

FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF REASONS
FOR LEAVING THE PROFESSION

by

JOYCE CAROL LEATHERS

(Under the Direction of Jo Blase)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe perceptions of female high school teachers who after teaching five or less years in a southeastern Georgia school system, chose to leave the profession. This study was guided by a symbolic interactionist framework and grounded theory research design. Face-to-face interviews were conducted; audio tapes were transcribed and coded. Constant comparative analysis was utilized to generate a theory, grounded in the data, explaining teachers' perspectives on their experiences and how those experiences influenced their decision to leave the profession.

Findings from this study indicate that the training novice teachers receive in their college courses and in their schools is inadequate. More practical and less theoretical training is essential. Novice teachers continue to express their need for more time to plan lessons, observe teachers, and build collegiality. Yet the current pressures placed on them (i.e., teaching two or three different preparations, teaching lower-level students, dealing with large class loads, having to sponsor extracurricular activities, and receiving little or no support from their administration) influence their decision to leave the profession. Additionally, their spouses' lack of understanding undermines their ability to balance their professional and personal demands.

Based on the findings, three theoretical ideas are discussed. First, when teachers are inducted into the profession, a potential negative source of influence is the principal. Second, teachers' personal and professional lives are strongly affected by the demands placed upon them. Third, when teachers are placed in difficult overload assignments, they are more likely to fail.

Implications for future research are discussed. Novice teachers are uninformed about their legal rights when dealing with students, parents, and administrators. This study cited reasons why Boards of Education should examine and address the reasons for teachers' high attrition rates in local high schools. In order for teachers to respect their administrators, the leaders must be trained to respond to teachers' concerns in a sensitive manner.

INDEX PHRASE: Teacher attrition

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Hinds (2002) observed that since World War II, there has been very little public concern about finding and keeping good teachers and providing them with the academic, pedagogical, and clinical knowledge they need. As a result, teacher attrition has and will continue to increase at an alarming rate (Bryne, 1998; Certo & Fox, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Gold & Roth, 1993) unless school districts acknowledge that teachers need an entirely new type of support that concentrates on growth and development of the person, rather than one that gives them formulaic strategies, attempting to solve their immediate needs (Gold & Roth, 1993). Macdonald (1999) supported the educational plan that utilizes effective reform strategies to address social and economic issues of today's society and advised school systems to appraise their attrition rates and review them on a regular basis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe perceptions of female high school teachers who, after teaching five or fewer years in a southeastern Georgia school system, chose to leave the profession. Because teacher attrition is a constant concern of district Boards and school administrators, the findings of this study can be used to evaluate current programs and encourage the development of new programs. Furthermore, analysis of the teachers' perceptions, which have never been solicited, may contribute to the literature, suggesting ways to lower teacher attrition rates.

Literature Review

Attrition is defined as the loss of teachers who decide to leave the profession (Ascher, 1992; Betancourt-Smith, Inman, & Marlow, 1994; Gonzalez & Sousa, 1993; and Houston, 1990). Researchers' ability to identify and interpret its complex and subtle causes is an essential component in addressing this national phenomenon. The constant high attrition rate of beginning teachers creates continual pressure on school systems to hire replacements (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Research reveals that most of the demand for new teachers is not driven by student enrollment or teacher retirement but by pre-retirement teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2002).

There are two definitions of *teacher turnover*. One is defined as the group of teachers who leave the profession (Ingersoll, 2002). These teachers account for 66% to 75% of new hires. The second definition identifies the changes in teachers' status from year to year, i.e., teachers who change fields [e.g., special education to general education] or schools. The rates of attrition reported in data often depend on which of these two definitions is being used.

Teacher attrition rates follow a U-shaped, bimodal curve (Tye & O'Brien, 2002). The highest rate of attrition occurs during teachers' first three to five years in their professional careers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Lortie, 1975; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991) due to disillusionment, stress, and vulnerability to disappointment (Marlow, Inman, & Betancourt-Smith, 1995).

In 1962, a Harvard University report stated, "Educational leaders and policy makers of the time [are calling] for a change in public attitudes and recognition that many 'first-rate individuals' go into teaching, but they aren't treated as people with enormous talent, great skill, training, and education" (Tye & O'Brien, 2002). The enthusiasm beginning teachers bring to the profession continues to be damaged by the lack of respect shown to them by society (Graham,

1999; Guglielmi, 2000), particularly when they sense the possibility of failure in their classrooms instead of being encouraged to value the importance of their work.

Tye and O'Brien (2002) conducted a study of their former graduate students who chose teaching as their career. Their response to a survey indicated that they were more negatively affected by the low status of the profession than by their concerns about administrators, students, and parents. The researchers concluded that teachers continue to be hurt by the knowledge that their friends and neighbors do not think that their chosen profession is very important. Research reveals that dissatisfaction in this area is cited by approximately two thirds of former teachers as the reason for their leaving the profession (Cole & Walker, 1989).

National surveys suggest that the public's discontent about the quality and perceived implementation of education programs (McLaughlin, Pfiefer, Swanson-Owens, & Yee, 1986) is linked to its mistrust of teachers (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991). The result is that many teachers—particularly neophyte teachers—leave the profession in large numbers. An additional indication of parents' lack of respect (Cole & Walker, 1989) is evidenced by their belief that when individuals choose to become a teacher, their decision is not indicative of a vocation but merely an *alibi* for their being unable to do "anything better," i.e., to do something else which would earn a person more money.

Because most teachers are women (Hart & Marshall, 1992), the impact of society's attitudes regarding them on the teaching culture must be considered. These attitudes, which tend to undervalue women as competent, able decision-makers, often directly impact teachers personally and professionally. An assumption is that women are more "fitted" for teaching because of the occupation's emphasis on nurturance, care, and intuition—characteristics typically attributed to women but not highly valuable in a capitalist society.

Many sociologists consider public school teaching to be a *semiprofession* (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991). Semiprofessions are characterized as follows: (a) they demand less training time to acquire a specialized body of knowledge, (b) their status is less legitimated, (c) their right to privileged communication is less established, and (d) they have less autonomy than supervision or societal control than in other *professions*. Boles and Troen (2000) note the following negative aspects of teaching that impact teachers' decisions to leave the profession: (a) it is a flat career that offers no promotions, (b) pay raises are based almost exclusively on years of service or academic degrees, and (c) few external incentives or rewards are given for acquiring knowledge, sharpening skills, or improving performance. When former teachers compare their *experience* in the teaching profession with the *expectations* they held before they went into teaching, 64% report that the lack of professional prestige was the cause of their dissatisfaction (The Metropolitan Survey, 1995).

Increasing teacher shortages in the United States are forcing schools to examine what is currently being done and what needs to be changed in order to keep both new and experienced teachers in the profession (Podsen, 2002). Many school systems are currently attempting to solve the problem of teacher attrition by offering crash courses [e.g., Teach for America] to people who are interested in teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2001), but the overall results have negated the intended positive outcomes. Most individuals who enter teaching through such programs leave the profession by their third year; in contrast, an estimated one third of the traditionally trained teachers and approximately ten percent of teachers who complete extended five-year programs that include a full year of student teaching leave the profession.

Other factors that affect the desire to quit teaching, as reported in the Dworkin (1980) study, are those that either make the teaching job less rewarding or make job abandonment less

punishing. In the study, the following data was compiled: (a) white faculty members were more likely to quit than black or Hispanic faculty members, (b) teachers who were assigned to campuses which did not have the racial composition of the student body they preferred [usually the same race as those teachers] were more likely to quit, (c) teachers who were racially isolated from the student bodies of their campuses (i.e., those who belonged to a different racial group than the majority of their students) often quit, and (d) teachers whose students' parents had high-status occupations were more likely to quit than those teachers whose students' parents had lower-status occupations.

In a Schools and Staffing Survey/Teacher Followup Survey [SASS/TFS] (2000-2001) report, 19% of the respondents indicated they left teaching as a result of a school staffing action, such as cutback, layoff, termination, school reorganization, or school closing. Another 42% cited personal reasons, including pregnancy, child rearing, health problems, and family moves. Approximately 39% said they left to pursue a better job, and 28% stated that dissatisfaction with teaching as a career was the main reason for their leaving (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Current research has demonstrated that little is known about the relative importance of career changes and leaving the work force in determining teacher exits (Stinebrickner, 2002), mainly because *teacher-specific* data used in most previous studies are constructed from educational records. These data provide information about teachers only during the year they are actually teaching in a particular school district or state. Furthermore, teacher-specific data typically contain very little personal information [e.g., marital and fertility histories] that could be used to explain why members of a certain demographic group decide to quit. Theobald and Gritz (1996) reported that most studies on teacher retention are based on retrospective data. The

validity and reliability of the data are questionable due to the lapse of the time an event and the data collected about that event.

Even though there is general agreement that the primary focus in studies of attrition is teachers who voluntarily and prematurely leave the profession (Macdonald, 1999), further interpretations of such variables will affect the studies. Shen (1997) asserted that one of the shortcomings of the existing research approach is that many studies are narrowly focused in selecting variables. By broadening an inquiry into the various variables, policy implications for various aspects of the retention issues will be examined. First, studies should define whom they consider to be teachers (Macdonald, 1999). Frequently, statistics include only those *leavers* from full time employment and ignore shifts in large, part-time sections of the work force. Second, studies should recognize teacher mobility. Teachers who resign from a school system or region should, perhaps, not be considered *leavers* because they might be re-employed in another school section, educational occupation, or country. Third, studies that are context specific should validate the importance of variations associated with groups and countries. Fourth, teachers' temporary leaving should be taken into account. Attrition rates should be viewed in conjunction with rates of those teachers who return to the profession. Current findings indicate, for example, that one fourth of the leavers eventually, return to the profession.

Description of the Study

This study was the first of its kind to be conducted in the county chosen for the study. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) was submitted and approved by the Human Subjects Committee at the University of Georgia in 2002. Permission was also granted by the Testing and Measurements Department of the county in which the study was conducted.

Initial Guiding Interview Questions

Data collection was guided by the following open-ended research questions:

1. What were resigning teachers' experiences with teaching?
2. What did those experiences mean to the teachers who resigned?

Site and Participant Selection

Because the participants in the study had resigned from the specified school system, the audio-taped interviews were conducted at a location acceptable to both the interviewer and the interviewees.

Upon the researcher's request, the system provided the first of two lists of female teachers who had resigned from their respective high schools during the academic year 2002-2003. Because the first list did not indicate which teachers left the system due to their retirement, the researcher sent a letter of introduction, and a form that requested demographic information and the reason(s) for the resignation to each teacher on the list. Four participants for the study were *selected* by their responses to the letter.

The letter included a statement that the researcher intended to gather data by interviewing female teachers who had had less than five years' experience when they resigned from the school system. Two *disqualifiers* were stated: (a) a teacher resigned due to her husband's job relocation, or (b) the teacher resigned to become a stay-at-home mother.

It was determined that additional participants were needed to broaden the base of information for the study. A second request was made by the researcher for a disaggregated list of teachers, i.e., a list which did not include the names of teachers who were retiring at the end of the academic year 2003-2004. A second set of letters and forms were sent to all potential

participants. Six additional teachers who had resigned qualified for and agreed to participate in the study.

Documents

Data gathered from the specified school system and the state's educational commission were used to provide background information and establish context for the study, including (a) educational training and experience of resigning teachers and (b) statistical information about the school system's Teacher Specialist Support mentoring program.

