attributions for their other reasons for leaving. Task difficulty and ability were described most in interviews in terms of Attribution Theory, but external factors like task difficulty, low pay, and respect for the

position were the final attributions for teachers leaving the profession within the first five years.

Using the Attribution Theory interpretive lens was relevant for this study because the researcher aimed to investigate specific reasons for quitting teaching within the first five years as perceived by teachers who experienced the phenomenon. By getting to the heart of participants' personal defining reasons for deciding to leave the profession, the researcher hoped to gain insight in terms of any patterns emerging among beginning teachers. Using the interpretive lens allowed the researcher to find three top reasons that participants listed for leaving: salary, demands of the position, and politics of teaching. By using the Attribution Theory analytic lens, the researcher discovered a key finding that is new to the literature: ability, effort, and task difficulty were perceived differently to participants than what is described in Attribution Theory models. More research on this topic could prove to be influential to Attribution Theory.

The study of teacher turnover is not a new one; however, more qualitative research is needed in order to explore the experiences of teachers who are leaving the profession, particularly the experiences of young teachers in their first years of teaching. More research on Attribution Theory in relation to young teacher burnout is also needed; it is imperative that researchers seek out the specific attributions that teachers are naming as reasons for leaving the profession early in the career. If new studies find that external attributions are most commonly cited as reasons for leaving the classroom, as was the case in the present study, then there will be evidence of a serious need for restructure of the profession and how it is developed and supported over the first years of employment.

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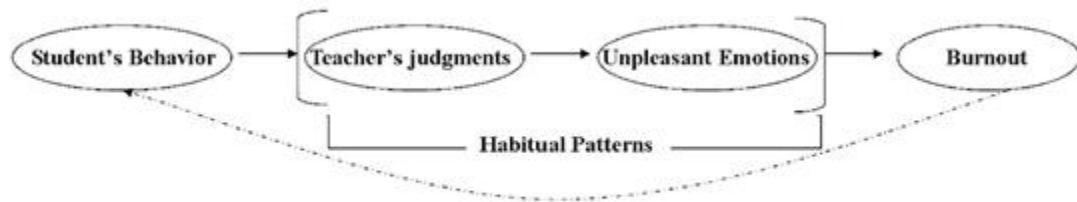Education, 36*(9), 1-21.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Fig. 1 Concept model for reviewing teacher emotions and teacher burnout

Figure 1. Chang's (2009) model for emotional burnout in teachers.

Appendix B

Table 1
Attribution Theory Table

Attribution	Locus of Causality	Stability
Ability	Internal	Stable
Effort	Internal	Unstable
Task difficulty	External	Stable
Chance/luck	External	Unstable

Note: Adapted from *Attribution Theory: An Organizational Perspective*, p. 10, by Martinko, M. J., 2002, Florida: St. Lucie Press.

Appendix C

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH
INTERVIEW**
This form is valid from January 2014-January 2015

Title of Study: Teacher Burnout among Beginning Teachers: Attribution Theory Applied to
Reasons for Teacher Turnover
Principal Investigator: Julia Weaver, M.S. candidate

What are some general things you should know about research studies?--You are being
asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have
the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any
time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a
certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study.
Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will
find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do
not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or
more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you
have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher named
above.

What is the purpose of this study?-- The purpose of this study is to examine the reasons
teachers leave the teaching profession within the first five years of teaching.

What will happen if you take part in the study?-- You may be asked to participate in a
personal interview regarding your experiences with teaching and the reasons why you chose
to quit teaching or are considering quitting teaching. The interviews will be recorded and
transcribed. The amount of time required for the interview is 25-45 minutes. The interviews
will be conducted at a location on campus to provide a central location for the participant and
researcher. The interviews will be conducted in person, or, if in person is not an option, over
the telephone or via Skype or Google Hangouts video conference.

Risks-- There are no perceived risks to you for taking part in the interview process.
Questions will be specifically targeted to your reasoning for leaving or considering leaving
the teaching profession.

Benefits—As a participant you will gain insight into your own feelings and beliefs because
of the opportunity to discuss your experiences. Teacher working conditions could be
positively altered in the future due to your responses and other responses in similar studies.

Confidentiality--The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential and
will be accessible by only the researcher. Data will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in

the principal investigator's office. The audiotapes, and copies of transcripts will be destroyed after the study is complete. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study. Direct quotes may be used in reports about the research with your identity protected by a fake name.

Compensation --You will be entered in a drawing to receive a $25 gift card of your choice for completing the interview. Gift cards may be from the following vendors: Target, Starbucks, Barnes and Noble, Bruegger's Bakery, Regal Cinemas, or Chick-Fil-A.

What if you have questions about this study?--If you have questions at any time about the study, you may contact the researcher, Julia Weaver, by email at jdweave2@ncsu.edu or by phone at (919)972-1576.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?-- If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

Consent To Participate
"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."

Subject's signature_____ **Date** _____

Investigator's signature_____ **Date** _____

Consent Form

I, _____ hereby give my permission for Julia Weaver to interview me and quote my responses in a scholarly research paper. I understand that this research will be submitted as part of a thesis at North Carolina State University.