Assumptions

Assumptions made by the researcher for the purpose of this study include the following:

1. Participants will feel confident that their identity will not be revealed.
2. Participant will feel free to express their perceptions about their experiences.
3. Participants' responses will be valued and reported accurately.
4. The findings that emerge from an analysis of the data will have a positive impact when they are presented to the Superintendent of the specified school system.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe female high school teachers' perceptions of contributing factors that prompted them to resign from a specified school system, thus adding to the high attrition rate of that system. At the present time, when teachers resign, they receive a packet containing information about insurance benefits and retirement, but no exit interview is conducted. The resigning teachers are never asked why they left the system.

This researcher recorded and analyzed the participants' perceptions of their former positions, supervision by their administrators, and, in general, the entire school system. Even though the results of individual exit interviews were partially subjective, there is much to be

learned from these interviews, including ways to improve the initial hiring process and overall working conditions.

Theoretical Significance

The results of this study contribute to the literature on teacher attrition and address issues that have not yet been explored. Literature indicates that many educational communities are attempting to address novice teachers' issues, yet the overwhelming realities of teaching contribute to the high rates of attrition. This study presents evidence that school systems must listen to the voiced concerns and experiences of their teachers. The findings suggest that novice teachers often feel unsupported, frustrated, and defeated. If current educational patterns do not change, attrition will continue at an alarming rate.

Practical Significance

When teachers do not feel they are working in an educationally collaborative setting that respects and values their work, every phase of their lives is affected. Teachers' maturing process deteriorates if support systems are not consistent. Currently, the selected school system does not investigate why novice teachers leave the system in five or fewer years. It is the belief of this researcher that there are many salient issues which greatly impact the attrition rate. The researcher will provide collected data to the Board's Superintendent. It is hoped that the school system will choose to use the data either to change existing programs and/or create programs that will address the needs of novice teachers. Furthermore, as more appropriate methods are integrated, the school system could become a role model for other county- and state-wide school systems.

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative study had two limitations: female high school teachers who taught in the chosen school system for five or fewer years were the only participants in the study, and data was collected from only one school system in Georgia.

Overview of Chapters

The remaining chapters in this dissertation include the following: Chapter 2, a review of the literature; Chapter 3, the methodology; Chapter 4, the findings; and Chapter 5, the summary, discussion, and implications.

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of teacher attrition; statistical findings; a thorough review of the literature related to the perceptions and patterns of teacher attrition; and a thorough review of the literature related to the professional and personal influences on teacher attrition.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in the study. It includes an overview of symbolic interactionism, the theoretical framework of the study; an explanation of site and sample selection procedures; an overview of the data collection procedures; a thorough discussion of grounded theory methodology; and a discussion of techniques used to enhance credibility.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. It begins with a description of each participant. The chapter presents the common themes and categories that emerged from the data and uses the participants' words to support the findings.

Chapter 5, the final chapter, summarizes and discusses the most significant findings, as they relate to the extant research and literature. It presents connections among the two themes and explains their relationship to the central category, teacher attrition. It presents the theoretical

ideas that have emerged from and can be supported by the data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for further research and of the significance of the findings.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: TEACHER ATTRITION

Chapter 2 presents findings generated by previous studies on teacher attrition.

Researchers continue to investigate the causes for this international phenomenon. For the purpose of this study, the following aspects of teacher attrition will be discussed: causes and effects, current educational responses, and recommendations for proactive responses.

Statistical Findings

In 1986, it was predicted that one million teachers would leave the profession in less than a decade (Gold & Roth, 1993), even though the majority of these professionals were dedicated to teaching. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) predicted in 1998 that by the year 2008, approximately 2.4 million teachers will be needed in America, at a rate of over 200,000 newly hired teachers per year.

As many as 33% of beginning teachers leave teaching altogether in their first three years (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1992; Ingersoll, 2002) and 46% to 50% leave in the first five years (Boles & Troen, 2000; Bryne, 1998; Certo & Fox, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1984, 1999; Delgado, 1999; Gold & Roth, 1993; Olson & Rodman, 1988; Schlechty & Vance, 1983). Even higher attrition rates exist in major cities that have disadvantaged schools [i.e., defined as those with large minority enrollments] (Wagner, 1993).

Compared with an average annual turnover rate of 11% for many other occupations, the most recent national data state that teachers turn over at a rate of 16% per year. The percentage is higher—20% per year—for teachers in public schools with high concentrations of poor students.

Urban schools lose a higher percentage of teachers (14%) than suburban schools (13%) (Ingersoll, 2003). Adams and Dial (1993) and Billingsley (1993) reported that the common reasons urban teachers cited for leaving the profession were lack of administrative, collegial, and parent support and insufficient involvement in decision-making. The data that reported the impact of lack involvement in decision-making on attrition is consistent with data reported by Lippmann, Burns, McArthur, Burton, Smith, and Kaufman (1996). They found that urban teachers generally report having less influence over their curriculum than do teachers in suburban and rural schools. Rural schools have the lowest turnover rate (11.2 %). Public school teachers do not leave as frequently as private schools teachers do [12.4 % of public school teachers leave versus 18.9 % for those in private schools] (Ingersoll, 2003).

The high rate of teacher turnover accounts for 66-75% of new hires (Ingersoll, 2002). LeCompte and Dworkin reported (1991) that when teaching is compared to other professions, including nursing, social work, and related service occupations, it has slightly lower turnover rates; however, the rates are higher than those found in other fields of work in which women are concentrated.

The annual report published by the United States Department of Education is considered to be the national statistical model of teacher supply and demand. However, Murnane (1987) observed that the figures do not consider teachers who have left the profession and re-entered later as a source of supply. A possible result of this discrepancy may be that media reports of a widespread teacher shortage in the years to come—reports that are often based on predictions made by the Department of Education—will be greatly exaggerated.

Perceptions of Teacher Attrition

The National Board of Employment, Education, and Training has reported that the usual assessment of the impact of attrition is viewed as an impediment to the educational, social, cultural, and economic goals of schools and communities (Macdonald, 1999). The attrition of younger and more qualified teachers also affects the age profile and morale of those who stay. By accelerating the aging of the profession, attrition makes it more difficult for older teachers to compete for promotion opportunities, extended responsibilities, and access to long service leave conditions. The *stayers*, more often women, may develop a sense of failure and see themselves as an underclass group of teachers who have fewer choices.

There are a number of reasons to believe that teacher attrition rates are not static (Houston, 1990). First, the age composition of the teaching force changes over time. Second, the experience composition of the teaching force is an important, changing variable. Third, labor market forces in teaching and in the general economy, undoubtedly, influence turnover rates. When teaching positions are scarce, temporary exits tend to be fewer, due to expected difficulty in re-entering; when other opportunities are plentiful, career changes are more likely.

Understanding the extent and nature of teacher attrition is complicated by problems of definition and methodology (Macdonald, 1999). Documents that focus on educational work force planning, and, in particular, the question of teacher supply and demand, connect attrition to *wastage*—a broader issue of teacher turnover—as the latter refers to the lateral movement of teachers moving within school systems. Recent studies have not considered the role of inter district transfers in the career paths of teachers (Theobald & Gritz, 1996) but instead have examined the number of years individuals continuously teach in a given state. Such an approach does not differentiate between teachers who are employed by several school districts in a state

during the same period. These two teacher career paths have different effects on local schools; in terms of loss or continuity of resources, transferring to another school district is indistinguishable from leaving the state's education system altogether.

Ingersoll (2001) reported that the movement of teachers from school to school and from district to district, a phenomenon he calls *migration*, accounts for half of the turnover that schools and districts experience. For those teachers who are at the work site, attrition and migration look the same. Ettorre (1997) challenged this perception by identifying teacher turnover as “the loss of intellectual capital” (p. 4). Olson (2003) observed that losing a good teacher—whether to another profession or to another local school—means losing the teacher's familiarity with school practices, experience with the school's curriculum, and involvement with students, parents, and colleagues. It also means that administrators and teachers on a selection committee must spend energy and time finding a replacement and acclimating the teacher to the school's environment.

Currently, very little information is known about the relative importance of career changes and leaving the work force in determining teacher exits (Stinebrickner, 2002), mainly because *teacher-specific* data used in most previous studies are constructed from educational records. These data provide information about teachers only during the years they are actually teaching in a particular school district or state. The implication is that there is no direct observation about why teachers choose to leave the profession. Furthermore, teacher-specific data usually do not contain any personal information [e.g., marital and fertility histories] that could be used to explain why members of a certain demographic group decide to leave the profession.

Patterns of Teacher Attrition

Attrition rates follow a U-shaped pattern (Houston, 1990), due in part to high attrition rates among new teachers (Charters, 1970; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Mark & Anderson, 1985; Vance & Schlechty, 1982). Huberman (1993) and Macdonald (1999) observed that many of these teachers feel they are moving from surviving and discovering the *real* issues of teaching to stabilization while, at the same time, making major family-related changes (e.g., marriage and child rearing). Bobbitt, Faupel, and Burns (1994) reported that the highest rate of attrition in the United States was 18.9% for teachers under thirty years of age.

Another contributing factor to the higher attrition rate for beginning teachers is the initial level of commitment to the teaching profession (Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, 2000). Some prospective teachers enter the profession with a positive attraction to teaching and plan to make it a long-term career. Others enter the profession with the intent of staying only a few years and plan to quit working altogether, or to use the skills gained from their education to pursue interests in other fields (Yee, 1990). Lortie (1975) observed that a minority of beginning teachers expect to teach continuously until their retirement. Although most women expect their careers to be interrupted, the vast majority think of teaching as a temporary career.

Neophyte teachers realize that transferring to other occupations is generally easier during the early phase of their career (Houston, 1990) because salaries are lower and occupation- and location-specific human capital investments are not high. Furthermore, it is highly probable that their career decisions are more sensitive to school- and district-specific policies, i.e., teachers are usually given the least desirable assignments spend more time preparing for classes and often lack an established support network, and the institutional environment than at later points in their careers (Fox & Certo, 1999). Yee (1990) made the following observation about new teachers:

“New teachers are often given those students or courses with which experienced teachers do not wish to deal. Instead of giving beginning teachers a nurturing environment in which to grow, we [educators] throw them into a war zone where both the demands and the mortality rate are excessively high” (p. 424). An additional contributing factor to the attrition rates is that beginning teachers realize that those teachers with less seniority are most apt to be dismissed when school districts must reduce the size of their teaching forces, due especially to declining student enrollments (Houston, 1990).

The probability of attrition decreases with age and years of teaching experience. The teachers who *survive* to the mid-career phase of teaching (usually 10-25 years of teaching experience) have very low attrition rates. Two inhibitors that prevent these teachers from leaving the profession are (a) the difficulty of finding alternate jobs that have matching salaries if the teachers lack the kinds of skills or training that would pay equivalent salaries in other occupations and (b) the disparity of their being able to accept lower entry-level salaries in other occupations because of family responsibilities and financial obligations. Late-career attrition is more dependent on the structure of the retirement system. Eligibility for retirement ordinarily depends on two factors: age and years of experience. Attrition rates begin to rise when teachers attain the minimum requirements for eligibility and continue to increase beyond mandatory retirement age (Houston, 1990).

According to Shen (1997), there are essentially two approaches that should be used to study teacher retention and attrition. The first approach, *multivariate* or *theoretical*, compares a set of variables simultaneously to test theories that explain why teachers either stay in or leave the profession. One of these theories is the human capital theory. Tye and O’Brien (2002) observed that a person’s decision to leave a job or career is based on how much he or she has

invested in it, i.e., the person weighs the benefits and costs involved in making a change. The more complex the initial training and the longer one holds a position, the less likely the person will perceive leaving the job as an option. The social learning theory and the theory of teachers as economically rational decision makers are additional components of the multivariate approach. The second approach, the *bivariate*,) is more prevalent in the literature (Shen, 1997). It studies such variables as race, subject area, academic ability, family factors, and initial teaching experience.

Although both approaches have contributed to the knowledge of teacher retention and attrition, they have their limitations (Shen, 1997). The multivariate approach tends to narrow the scope of variables included in a study because of the particular focus on supporting a theory. The bivariate approach alleviates the multivariate's narrow focus by studying two issues, i.e., retention/attrition and a different variable simultaneously by repeating inquiries. However, the bivariate approach is limited due to its lack of considering the relationship between and among the variables.

Influences on Teacher Attrition

Research continues to reveal the reasons for the pattern of continual teacher attrition. Even though educational issues seem to belong either to the professional or personal segment of teachers' lives, this researcher assumes that, in many instances, they are interrelate

Professional Influences

Stress and Burnout

Teaching is characterized as a high-stress occupation (Dunham & Varma, 1998; Milstein & Golaszewski, 1985). In an international review, Kyriacou & Sutcliffe (1978b) defined teacher stress as “conditions of negative effects, such as frustration and anxiety, that result from aspects

of the job and that are perceived by teachers as a threat to their psychological or physical and intellectual stimulation” (p. 160). Most teachers have not been trained to handle the many difficult stressors in their profession (Gold & Roth, 1993). They often feel that they have little or no control over their professional situations if they perceive the principal does not practice participatory management (Colley, 2002). As a result, they become dissatisfied with their teaching and their effectiveness is diminished (Bryne, 1998). Without an understanding of what they can and cannot do, they feel helpless. These feelings, when not addressed, only increase the stress factor (Gold & Roth, 1993).

Bernshausen and Cunningham (2001) suggest that teachers who are experiencing stress must be taught resiliency, or the ability to adapt and bounce back when faced with upsetting or stressful conditions. These researchers contend that without resiliency, new teachers cannot sustain their enthusiasm and commitment for a long period of time. They found that most experienced teachers who leave the field do so because of such factors as lack of support from administrators or colleagues and insufficient involvement in decision making. Their research suggests that school communities can promote resiliency by encouraging teachers’ feelings of competence, belonging, and usefulness.

The majority of research on stress and burnout focuses on urban school teachers (Rottier, Kelly, & Tomhave, 1983). Little research has examined differences in stress and burnout between rural and urban school teachers despite the fact that rural and urban school systems are markedly different. The studies that do exist have found greater stress among urban teachers (Feitler & Tokar, 1982; Tokar & Feitler, 1986). Rural schools, apparently, offer a less stressful learning environment, and their primary sources of stress are different from those in urban

schools. Tokar and Feitler (1986) found that stress from inadequate discipline policy, inadequate salary, noisy pupils, and too much work were the major sources of stress for rural teachers.

Societal changes, such as population increases, diversity in school populations, cost of living increases, crime and its effect on students' behavior (Gold & Roth, 1993; Smylie, 1999), often force teachers to modify their personal and professional lives on a regular basis. When their equilibrium is affected, teachers' ability to deal with stressful situations, reactively or proactively, can determine whether the consequences of stress are positive or negative (Smylie, 1999).

The findings of studies have indicated that teachers use a variety of adaptations to deal with the problems they encounter in their professional and personal lives (Gold & Roth, 1993). The most frequently cited areas include coping mechanisms that affect emotional and physical well-being, communication, interpersonal skills, and interaction of personal and professional concerns. Schwarzer and Greenglass (1999) observed that these adaptations help teachers overcome *temporary* crisis situations, but their problem-focused coping strategies appear to be insufficient to deal effectively with the constantly changing job demands. The degree to which teachers experience stress has an impact on their deciding whether to stay in or leave the profession (The Metropolitan Life Survey, 1995). Teachers who report experiencing stress several times a week are more likely to consider leaving within five years. Findings that suggest that perhaps these teachers are not prepared psychologically to deal with potential stressful situations emphasizes the fact that their psychological needs should be a priority (Lortie, 1975).

Depending on the nature of the stress, the individual teacher, and various mediating variables, the consequences of stress may exhibit themselves in the following ways: (a) *emotional manifestations*—feelings of undefined anxiety, dissatisfaction, depression, fear,

frustration, and low self self-esteem, possibly resulting in burnout, (b) *behavioral manifestations*—behavioral problems such as appetite disorders, excessive smoking and alcohol and/or drug abuse, violence, or the inability to sleep, plus possible displays of withdrawal symptoms (e.g., absence and resignations from the profession), and (c) *physiological manifestations*—heart disease, psychosomatic illness, fatigue, and depleted energy reserves.

Fimian and Santoro (1981) claimed that emotional manifestations often precede behavioral and physiological manifestations when teachers are experiencing stress. They are often reluctant to admit the extent to which they experience stress due to their fear that they may seem weak and less professional (Abel & Sewell, 1999). Cooper and Marshall (1975) observed

People suffer, in fact, because it is contrary to our cultural norm to admit that one is under stress. Stress is viewed as closely linked to weakness, incompetence, and unreliability (none of which are attractive employee characteristics), as well as mental illness. Understandably, the employer is least likely to admit his inability to cope in the actual work situation—it is here he knows the most damage can be caused. (p. 27)

In the early 1970s, much of the concern about attrition was focused on the number of teachers who had left the profession due to stress as employment prospects for ex-teachers became more scarce (Travers & Cooper, 1996). Today, many teachers who are staying in the profession may be prone to burnout and are included in the number of teachers who take early retirement due to ill health. The term *burnout*, defined as “a syndrome which emanates from an individual’s perceptions of unmet needs and unfulfilled expectations . . . characterized by progressive disillusionment, with related psychological and physical symptoms which diminish one’s self-esteem” (Gold & Roth, 1993, p. 41), has been identified as a professional disease because its causes and symptoms are specific to the social professions (Heus & Diekstra, 1999).

The development of burnout is a dynamic process (Etzion, 1984; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998); coping and adaptation play key roles. As a result of its chronic and dynamic nature, it is

virtually impossible for studies to determine particular *causes* of what has become a habitual pattern of symptoms labeled *burnout*. Pines and Aronson (1988) stated that burnout is most likely a long-term stress reaction, which means that, by definition, a considerable time interval exists between the effects of burnout and the teacher's observable reactions. As previously stated, even though it is almost impossible to single out particular *causes* that are responsible for the existence of burnout, contributing factors have been suggested by teachers who participated in a study conducted by Farber (1991a): student violence, classroom discipline and apathy, overcrowded classrooms, mainstreaming, unreasonable or unconcerned parents, public criticism, public demands for "accountability," excessive paperwork, loss of autonomy and sense of professionalism, lack of promotional opportunities, isolation from other adults and the lack of a psychological sense of community, involuntary transfers, inadequate preparation, bureaucratic incompetence, and deficiencies in the physical environment. Teachers who, in general, are permitted minimal input into decisions that directly concern them (e.g., policy changes and implementation, curricula changes, student disciplinary action) experience declining morale, job satisfaction, loss of control, and self-esteem (Ingersoll & Smith, 2002; McGrath, 1983). The cumulative effects lead to job stress and ultimately to burnout.

Many current research efforts in the field of teacher stress and burnout are characterized by findings of futility and sterility (Guglielmi, 2001). Teacher burnout is related to such higher order needs as self-actualization, which includes the need for success, achievement, and working at one's full potential. Gold and Roth (1993) noted that as teachers' feelings of burnout increase, their negative feelings of fear and guilt can become overwhelming. They do not feel successful in their interactions with people in their schools and communities. Pines (2002) reported that teachers who experience burnout feel emotionally exhausted (i.e., depleted of all energy from

interactions with all persons involved in their educational environment) and depersonalized (as evidenced by lack of accomplishment and usually accompanied by feelings of incompetence and low self-esteem). Due to their unmet needs, teachers feel guilty about their *perceived* failures in not living up to their ideals and expectations they had for their teaching (Gold & Roth, 1993). Additional results of burnout include teachers experiencing uncertainty or dissatisfaction when they face practical problems, requesting a transfer to another school, gradually limiting the amount of work done to reduce involvement in the job, using absenteeism as a way of reducing accumulated tension, and desiring to leave the profession (Cole & Walker, 1989).

When teachers suffer from burnout, they become emotionally detached from their jobs altogether (Travers & Cooper, 1996). A relationship between a teacher's personality and burnout has been identified by research (Gold & Roth, 1993). Teachers who can control most of their responses to life's circumstances are more likely to experience few situations that can cause burnout (Cole & Walker, 1989). Studies related to withdrawal factors have drawn different conclusions regarding the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Bridges, 1980). From one viewpoint, extrinsic rewards (e.g., recognition, sense of accomplishment, fulfillment, advancement) have been found to play a more important role in many cases than intrinsic rewards (e.g., working conditions, management policies) in the process of withdrawal (Black, 2001). Because teachers are in the service sector, it is assumed that motivation is linked with intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards. The traditions of teaching make people who seek money, prestige, or power seem somewhat suspect; as a result, the characteristic style in public education is to downplay personal ambition (Lortie, 1975). Conversely, other studies (Miskel, McDonald, & Bloom, 1983) have highlighted the *equal* effect of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. The absence of extrinsic rewards leads to frustration; the absence of intrinsic rewards leads to low job

satisfaction, resulting in absenteeism, lateness, and, in many situations, resignation from teaching.

The more than 500 studies that have examined the relationship between teacher stress and the resulting burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998) have been essentially atheoretical (Guglielmi, 2001). Dozens of measures are intercorrelated and *post hoc* explanations of statistically significant associations are offered without interpretations of those findings within a theoretically meaningful framework. The adoption of a theoretical framework would help to organize research findings across investigations, introduce consistency in the assessment of the findings, and point to focused research hypotheses to be tested empirically. Some researchers believe that the causes of burnout could be unraveled if an intensive study, composed of a small sample of teachers, were to be conducted over a period of years (Houston, 1990). However, the disadvantage of using this approach is noteworthy; i.e., conclusions would be difficult to generalize beyond the particular sample which is under investigation.

Working Conditions: Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is often equated to work conditions (Certo & Fox, 2002; Fox & Certo, 1999; National Center for Education Statistics, 1997), which appear to play a key role in keeping teachers in the field. A study conducted by Lachman and Diamont (1987) purported: “Teachers’ perceptions of their environment lead to an affective reaction to the job, which, in turn, influences their intentions to leave. Specifically, it is hypothesized that self-actualization, interpersonal relations, management and school functioning directly influence. . . .their turnover intentions” (p. 32). After interviewing fifty-nine experienced teachers, Yee (1990) found that teachers highly involved in their work attributed their decision to stay in teaching more to

supportive work conditions than to pay; other highly involved teachers reported unsupportive workplace conditions as the main reason they had left the field.

In a study conducted by Tye and O'Brien (2002), 551 teachers were followed for seven years after they had completed their training programs. At the end of the study, it was found that 49% were no longer teaching due to the following reasons in order of importance: (a) accountability, (b) increased paperwork, (c) student attitudes, (d) lack of parent support, (e) unresponsive administration, (f) low status of the profession, and (h) salary considerations.