I hereby give my permission in the form of my signature below.

Signature_____   Date_____

Appendix D

Beginning Teacher Turnover Interview Protocol

Introduction: I am interested in your reasons for leaving the teaching profession. I'm trying to see if there is a pattern between young or beginning teachers who choose to quit teaching. My goal is that in finding reasons for leaving and dissatisfaction with the job, teacher preparation programs, policymakers, and administrators can help the phenomenon of young teachers leaving the profession and put practices in place that will help beginning teachers want to continue in the career.

1. Tell me about your first year(s) of teaching.
2. Tell me about what this year has been like / Tell me about what your last year of teaching was like.
3. Tell me about your students. (Prompt: What types of relationships did you have with them? Did you consider yourself to be close to your students? Did you consider yourself to be involved with your students' lives outside of the classroom in any capacity?)
4. Please describe any emotions you experienced toward your students or because of your students.
5. Please describe any emotions you experienced toward your work conditions, administrators, or school/district politics and paperwork.
6. Why are you considering leaving the profession of teaching / Why did you decide to leave the profession of teaching? (Prompt: Are there any other reasons? Prompt: You mentioned personal / professional reasons. Are there other professional / personal reasons?)
7. Tell me about your successes as a teacher. Why do you think you were successful? (Prompt: What other successes did you have?)
8. Tell me about your struggles as a teacher. Why do you think you struggled? (Prompt: What other struggles did you have?)
9. Tell me how you would describe the job of a teacher, based on your experiences.
10. Tell me what you think you'll do if you decide to leave the profession. / Tell me what your plans are now that you have left the profession.
11. Under what conditions might you consider returning to the field of teaching? (Prompt: What do you think needs to be improved in the job/field of teaching?)
12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix E

Participant Recruitment Letter

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Julia Weaver. I am a candidate for an M.S. degree in Curriculum and Instruction. I am conducting an examination of an extremely important phenomenon in public education: teachers who have or are considering leaving the profession within their first five years of teaching. The study will investigate and analyze factors that contribute to teachers leaving the profession within the first five years. This study is important because it will inform research in understanding reasons people leave the teaching career, and will potentially impact teachers' job satisfaction in the future based on policymakers, administrators, and teacher preparation programs putting this and similar research into practice. This, in turn, would help solve the looming teacher shortage in many countries.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research project. You will be asked to participate in a short interview about your reasons for leaving or for considering leaving the teaching field. The interview is expected to take 45 minutes, and no longer than 1 hour. The interviews will be conducted on campus. If an in person interview is not an option for you, I will conduct the interview over telephone or through Skype/Google Hangout video conference.

I would truly appreciate your assistance in making this research study possible. This study is to fulfill thesis requirements for graduation. After the interview completions, all participants will be entered into a drawing for a $25 gift card of your choice from the following vendors: Target, Starbucks, Barnes and Noble, Bruegger's Bakery, Regal Cinemas, or Chick-Fil-A.

If you have any questions related to the study, please feel free to contact me directly. I can be reached via email at jdweave2@ncsu.edu or by telephone at (919) 972-1576.

Sincerely,

Julia Weaver
Candidate, M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction

Appendix F

Table 2
Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Years Taught	Subject Taught	Training Type	Still Teaching
Marie	25	4	Middle/High School elective courses	Traditional	Yes
Sophia	28	3	High school math	Traditional	Yes
Jennifer	25	3	High School math	Traditional	No
Samantha	27	4	Elementary grades	Traditional	Yes
Carrie	25	3	High School English	Nontraditional	No
Charlotte	24	3	Elementary/Middle School ESL	Traditional	Yes
Heather	32	4	High School English	Nontraditional	No
Ethan	27	3	High School Exceptional Children, History, English	Nontraditional	No

Appendix G

Table 3

Coding categories and scheme

Categories	Brief Description	Subcategories
1. Internal Attributions	Reasons teachers gave for leaving the profession that originated within participants themselves.	1.1 Ability 1.2 Effort 1.3 Personal Factors
2. External Attributions	Reasons teachers gave for leaving the profession that originated from outside factors not related to participants themselves.	2.1 Task Difficulty 2.2 Lack of Respect for the Position 2.3 Salary
3. Emotions	Emotions that teachers experience in the profession due to students, work conditions, and/or school politics.	3.1 Happy/positive emotions 3.2 Unhappy/negative emotions
4. Role Conflict	Roles that teachers take on other than just the role of instructor in the classroom	4.1 Roles of a teacher 4.2 Conflict of roles with personal life roles

Appendix H

Table 4
Participant Attributions for Leaving the Profession

Participant Name	Internal or External	Description
Sophia	External	Salary, respect for the profession
Heather	Internal/ External	Go back to school/salary
Charlotte	External	Politics of teaching, salary
Marie	External	Salary, demands, politics of teaching
Carrie	External	Salary
Jennifer	External	Demands, salary
Samantha	External	Demands, salary, politics of teaching
Ethan	Internal/ External	Broaden horizons/lack of respect from administrator