In the first years of teaching, only the strongest and most determined teachers survive (Croasmun et al., 2000). Some of the most talented find conditions in the workplace frustrating, unrewarding, and intolerably difficult. In a longitudinal study of 225 female beginning teachers, Schonfeld (1992) reported that teachers—particularly beginning teachers—experienced feelings of depression, irritability, fatigue, frustration, and disillusionment. School environment and conditions had important effects on their stress (Bakkenes et al., 1999). Rather than increase teachers' sense of power and commitment, many studies suggest that teachers have become dissatisfied with burdensome administrative tasks, while at the same time have a sense of increased levels of accountability, surveillance, and role conflict, especially beginning teachers (Huberman, 1989; Kushman, 1992; Macdonald, 1995; Neave, 1992; Wagner, 1993).

Working Conditions: Isolation and Alienation

Historically, schools have not been set up to support the learning of novice and veteran teachers (Lortie, 1975). The classrooms have been labeled *cellular structures* that have produced a measurable consequence for teachers—high turnover. Schools have traditionally been arranged in modular fashion: teachers work in their own rooms and conduct their own duties. Hoerr (1997) observed that teaching has never been a collaborative activity. “Most teachers work

in isolation with little adult-to-adult interaction. Teachers working as colleagues, learning from and with one another, is not the norm” (p. 40).

Beginning teachers are quickly inducted into the profession by the “sink-or-swim approach,” which means they have to learn how to cope on their own (Lortie, 1975). Learning about the nuances of teaching is limited by their personal resources (Certo & Fox, 2002) and the fact that most schools do not provide common standards and solutions. The absence of a common technical vocabulary limits a beginner’s ability to understand a preexisting body of practical knowledge. Without such a framework, neophytes feels isolated and are not able to understand the importance of daily events, causing them to miss crucial transactions, which might limit professional development.

Travers and Cooper (1996) defined *teacher isolation* as “the extent to which teachers are [minimally] restricted from or restrict themselves from interactions with other individuals or groups in the school” (p. 168). When beginning teachers feel isolated, they frequently work things out the best they can before asking for assistance (Lortie, 1975). Isolated teachers strongly focus on their own classroom practices (Bakkenes et al., 1999). It can be expected that isolated (nonparticipatory) and nonisolated (participatory) teachers differ in their perception of tasks that require collaboration with colleagues.

Roland Barth (1990) created the simile of schools being like sandboxes:

In schools . . . the benefit of parallel play is isolation from others who might take our time, challenge our practice, steal our ideas, or have us do things differently. The price of parallel play is that we ward off those who might help us do things better and with whom together we might do grander things that neither could do alone. And the price is isolation from other adults. (p. 16)

Cultures of individualism tend to increase teachers’ emotional stress, particularly those who are beginning teachers, because they would rather *pretend* that they are coping with their working

conditions rather than being labeled incompetent by their colleagues (Hart & Marshall, 1992). When they refuse to admit that they are experiencing fear and anxiety about their job performance, they do not realize that their reaction patterns are limiting their ability to become effective teachers. This *norm of silence* and tendency to isolate themselves represent a restrictive environment.

Many teachers report that they experience alienation. Shoho and Martin (1999) defined *alienation* as “a combination of isolation, normlessness, powerlessness, and meaninglessness” (p. 30). Gold and Roth (1993) observed that these feelings can cause teachers to exhibit unproductive behavior in the classroom. If this condition continues, eventual burnout and dropout due to depersonalization and disillusionment will occur. LeCompte and Dworkin (1991) encouraged teachers to look for *systemic causes* of alienation rather than blaming themselves. They observed that society has a tendency to focus on individual effects that “evoke self-blame rather than a system-blame model that explains teacher problem” (p. 116). Classroom teachers are especially prone to blame the problem on themselves because (a) in their preparation programs, they are not usually taught to recognize how the system works and, (b) in the course of a typical workweek, they do not have time to talk to one another and to see that others feel much the same way that they do (Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975; Sarason, 1982). If they discuss their feelings with one another, they seldom acknowledge the large, systemic causes of their job dissatisfaction. The physical and emotional separation teachers experience reinforces their isolation and sense of autonomy (Certo & Fox, 2002) which makes them feel reluctant to share problems or ask for help. Beginning teachers need to have colleagues with whom they can share ideas, make plans, and attempt to solve problems.

Dreeben (1973) noted, “Perhaps the most important single property of a classroom, viewed from a school-wide perspective, is [teachers’] spatial scattering and isolation throughout school buildings. Because teachers work in different places at the same time, they do not observe each other working . . . the implications of this spatial isolation are far reaching” (p. 451).

Working Conditions: Collegiality

In 1932, sociologist Dr. Willard Waller observed that a school is a unique world in which people form a web of interrelationships. He observed that if teachers, especially those beginning their careers, do not understand the social realities of school life, they will become disillusioned and leave the profession. The need to create a “psychological sense of community” has been advocated by several organizational and social psychologists (Farber & Miller, 1981; Gold & Roth, 1993; Sarason, 1977). Schools need to maintain collaborative cultures in which the participating individuals know about and accept one another as people and are sensitive to each other’s personal and professional needs (Nias, 1999). Menchaca (2003) observed: “Interactions at high schools tend to be superficial with minimal sharing or collaborative work” (p. 25).

Developing sensitivity to each other’s needs may prove difficult for some teachers due to the fact that teacher induction programs do not address the need for psychological support in teachers’ lives (Gold & Roth, 1993). Teachers learning how to address their basic needs as well as those of others is referred to as the *hidden dimension*. The lack of preparation significantly contributes to the high rate of failure of beginning teachers and the burnout of both beginning and experienced teachers.

Since the 1980s, efforts to eliminate the effects of individualism and isolation in teaching has led to widespread attempts to re-culture schools by encouraging teachers to work and interact collaboratively (Hargreaves, 2003). Effective leadership promotes informal as well as formal

collaboration among teachers by joining professional efforts in a web of long-lasting, trusted relationships. Many educators believe that teachers derive support, motivation, and direction from each other (Cohen, McLaughlin, & Talbert, 1993; Gold & Roth, 1993; Meir, 1995; Sizer, 1992; Westheimer, 1998). When beginning teachers are mentored in a collaborative environment, they want to pursue new areas of knowledge, feel less isolated, and develop a greater sense of self-esteem (Renard, 2003). Conversely, teachers who do not have the support of their colleagues and administrators are likely to feel isolated and even ridiculed when their ideas are not supported by other individuals within their school.

Research literature contains numerous studies indicating that collegiality and teacher collaboration has been promoted as one of the most important factors in teacher development and school improvement (Farber, 1983). The atmosphere of social support seems to lessen the psychological effects of physical stress. Even though this support has value, it cannot be regarded as a panacea because the establishment of a social support network within a chaotic work setting may be quite difficult. In addition, it must be recognized that while social support can lessen the impact of stress, it usually cannot alter the conditions of work that initially created the stress.

Furthermore, since 1990, researchers have demanded a more balanced view of collegiality and teacher collaboration (Kelchtermans & Strittmatter, 1999; Little, 1990b). They assess the impact of teacher autonomy and collegiality on professional development in terms of a *field of tension* [i.e., apart from differences in perspectives or priorities]. Colleagues in a school can be either a very supportive or a very threatening and stress-inducing factor (Hargreaves, 1994).

In the past (Grumet, 1988), teachers did not create communities that supported each other because they were hesitant to talk about the pleasure their teaching gave them and were reluctant to acknowledge their commitment to their careers. Today, many teachers recognize that collegiality begins with civility—an essential component of a strong school's culture (Colb, 2001). In this environment, teachers praise, thank, appreciate, help, support, encourage one another, and welcome the differences between them as a source of mutual learning and enrichment. Staff members are sensitive to one another's personal and professional needs, often acting with great kindness even toward colleagues whom they do not particularly like. They rely on each other for straight talk about their work. However, such a culture should not be mistakenly viewed as conflict free. Collaborative cultures are also built on a belief in the value of openness, tempered by a respect for individual and collective security. Another aspect of mutual support and of *care* within such environments is that individuals feel free to express their emotions (negative and positive), to admit failure and weakness, to voice resentment and frustration, and to demonstrate affection (Nias, 1999).

Barth (1990) observed,

Enormous risks and frequent costs are associated with observation, communication, mutual visibility, sharing knowledge, and talking openly about the work teachers do. Collegiality requires that everyone be willing to give up something without knowing in advance just what that may be. But the risks and costs of interdependence are nothing next to the risks and costs of sustaining a climate of emotional toxicity, of working in isolation. (p. 31)

Social support includes six functions: listening, professional support, professional challenge, emotional support, emotional challenge, and the sharing of social reality (Gold & Roth, 1993).

One study found that listening, i.e., listening without giving advice or making judgments and emotional support, i.e., having someone who is supportive and encouraging to an individual's work were important factors that helped to decrease teacher attrition rates (Wang & Odell, 2002).

Stress can be diminished if there is communication and cohesion between colleagues at *all* levels. Research has suggested that when social support is available, levels of burnout are diminished (Bridges & Hallinan, 1978; Pines, 1983).

Two additional components in collaborative communities are humor and laughter (Nias, 1998 & Pollard, 1987). Humor reduces tension, induces relaxation, promotes and maintains a sense of social cohesion and staff morale, and promotes individual confidence. A third factor which can relieve teachers' stress levels is play at work, as defined by Fine (1988): "Play at work contributes to increased satisfaction and productivity by changing the definition of the work environment from an institution of coercive control to an arena in which the workers have some measure of control over the conditions of their employment" (p. 120). Task effectiveness is also seen as an unexpected advantage of the integration of work and play (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). This factor may be significant in considering the collaborative activities in which teachers are involved on a regular basis.

An approach which limits collegiality results from teachers' lack of knowledge regarding ways to avoid isolation and/or their desire to be isolated in their educational communities. Educational reformers *assume* that teachers will form communities that inspire their work and enrich the connections among themselves (Barth, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1988; Goodlad, 1984; Smylie & Tuermer, 1995). A second assumption is that, given the proper workplace conditions, teachers will *know* how to turn organizational potential into effective communal relationships (Westheimer, 1998). However, researchers have found that some teachers do not actively seek such communities, choosing instead to isolate themselves. Bakkens et al. (1999) defined *teacher isolation* as "the extent to which teachers are restricted from or restrict themselves from interactions with other individuals or groups in the school" (p. 168).

Sarason (1996) stated

Teachers who have experienced long-term psychological isolation tend to view their work environment as limited to *their* classroom, *their* students, and *their* teaching. Although their isolation was initially involuntary, after a certain length of time, they adapt to and accept the tradition of isolation. Consequently, they resist opportunities for professional dialogue and collaboration with other teachers. (p. 201)

Many beginning teachers often isolate themselves during the first few years of teaching as they try to survive (Gold & Roth, 1993). They often hide their personal needs in order to accomplish the demands of the profession (Lortie, 1975). When they do not have personal support and interpersonal skills, they feel isolated and frequently try to work things out the best they can before asking for assistance. If this pattern continues, disillusionment and burnout are often the results. Isolated teachers strongly focus on their own classroom practices. It can be expected that isolated (nonparticipatory) and nonisolated (participatory) teachers differ in their perception of tasks that require collaboration with colleagues (Bakkenes et al., 1999). Dunham (1977b) reported that working relationships with colleagues can be a source of stress. It has been argued that the dominant source of stress is the *quality* of these interpersonal relationships. Because teachers are basically *people focused* (Dunham & Varma, 1998), they perceive that the everyday events that occur in their schools impact their professional relationships. As a result, if something goes wrong, they perceive that their feelings about their relationships with their colleagues and their colleagues' perception of them will be negatively affected. If this situation occurs on a continual basis, many teachers' perception of their diminished self-actualization and their lack of ability to maintain interpersonal relationships may influence their decisions to leave the profession.

Another potential cause of a field of tension occurs when teachers take an opposing stand on sensitive issues (Kelchtermans & Strittmatter, 1999). Rather than encouraging an atmosphere

that respects diversity of opinions, there is a strong possibility that when the engaging teachers express their ideas, fragile collegial relationships may be damaged. Feiman-Nemser (2003) reported that resentment on both sides of the issue often results in simple academic disagreements when one party is not willing to accept managerial directions. If these situations are not handled in a skillful, direct manner, they will escalate into major problems for the faculty and staff.

If a school has conditions that cause stress, the school's morale is often affected negatively. Briggs and Richardson (1992) conducted a study to examine teacher morale. Their subjects selected several characteristics which were classified as external reactions, or external effects, of low morale. These reactions, referred to as relationships with other teachers and administrators, included backbiting [i.e., the slandering of an absent party], open hostility, bickering, and the formation of cliques. They also selected descriptors classified as internal reactions of low morale: confusion, frustration, fear of supervision, and an attitude of futility.

Working Conditions: Administrators

In each school, the pivotal person who affects teacher attrition is the principal. LeCompte and Dworkin (1991) suggested that principals should be required to have management training that addresses issues of employee morale and productivity. They should be rewarded for encouraging teachers to develop themselves professionally, and they should be evaluated on the basis of voluntary turnover at their campuses. Excessive teacher turnover should be seen as a sign of ineffective campus management.

Studies of school effectiveness have shown that the capacity of schools to improve teaching and learning are strongly affected by the quality of the principal's leadership (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1994; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997; Van Petegem, 1998).

High-quality leadership appears to be a critical factor in the shaping of organizational processes and structures, patterns of social interaction, beliefs, attitudes, and job-related behaviors of teachers (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Studies based on the transformational-leadership model also stress the importance of involving school principals in the classroom in order to provide instructional support, find out what teachers are doing in their classrooms, identify problems encountered during instruction, and provide feedback.

Conversely, teachers have identified the presence or lack of principal support as a major factor which impacts the school's climate (Taylor & Tashakkori, 1994; Winter & Sweeney, 1994). Futrell (1989) stated that the frustration many teachers feel is due to the "rigid bureaucratic hierarchy in which teachers are treated like tall children rather than professionals" (p. 31). Many important decisions that directly affect teachers' lives are made by their principals (Barth, 1990). Exclusion from critical choices leads to a pervasive feeling of inefficacy and isolation that directly affects the quality of the teachers' worklife (Bacharach, Bauer, & Conley, 1986; Blase & Matthews, 1984; Evers, 1987; Farber, 1991(a); Lortie, 1975; McLaughlin, Pfeifer, Swanson-Owens, & Yee, 1986; Natale, 1993; Phillips & Lee, 1980; Ricken, 1980).

In a study conducted by Bryne (1998), the teachers agreed that the most effective way to reduce their burnout and increase the effectiveness of their school was the broadening of school-based decision-making powers in all areas of their school life. The school-based management model was based on the theory that if the top down administration is abandoned in favor of policy decided by all the constituents in a school community (including supervisors, teachers, parents, and students), a more harmonious atmosphere based upon individual responsibility will exist.

By applying Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, i.e., learning by observing, teachers are able to evaluate how their experiences influence their behavior and development (Grusec, 1992). In this type of positive environment, they learn to pay attention to events—live or symbolic—that are modeled by the administrator. The desired result is that there will be sufficient incentive for them to become an active participant in the school community.

Most administrators respect their colleagues; however, in a study conducted by Blase and Blase (2003) over a 1.5-year period, fifty teachers who had experienced long-term mistreatment by their principals revealed that their principals engaged in numerous destructive behaviors. The principals' mistreatment included indirect and moderately aggressive behaviors such as ignoring, insensitivity, stonewalling, withholding resources, and withholding professional development. Direct and moderately aggressive behaviors included spying, sabotaging, and criticizing the teachers publicly and privately. The most severe aggressive behaviors included lying, being explosive, threatening, giving poor evaluations, sexual harassment, and racism. When teachers are abused, they suffer psychological-emotional and eventual physical-physiological harm (Bies, 1987). Data support the fact that some teachers feel the after-effects of their mistreatment even after the abuse ends (Blase & Blase, 2003).

Indicators of psychological-emotional damage include depression, helplessness, powerlessness, distrust, cynicism, guilt, shame, embarrassment, poor concentration, panic attacks, and posttraumatic stress disorder [PTSD] (Blase & Blase, 2003). Teachers who are rated ineffective by their administrators experience one or more of these indicators (Gold & Roth, 1993). Indicators of physical-physiological damage include severe headaches, backaches, fatigue or exhaustion, illness, hyperactivity, weight changes, irritable bowel syndrome, heart arrhythmia, skin changes, ulcers, substance abuse (first-time use), and suicide (Blase & Blase, 2003).

Examples of other severe physical and physiological problems included diarrhea, high blood pressure, blurred vision, nausea or vomiting, respiratory infections, hives, vertigo, heart palpitations, gum disease, auditory impairment, panic attacks, and frequent colds and allergies.

Few if any of the recent reforms challenge existing conditions or styles of leadership and control within schools (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991). Lieberman (1989) observed,

Reforms that propose to empower teachers, replace hierarchical structures with peer group, or accord professional autonomy to teachers are ludicrous intellectually but devastating in their political and policy consequences. . . . Reforms usually exact a price, including mandates for greater teacher accountability. These, in turn, necessitate less supportive and more evaluative roles for administrators, which contributes to disenfranchisement, a diminished sense of professional autonomy, and subsequent burnout for teachers. (p. 217)

Until the Blase and Blase (2003) study was conducted, there had been no conceptual, theoretical, or empirical work published using information provided by victimized teachers themselves about the mistreatment and abuse they had endured from their principals. The interviewees in the study experienced overt mistreatment, including obvious favoritism shown to certain faculty members. Other examples of abuse included unfair reassignments, forced transfers, and terminations. If the teachers were moved unilaterally, their locations and/or professional responsibilities were changed. Several indicated that when they had confrontations with disruptive students, their principals did not support them. Initially, if some faculty members realized that teachers were being mistreated in their school, they supported the mistreated teachers. However, these same teachers quickly began to ostracize their mistreated colleagues, usually because they feared that their principals might seek revenge against them or because they were on the “principal’s side.” The mistreated teachers’ reactions ranged from fear, disgust, and indignation to anger, not only at the principals but also at themselves for feeling helpless to confront and/or stop the mistreatment.

Personal Influences

Interpersonal Relationships

In addition to dealing with myriad stress-related factors in their professional lives, teachers must also deal with their interpersonal relationships (Travers & Cooper, 1996). The main stresses from the home/work interface are those resulting from dual-career couples and relationships between work and family. In a study conducted in 1982 (Gold & Roth, 1993), first-year teachers were surveyed to evaluate the effect teaching placed on their personal lives. Four years later, a follow-up study of the same teachers was conducted. It revealed that they felt the demands of the classroom was on a collision course and was having detrimental effects on their personal lives. According to Nias (1999), “Teachers are socialized into a service ethic that encourages them to ignore their own needs. It is possible that some satisfactions of teaching depend, paradoxically, on taking more care of others than of oneself” (p. 230). Teachers who respond to the early signs of stress by taking care of their symptoms (Hargreaves, 1994) usually take time off from work even though their absence is disadvantageous to their colleagues as well as to their pupils. Consequently, the greater teachers’ sense of responsibility to their colleagues and the more they care for them, the less likely they are to heed their own early-warning signals.

In a study conducted in 1990, teachers in Australia, England, and New Zealand who had resigned were interviewed (Dinham & Scott, 2000). They were asked open-ended questions and filled out a self-selecting sample. They were asked questions about what they found satisfying and dissatisfying about teaching and the circumstances that caused their resignations. Three dominant reasons they cited were lack of teacher status, imposed educational change, and the critical portrayal of teachers in the media. A follow-up study was conducted in 1994-95. Fifty-seven partners of teachers who were non-teachers and who did not have close relatives who were

teachers were interviewed. The findings revealed that the non-teaching spouses were unaware of the demands that teaching made upon their partners, their relationship, and their family life.

Additional results of their study noted the teachers' observations that teaching increasingly "spilled over" into their personal lives, making it difficult to "switch off" due to their concerns related to their work (Dinham & Scott, 2000). A number of the interviewees expressed regret about how they had neglected their own families as a result of the increased demands teaching was making on them. Some of their husbands were jealous of their working relationships with the male teachers in their schools. The husbands also reported that their wives ignored their maternal and conjugal responsibilities. Youngs (1993) reported that teachers perceived their social approval was diminished if they had marital problems. Farber (1991a) claimed that teacher stress and burnout have affected and will continue to affect the lives of teachers and their families.

Marital status is more strongly related to teacher attrition than any other variable on which current research data are available (Croasmun et al., 2000). Women who are married to men in higher status business occupations may work temporarily while their husbands recover from the financial strain incurred when they attended graduate or professional school or while they are establishing a clientele or business. Research has indicated that when these men become established financially, their influence on their wives' decision to continue teaching is one of the most important factors for their staying or leaving the field of education.

Some researchers theorize that the decision to accept and keep a teaching job depends on life cycle factors (e.g., existing family status and change in family status) (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993). According to Lortie (1975), most women expect their careers to be interrupted. The vast majority of female teachers think of teaching as a terminal status. Beginning women teachers do

not hide their intention to put family matters first. In a study of teachers' attitudes toward attrition, more than half looked ahead to teaching as an "in-and-out" situation which was based on marital and maternal commitments.

Physical Toll

Teachers often feel depleted emotionally and physically after working long hours in a stressful setting (Gold & Roth, 1993), yet they are expected to return to their homes and continue giving their energy and time to others. Unless they set limits on what people are allowed to demand of them, conflicts will arise, causing a condition called *stress overload*.

The most dangerous threats to the physical, emotional, and intellectual welfare of teachers) are the stressful and emotional dilemmas they encounter almost daily (Gold & Roth, 1993). Depending on the nature of the stress, the individual teacher, and various mediating variables (Travers & Cooper, 1996), the consequences of stress may reveal themselves in behavioral manifestations such as appetite disorders, excessive smoking and alcohol and/or drug abuse, sleep deprivation, and possible displays of withdrawal symptoms (i.e., absences and resignations from the profession). Milstein and Golaszewski (1985) reported that physiological manifestations include heart disease, fatigue, psychosomatic illness, and depleted energy reserves.

Financial Concerns

Although most teachers are attracted to the profession by the intrinsic satisfaction of working with students (Goodlad, 1984), research has found that teachers cite low pay as one of the major reasons for leaving (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Goodlad, 1984; Murnane, Singer, & Willett, 1989; NCES study, 1997). In the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) study (1997), teachers identified low salaries as the second most common reason for leaving the

profession. Langdon's survey (1996), however, indicated that low pay was first on the list of reasons for getting and keeping good teachers. Shen (1997) found that the amount of annual salary for teachers was correlated with teacher retention. For those teachers who leave to work in other occupations (Metropolitan Survey, 1995), the most prevalent single reason is financial. Sixty percent of former teachers who were surveyed in 1985 indicated that they left due to teaching's low salaries.

Early in their careers, female teachers appear to be looking for the highest salary within teaching (Murnane & Olsen, 1989). As they become more experienced, the relationship between local wages becomes more important than the relationship between local and other teaching salaries in the state. Decreasing average annual earnings in the community increases the likelihood more veteran female teachers remain in their position.

Addressing Attrition Issues

The previously discussed issues relating to teacher attrition are complex. High rates of teacher attrition disrupt program continuity and planning (Shen, 1997). Even though there is an awareness that meeting the basic needs of teachers is an important dimension of the professional preparation of our educators), addressing teachers' stress or psychological needs is not a major item on the agenda of professional development programs (Gold & Roth, 1993). Currently, when assistance is provided, it is either too little, too late, or misdirected. If teachers suffer, then the nation as a whole is robbed of a high-quality work force for its schools (Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

Travers and Cooper (1996) observed that the majority of studies and recommendations for coping have been focused on the individual teacher and what he or she can do. Researchers are now emphasizing the need to examine the whole school context as an organization to be

managed. A central finding by Ingersoll and Smith (2004) is that high levels of employee turnover are both cause and effect of ineffectiveness and low performance in organizations (namely, schools) which result in organizational instability and low morale. High rates of teacher turnover can inhibit the development and maintenance of a learning community. These rates, in turn, contribute to school staffing problems and teacher shortages.

Cox, Boot, and Cox (1988) argued that studies on stress in schools have generally failed to develop past the established paradigms of considering the teachers' experiences in isolation from their organizational context. At the same time, many studies have reported that the problems faced by teachers are organizational (or managerial) in origin. Only school leaders can foster the full range of support that teachers need (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). New teachers tend to stay at schools where a consistent support system is offered.

In a report for the Education Commission of the State, Scott (1999) observed: "Beginning teachers are not finished products. Expecting them to perform all the duties that we expect *seasoned* professionals to do is unrealistic" (p. 6). Novice teachers have many concerns during their induction years (Moir, 1999). They tend to have difficult work assignments and tend to start off with more responsibilities than veteran teachers. They understand formal expectations but tend to be unclear concerning the conflicting expectations of other administrators, other teachers, and parents. Educators should not be surprised that new teachers often feel demoralized, dispirited, and anxious about their efficacy and their capacity to cope.

Renard (2003) observed that if school systems are serious about retaining new teachers past their first three years and want to help them to become effective classroom leaders, then the demands placed on them must be examined. In many schools, their teaching loads and work schedules set them up for failure rather than success. Lortie (1975) noted that novice teachers'

tasks are not added sequentially to allow for their gradual improvement of their skills and knowledge. Instead, they learn while performing all of their teaching duties. Consequently, they feel tremendous anxiety.

Systematic and comprehensive induction programs that are designed to help teachers develop strong initial teaching skills are the exception rather than the trend (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). It is important to clarify that teacher induction is distinct from both pre-service and in-service teacher training programs (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Induction programs are often utilized as a bridge to connect individuals' role of being students of learning to their becoming teachers of students. The term *teacher* induction can refer to a variety of different activities such as classes, orientations, seminars, and especially, mentoring.

What kinds of induction programs and experiences exist and under what circumstances they help are clearly important questions for education policymakers and school administrators faced with decisions about supporting such programs (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). As the implementation of these programs have increased, there has also been a growing interest in empirical research on the variety and effects of these initiatives. During the past 20 years, several studies have provided support for the hypothesis that well-conceived and well-implemented teacher mentoring and induction programs are successful in increasing the job satisfaction, efficacy, and retention of new teachers (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999).

Additional strategies used to control or decrease attrition are based on financial and employment incentives. Murnane and Olsen (1989) argued that increasing salaries is "the single most direct and effective way to reduce attrition" (p. 19), even though it is not always practical (i.e., high impact but hard to implement, due to fiscal limitations). They noted that beginning

teachers who were paid more stay in teaching longer although this pattern of retention varied across subjects' specialties (e.g., physics and chemistry teachers were less inclined to stay). They concluded that an increase of \$1,000 per incremental year resulted in an increase in the median duration of two or three years of service. Seven years later, Theobald and Gritz (1996) concluded that a \$3,000 increase in salaries discouraged attrition. Still, there is little evidence that increased salaries and other monetary allowances alone can have a high, long-term impact on attrition.

Summary

A multiple-perspective approach to the issue of teacher retention and attrition must be taken (Shen, 1997). Boards of Education need to recognize the importance of adopting a specific personnel policy on teacher retention (Cosgrove, 2001). Macdonald (1999) observed: "American school systems should appraise their attrition rate, construct high impact and realistic strategies, and review these regularly in line with changing conditions" (p. 846). Scott (1999) advised that school systems should give full consideration to program purposes, budget needs, and the delegation of leadership responsibilities.

Schools should have an administrator who serves in the capacity of a coach (Weissbourd, 2003). This person would have the responsibility of monitoring the emotional and professional condition of the teachers by providing feedback to them on such topics as how to earn respect and trust, how to create a caring community, and how to identify and reverse the downward spiral many teachers experience. This type of individualistic support could be linked with staff development.

Just as the coaches' in-school support is crucial to the teachers, the support of principals is vital to the coaches. Poglinco & Bach (2004) found that there is a strong need for principals to

enter into a partnership with coaches if the coaching model is to succeed in their schools.

Coaches fulfill multiple roles and responsibilities for which they need an array of sophisticated skills. Their effectiveness increases when other school staff members support them and make a commitment to achieve the goal of instructional improvement.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework: Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism, a primary approach to qualitative research among sociologists, is described by Blumer (1969) as “activity in which humans interpret each other’s gestures and act on the basis of meaning yielded by interpretation” (pp. 65-66). Symbolic interactionism uses an empirical social science perspective that “sees meaning as arising in the process of interaction between people . . . and meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact” (pp. 4-5). From the symbolic interactionist’s point of view, even though the individual is influenced by others, he or she also maintains distance from others and is able to initiate individual action (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). Symbolic interactionists describe the *processes* of symbolic interactionism in order to *understand* behavior (Jacob, 1987).

Background of Symbolic Interactionism

The basic method that preceded symbolic interactionism was founded by Cooley in 1909 (Schwandt, 2001). He believed that *sympathetic introspection* helped researchers understand the meanings and interpretations of people’s reactions in any given setting by observing and interviewing them. In 1934, George Herbert Mead laid the groundwork for symbolic interactionism. Blumer gave the method of symbolic its name in 1937. He and his colleagues (G. H. Mead, Charles H. Cooley, John Dewey, and W. I. Thomas) developed a psychological and sociological theory that has its roots, i.e., basic ideas, in American pragmatism.

Framework of Symbolic Interactionism

The Blumer-Mead version of symbolic interactionism (1969) rests on the following premises: (a) Human life consists of the participants fitting in with each other in daily events; (b) The participants indicate to each other what they want the individuals to do and, in turn, interpret each other's reactions; (c) The participants form the meanings of the objects and react to them, based on their interactions with others; (d) Human action is constructed by the actors on the basis of what they observe, interpret, and assess. The result of their actions serves as the basis for complex interdependent relations. Social interaction is a formative process (Blumer, 1969). People direct, check, modify, and transform their actions in response to what they encounter in the actions of others. A study of social interaction cannot be valid if it is based on the premise that group life is simply a result of determining factors used in the interaction of people.

The exploratory study of human group life is a flexible procedure in which researchers must be able to shift from one line of inquiry to another with ease, adopt new points of observation as the study progresses, and change their opinions about the relevant data as more information is collected and understood (Denzin, 1970). Part of the revision comes from what informants tell them. However, it is a mistake to consider participants' versions of events as flawless representations of what *really* happened to them because their words express their *perceptions* of the events. Researchers' total acceptance will undermine the validity of their work because the meanings of the participants' events are related through a *process of interpretation*.

Social interaction with others influences how individuals interpret meanings. Blumer (1969) described two steps in this interpretive process. First, individuals communicate with themselves—via thought—to identify which objects have meaning. Then, individuals select,

check, suspends, regroup, and transform these meanings based on the current situation in which they are placed. Individuals constantly interpret meanings as they move from one situation to another. Therefore, meanings are not static but change in light of new situations.

Relationship of Symbolic Interactionism to This Study

The purpose of this study is to describe the contributing factors former female high school teachers cited for leaving the profession. Symbolic interactionism is the theoretical perspective that applies to this study because it places emphasis on the meanings people perceive and develop in their social settings. It is assumed that these former teachers resigned due to their own interpretation of their experiences—both professionally and personally.

Statement of Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of the study was to gather and study perceptions of the teachers who resigned.

The study investigated the following guiding research questions:

1. What were resigning teachers' experiences with teaching?
2. What did those experiences mean to the teachers who resigned?

Site and Sample Selection

Site Selection

Because the participants in this study had resigned from the specified school system, it was necessary for the researcher and each participant to select a location for the interview to be conducted. It was agreed that the site must be devoid of outside distractions and noise. Nine of the ten interviews were conducted in the participants' home during evening hours. The tenth interview was conducted in a glass-enclosed conference room in a local public library.

Sample Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to identify the subjects. In April, 2003 the researcher's request to interview female high school teachers who had taught five or fewer years in the selected school system and had resigned, effective at the end of the 2002-2003 school term, was approved by the system's Board of Education. The list of 55 teachers' names and their respective school locations was sent to the researcher by the Director of Research in May, 2003.

The researcher sent each teacher a letter of introduction that provided information related to the general purpose of the study, the issues concerning confidentiality, and two *disqualifiers* [a participant had not resigned from the system due to her husband's job relocation or she had decided to become a stay-at-home mother], a consent form (Appendix A) that requested demographic information and the reason(s) the teacher had resigned, and two envelopes. If the teacher chose to participate in the study, she had an option of returning the forms either in the envelope that was stamped and addressed for return to the researcher's home or in an envelope that was sent via the school system's courier service to the researcher at her high school within the same school system. The time frame for receiving the responses was crucial because no other contact information could be provided by the Board once the resigning teachers left the system, due to the legal issue of confidentiality of employees.

Because the researcher did not know which of the teachers on the list were retiring, she had to spend unnecessary time and expense sending the letter, consent form, and envelopes to each teacher on the list. Of the 55 teachers, ten of the twenty who responded were retiring, making them ineligible for the study. Another six of the respondents were disqualified by stipulations stated in the letter. Those who qualified for participation in the study met the definition of theoretical sampling, i.e., they had the ability to provide theoretical insights into the

topic of teacher attrition. They left the teaching profession due to adverse conditions that did not include health factors.

The researcher contacted the Director of Research and informed him of the limited number of qualified participants. He requested that several more participants be added to the study for validity purposes. Consequently, in the spring of 2004, the researcher issued a second request to the Board for names of female high schools who had taught in the school system for five or fewer years and had resigned, effective May, 2004. Based on her previous experience, the researcher requested that no names of retiring teachers be included on the list. Again, the time factor was of the essence. The researcher contacted the Director twice before she received the information.

The requested disaggregated list of 50 names of teachers was sent after the 2003-2004 school term had ended. No other information about the listed teachers was given. The researcher re-contacted the Director and asked him how she could get in contact with the teachers. His response was that he could give the researcher only the teachers' former school locations because they were no longer employed by the system.

The researcher had no choice but to use a circuitous route to obtain contact information (i.e., the teachers' home telephone numbers). She called teachers whom she knew taught in the former teachers' schools. If her "contacts" knew the teachers who had resigned and indicated they thought certain former teachers would be interested in participating in the study, they provided the telephone numbers for the researcher's use. She, in turn, made introductory follow-up telephone calls. If the resigned teacher indicated she would participate in the study, a letter of introduction, consent form, and return stamped envelope was mailed to the participant.

Data Sources

Ten female high school teachers participated in the study. The time and place for the interviews were discussed and selected by the researcher and the interviewees several days in advance. Nine of the interviews were conducted in the participants' homes during evening hours. The tenth interview was conducted in a glass-enclosed conference room at a local public library. Each participant selected a location that was devoid of distractions and noise. Initial interviews were conducted during the months of May-August, 2004. Follow-up recorded telephone interviews were conducted in October, 2004.

Nine of the ten participants were Caucasian; one was African-American. The academic degrees earned by the participants were as follows: one doctorate, four Master's, and five Bachelor's.

Each high school in which the participants had taught had a student enrollment of over 2,000. The participants represented seven high schools in the specified school system. The participants' demographic and professional data are summarized in Table 1.

As the researcher analyzed her data, she determined that theoretical saturation had been reached and concluded that it was unnecessary to pursue interviews with additional former teachers.

Data Collection Procedures

In the following section, data collection procedures will be discussed. The purpose of this study was to describe the teachers' perspectives of their teaching experiences and how those experiences impacted their lives. Data collection was guided by the following research questions: (a) What were the resigning teachers' experiences with teaching? (b) What did those experiences mean to the teachers who resigned? In addition, a research journal was kept by the researcher.

Table 1

Demographic and Professional Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Highest Degree Earned	Age	Years Experience
Lisa	Female	Master's	29	4
Kim	Female	Master's	35	3
Meg	Female	Master's	35	5
Carol	Female	Bachelor's	29	1.5
Jill	Female	Master's	30	4
Katie	Female	Bachelor's	24	2
Mary	Female	Bachelor's	34	3
Joyce	Female	Bachelor's	34	1
Ann	Female	Doctorate	47	.5
Celia	Female	Bachelor's	24	3

Interviews

In-depth interviews provided the data for the study. As described by Taylor and Bogdon (1998), in-depth interviews are “repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants’ perspectives o their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words” (p. 88).

Prior to conducting the initial interview, the researcher explained the elements of confidentiality, timelines, and purpose of the study to each participant. It was confirmed that each participant had received a Consent Form (see Appendix A) that stated the interview would be audio taped. The tape recordings allowed the researcher to preserve the exact words of the

participants for subsequent review, transcription, and reflection (Merriam, 1998). The researcher also discussed with the participant her concern that the mutually selected location of each interview would be free of any distractions (e.g., noise in the background and the presence of people who might make the interviewee feel inhibited about making certain comments). Without exception, each participant assured the researcher that this criterion of the study would be met.

At the time of the interview, two copies of the Consent Form were signed and dated by the researcher and the participant. Each person kept a copy of the form. Each interview began with informal talk to put the participant and researcher at ease and to establish rapport. When the formal interview began, the researcher turned on two recorders. One was positioned close to the participant, and the other recorder was set up next to the researcher. Both recorders' volume was set on the highest level. The use of the two recorders proved to be invaluable, especially when the participants would change the volume of their voice levels. When the researcher listened to the tapes upon returning home, she discovered several times that when some of the participant's words on one of the tapes recorded during an interview was inaudible, the words on the back-up tape was clearer. A second benefit of using two recorders was a guarantee that if one malfunctioned during an interview, there was a back-up system in place.

Initial interviews were unstructured, allowing the participants to respond in an open manner about their teaching experiences. The researcher did not have any pre-conceived ideas regarding what she would learn about the participants' experiences. As explained by Lincoln and Guba (1985), this type of interview is of value when the interviewer "does not know what [she] doesn't know and must therefore rely on the respondent to tell [her]" (p. 269). As the participants described their experiences, the researcher asked specific questions to clarify the basis for a certain perspective.

During each interview, which lasted from fifty to seventy-five minutes in length, some participants talked more readily than others. The former teachers who had taught longer than one year had more experiences to share. Eight of the locations where the interviews were conducted met the criterion of having no distractions. However, two of the participants' responses were affected. As soon as one of the interviews began, the researcher heard an argument ensuing between the participant's two sons, who were in the adjacent room. The argument continued during the entire interview. Even though the participant did not leave the site of the interviewee to stop the argument, she was obviously distracted and asked that the researcher repeat questions several times before she responded.

During another interview, a situation occurred when the researcher asked some questions that the participant perceived to involve a sensitive element pertaining to her leaving the profession. The first time such a question was asked, the participant reacted with a concerned look on her face, silently indicated that she thought her parents were listening to the interview in the adjoining room, and lowered her voice. The researcher immediately moved both recorders closer to the participant and indicated to her that she needed to speak more directly into the recorders' built-in microphones.

As the researcher became more adept at asking in-depth questions, she became more intuitive concerning how to probe the participants' observations for richer responses. The researcher had to monitor her enthusiasm to relate similar experiences that had occurred during her own teaching career and to use the silence technique in order to encourage the participants to expand their thoughts.

Recurrent themes, categories, and sub-categories became obvious. As a result, the researcher was able to narrow her questioning during the follow-up interviews to focus on

specific topics that emerged from the initial interviews. For example, the demands of teaching placed on a teacher's professional and personal life were a dominant topic of discussion. The participants' responses enabled the researcher to obtain more detail about emerging themes. This follow-up procedure is consistent with grounded theory methodology and constant comparative analysis.

Following each initial interview, the researcher returned to her home, where she made additional field notes about her experiences and observations during the interview. These notes, which were kept in the researcher's journal, described the mode of the interview, as well as the participants' behavior and expressions. This activity allowed the researcher to record her reflections before beginning the process of transcribing and coding the data line-by-line.

Following the initial interviews, the researcher reviewed the transcripts and wrote specific questions that she wanted some of the participants to answer during follow-up interviews. The second set of interviews was conducted by the researcher. Each call was placed on a speaker phone. A recorder was placed next to the phone to record the researcher's questions and the participants' responses. Each interview, which lasted twenty to thirty minutes, served as a means of filling out categories and of member checking. In addition to responding to the structured questions, the participants were also allowed to share additional experiences that they felt related to the study.

Documents

Official documents published by the state's educational commission and the specified school system's Board of Education were also used as sources of data in the study. According to Merriam (1998), most documents are easily accessible and can "generate an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated" (p. 126). Documents were examined line-by-line and

coded. Data obtained from the documents were labeled for the purpose of subsequent sources of identification.

Researcher Journal

A research journal served as an organizer in which the researcher recorded her notes and memos during the study. It also contained a calendar of interview dates, dates of transcription completions, and deadlines. This visual timeline helped the researcher achieve her goals.

Research memos are “the theorizing write-up of ideas about categories and their relationships as they strike the researcher while coding” (Glaser, 1978, p. 83). As the researcher coded the participants’ comments, her own ideas and questions emerged. Answers to the questions were frequently answered as the data were collected. Frequently, the researcher would ask herself: “How do these experiences affect the participant?” By doing so, the researcher was able to discern which issues were more important to each participant. Writing memos was a critical component to the data analysis process and to the writing process. Charmaz (1994) observed, “Memo writing connects the barebones analytic framework that coding provides with the polished ideas developed in the finished draft” (p. 106).

Data Analysis Procedures

Grounded Theory

The grounded theory method for this study was used to generate a theory concerning former teachers’ perspectives of why they left the profession. Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed a methodological approach from the symbolic interactionism tradition. This approach accounted for behavior rather than descriptions of behavior that would verify behavior. Strauss and Corbin (1994) stated: “Grounded theory is a *general methodology* for developing a theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Theory evolves during actual

research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection” (p. 273). The grounded theory allows the data to emerge in a natural way during data collection.

Grounded theory methodology results in theory that is appropriate for a particular study (Strauss & Corbin, 1967). This researcher has chosen to use grounded theory methodology because the data related to teacher attrition in the specified school system have not been researched on a formal basis. No direct feedback from teachers who resigned from the system because of their experiences has ever been given to the Board.

A grounded theory study challenges researchers for the following reasons: (a) The investigator needs to set aside theoretical ideas so the analytic theory can emerge; (b) the researcher must recognize that there is a systematic approach to research with specific steps in data analysis; and (c) the researcher faces the difficulty of determining when categories are saturated or when the theory is sufficiently detailed (Cresswell, 1998).

Grounded theory methodology allows theory to emerge from the data (Charmaz, 1994). Because grounded theory requires that researchers learn about the actors’ interpretations of their perspectives of their world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), it also mandates the “development of the theory [of] those interpretations, and perspectives become incorporated into [the researcher’s] own interpretations [conceptualizations]” (p. 172). Therefore, the researcher uses several strategies: (a) collection and analysis of data will determine the process how future data is collected, (b) verification of data is not required due to the fact that on-going, systematic checking of data is part of the methodology, and (c) final interpretation of the data is not feasible. Glaser and Strauss (1967) observed that theory is a process, an “ever-developing entity, not a perfected product” (p. 32).

A major component of grounded theory methodology is constant comparative analysis. This method of analysis uses continual comparison of one piece of data with other pieces of data and “is concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting (but not provisionally testing) many categories, properties, and hypotheses about general problems” (p. 104). The steps of constant comparative analysis include comparing incidents, creating categories and their properties, delimiting the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and writing the theory (Glaser, 1994). Components of constant comparative analysis include theoretical sensitivity (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978), theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1978), theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and theoretical pacing (Glaser, 1978). Application of these theoretical components were recognized in the assessment of the data.

Four Stages of Constant Comparative Analysis

There are four stages of constant comparative analysis: comparing incidents, integrating categories and their properties, delimiting the theory, and writing the theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) noted that theory grounded in the data emerges as the researcher methodically works through the stages. Constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was the method used to generate a grounded theory focusing on teachers’ perspectives that explained why they left the profession. Systematically working through each stage assisted the researcher in producing theoretical ideas that were grounded in the data.

Stage One: Comparing Incidents

The researcher began by reviewing the data line-by-line and coding the data for incidents. As the interviews were conducted and transcribed, the researcher used a hard copy of the data and marked each incident with a highlighter. Incidents were labeled in the margins and on a

sheet of paper on which the labels were listed. The researcher changed or added labels as the incidents were coded.

As the process of data collection and analysis continued, the researcher began to discern similarities among incidents, and preliminary categories began to emerge and were labeled. Two kinds of categories emerged: those constructed by the researcher and those provided by the participants' responses. The beginning categories helped the researcher refine questions asked during later interviews in order to obtain additional information.

Following the central premise of constant comparative analysis, the researcher, while coding an incident for a category, compared the incident with all previous incidents in the same and different categories. This required the researcher to review all previously collected data on a constant basis and reflect on the true meaning of each category.

Throughout the coding process, the researcher recorded all of her ideas by writing memos. "Memos are written elaborations of ideas about the data and the coded categories" (Charmaz, 1994, p. 106). These memos helped the researcher explore new ideas, shape future data collection, broaden categories, and explain the researcher's thoughts during the coding process. They were treated as data, i.e., they were sorted and integrated along with the data in the analysis process (Charmaz, 1994).

Stage Two: Integrating Categories and Their Properties

As coding continued, the researcher began to build properties of the categories that had resulted from the first stage of comparing incidents. All of the data became more integrated and related in several ways. Further analysis included reviewing participants' responses and assessing common themes. As the researcher determined that different incidents would fit into different categories, she would list them. This was a time-consuming process; however, it

benefited the researcher's ability to refine the categories and their properties. As a result, the researcher realized that some of the categories were irrelevant and others emerged as being more applicable to the subject.

Stage Three: Delimiting the Theory

During stage three, delimiting the theory, the researcher formulated a clear, simple theory within a smaller set of higher-level concepts. This stage helped the researcher to streamline both the theory and the categories. This process involved collapsing similar or overlapping categories into one category and removing irrelevant properties of categories. If categories did not fit the boundaries of the emerging theory, they were withdrawn. Theoretical saturation (explained in a later section) also served to delimit the list of categories. Saturation was reached when the collection of data did not provide new insights to a category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Once the researcher established the categories, she conducted follow-up interviews with each participant to confirm her ideas and fill out the categories. These interviews provided the researcher with new ways of making connections among the categories, resulting in the refinement of the emerging theory.

Stage Four: Writing the Theory

Writing the theory began with collating the memos on each category. As the writing continued, the researcher created an analytic framework as a result of constant referral to the coded data to provide specific examples as validation and illustration of the theory (Glaser, 1994).

Four Components of Constant Comparative Analysis

The four components of constant comparative analysis are theoretical sensitivity, theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation, and theoretical pacing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). They are discussed in the following sub-sections.

Theoretical Sensitivity

Sensitizing concepts give the analysis “a general sense of reference” and provide “directions along which to look” (Blumer, 1969, p. 148). Theoretical sensitivity is a personal characteristic of the researcher (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During the researcher’s twenty-five year teaching career, she talked to novice teachers who left the profession in five or fewer years. These experiences increased her sensitivity. Personal reflections also assisted the researcher in analyzing data and generating theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Theoretical sensitivity was also increased because the researcher was familiar with the general literature bases related to the study. Thus, the researcher was able to see connections in the data and considered hypotheses that aided in generating theoretical ideas. Insight gained from the actual research took precedence over the researcher’s personal reflections.

Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is a procedure used during data collection, coding, and analysis to understand the significance of the incidents (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical sampling allowed the researcher to compare incoming data to the emerging conceptual framework.

Theoretical Saturation

Strauss and Corbin (1990) observed that theoretical saturation occurs when theoretical concept can be generalized and predicted. Theoretical saturation was achieved when no new categories emerged in the data , and new data failed to add insight to an existing category.

Theoretical saturation is also based on the integration and density of the theory and researcher sensitivity (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher did not have difficulty in determining when a category's saturation had been reached.

Theoretical Pacing

According to Glaser (1978), there are two stages of theoretical pacing that are used to collect, code, and analyze data: input and saturation. Input includes collecting data, analyzing data, and writing memos. It has been suggested that a researcher should allow two to four hours per day to work on the research study. All ideas concerning the data were recorded in memos. Saturation occurred when all ideas in the memos had been thoroughly extrapolated and new data did not provide new insight (Glaser, 1978). Glaser observed that the level of energy used by the researcher to collect data and analyze it must be balanced. The researcher analyzed the collected data on a regular basis.

Credibility

Credibility of a study is ascertained when it is believable and can be trusted that the theory that is generated from the process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Another criterion is that the findings must represent the realities of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Several criteria were used to enhance the credibility of this study. These criteria will be discussed in the following section.

Grounded Theory Credibility Criteria: Fit, Work, and Relevance

Fit, work, and relevance (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) are the specific criteria used to judge grounded theory. Grounded theory methods provide assured means to enhance the credibility of a study. The use of constant comparative analysis assisted the researcher in formulating a credible match between the categories and the participants' perspectives. Using joint collection

and analysis ensured the data's fit, work, and relevance to the emerging theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Fit

Fit means that the categories of the theory are directly derived from the data and are applicable to the study (Glaser, 1978). They are not forced or selected to fit pre-conceived categories (Charmaz, 1994). Allowing the participants to talk about what they considered to be relevant encouraged a better fit.

Work

Work is the ability of the grounded theory to explain the actions that are studied (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A theory will work if its categories fit and if it is relevant.

Relevance

Relevance means the categories have significant relevance to the research topic. Grounded theory allowed core problems and processes to emerge from the data.

Peer Debriefing

Because every researcher needs to clear his/her mind of "emotions and feelings that may be clouding good judgment or preventing emergence of sensible next steps" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 308), the researcher regularly talked to one of her fellow graduate students and to veteran teachers with whom she worked who provided insight, asked questions, and were willing to listen. Peer debriefing helps to keep the researcher honest while questioning and clarifying biases, methodological procedures, and interpretations of findings.

Member Checks

This technique is the most crucial for establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking can be formal or informal. It occurs continuously throughout the data process.

Several methods were used to member check. During the interviews, the researcher often summarized the main points of the interview and asked for agreement or additional information. On several occasions, the participant added additional information that gave the researcher a new insight or different view. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) noted that participants will enhance the significance of the study by making their comments.

Additionally, insights were gained from one interview were formulated into questions for other participants. For instance, five of the participants taught in trailers. As the researcher asked each one how she felt about her teaching location, the first four said they hated it. When the researcher informed the fifth participant of the other four teachers' feelings, she countered them by saying she loved teaching in a trailer.

A final method was conducting follow-up interviews with participants after the majority of data analysis was completed. Follow-up interviews were conducted with five of the ten participants.

Thick Description

Thick description is a credibility technique used to assist others in their understanding of the findings of the study. Thick, rich description allows the reader to make decisions regarding transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998) to discern how well the research situation matches their own situations. In this study, thick description was provided concerning the preparations for teaching the teachers had received and how their experiences determined the reasons they left the profession.

Summary

This chapter provided a thorough discussion of the methodology of the study. The study was designed and carried out according to the symbolic interactionist perspective and grounded

theory methodology. Data sources included interviews and documents. Constant comparative analysis was used to code and analyze data. A working theory of teachers' perspectives of why they left the profession resulted. Several strategies were utilized to enhance the creditability of this qualitative study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was twofold: (a) to describe the resigning teachers' experiences and (b) to describe what those experiences meant to the resigning teachers. The research was conducted to establish a theory grounded in the data that explains the teachers' experiences and the meanings those experiences had for them.

This chapter presents the findings from this research using the actual words of the participants. The first section introduces the individual participants in the study. The second section delineates two main themes, six categories, and seven sub-categories (see Table 2).

Individual Participants

This section of Chapter 4 describes the study's ten participants in order to introduce them and provide general information about them. All participants were women whose ages ranged from 24 to 47. These former high school teachers entered classrooms located in some of the selected county's high schools with enthusiastic and idealistic expectations of their experiences. Within five years, nine of the ten participants chose to leave the profession. One participant, who had previously been a college professor, returned to the college classroom.

Lisa

Lisa, age 29, began teaching after earning her Master's degree. Her teaching career ended after four years. She was one of two participants who had educators in her immediate family. Her field of study was science.

Kim

Kim, age 35, worked in the field of advertising before returning to college to earn her Master's degree. Her teaching career ended after three years. Her fields of study were English and art.

Meg

Meg, age 35, earned her Master's degree and then worked as a professional writer before entering the teaching profession for a five-year career. Her fields of study were English and journalism.

Carol

Carol, age 29, had a Bachelor's degree. She taught for two years. Her field of study was music.

Jill

Jill, age 30, had a Bachelor's degree. She taught middle school grades in the study's selected county before becoming a high school teacher. She resigned from her career in high school teaching after four years. Her field of study was science.

Katie

Katie, age 24, had a Bachelor's degree. She was one of two participants who attended high school in the study's selected county. She taught for two years before resigning from the profession. Her field of study was science.

Mary

Mary, age 34, had a Bachelor's degree. She worked for a non-profit organization before she began her three-year teaching career. Her field of study was social studies.

Joyce

Joyce, age 34, had a Bachelor's degree. She ended her teaching career after being in the classroom for one year. Her field of study was foreign language.

Ann

Ann, age 47, had a Doctorate degree. She taught in one of the county's high schools for one semester. Her previous teaching experience was on the college level. Her field of study was foreign language.

Celia

Celia, age 29, had a Bachelor's degree. She resigned from the teaching profession after teaching three years. She was the second participant who had educators in her immediate family. Her field of study was music.

Common Themes

Two significant themes emerged from the extensive analysis of the data collected in this study on teacher attrition: teachers' experiences and the outcomes of those experiences. According to their perceptions, the participants felt that the negative factors produced by their teaching had impacted their professional and personal lives to such an extent that they had no choice but to leave the profession. Within the two themes, six categories and seven sub-categories were discussed by the participants. Table 2 summarizes the themes and categories. In the following sub-sections each theme is discussed in length, supported by verbatim interview responses from the interviewees.

Theme 1: Experiences in Teaching

Category 1: Preparations

In this study, the term *preparation* refers to the college courses the participants completed. The participants' opinions concerning the value of their college training was that the courses were a waste of time and money because they were highly theoretical and impractical.

When the participants were asked to describe these experiences, seven of the ten responses were negative. Lisa observed

Instead of college professors preparing teachers on the front end to know how to handle bad things when they happen, they taught me n-o-t-h-i-n-g about the realities of teaching. I felt the education courses were so esoteric. The material was taught on a very high level. It wasn't practical at all. I learned a great deal about Bloom's taxonomy of needs, which is all very well, but I didn't learn how to translate this information into what I was supposed to say to my students on the first day of school. I would have preferred that they had *vaccinated* me so I would not be *susceptible* to the disrespectful students, parents, and teachers.

Kim stated, "My experience at the university was highly theoretical. There was very little practical training. So when I started teaching my first year, I was not prepared for the emotional drain that I went through."

Katie had been told that her supervising teacher would support her when she student taught. Instead, she experienced an incident that scarred her perception of successful teaching. Her supervising teacher did irreparable damage by being brutally honest. She told Katie, 'If your lesson flops, I'm going to leave you in front of the room because in the real world, you're not going to have anyone scrape you up off the ground.' She was shocked because her supervising teacher's lack of empathy refuted her professors' assurance that she would be provided an environment in which she could be successful. After her first year, Katie realized that the student teaching experience had been an omen; many of her lessons failed, and there was no one to help her.

Table 2

Themes and Categories

Theme 1: Experiences in Teaching

Category 1: Preparations

Category 2: Induction

Sub-category 1: Experiences with administrators

Sub-category 2: Experiences with professional development

Sub-category 3: Experiences with colleagues

Category 3: Demands

Sub-category 1: Management

Sub-category 2: Course load

Sub-category 3: Extracurricular activities

Sub-category 4: Isolation

Theme 2: Outcomes of Experiences

Category 1: Physical Strain

Category 2: Psychological Damage

Category 3: Family Stress

The second incident involved her being required to participate in a role-playing situation in which she and other senior education majors had to pretend they were misbehaving in a high school classroom. For this scenario, her professor appointed another class member and told her to play the role of the classroom teacher who would discipline the misbehaving students. Katie stated it was impossible for senior education majors to misbehave. “We didn’t misbehave when

we were in high school, so we didn't know what to do. This was a ludicrous exercise and wasted our time. When I walked into my first classroom and met *real* students who misbehaved, I knew I didn't know how to handle the situation."

Mary had an opportunity in one of her college classes to hear her classmates' firsthand experiences of their teaching. These teachers were taking the course to earn credit for their required state re-certification. She said,

I heard horror stories about how they dealt with certain situations. I think rather than just being lectured to by a college professor who has never taught in a high school classroom—which, by the way, I think is one of the big problems in our educational training system—the people I was around were people who were teaching in the trenches. I also heard about discipline and administrative problems. But even with this advantage, I think I was set up for failure because my professors taught me to teach my subject in a totally different way than my school allowed me to do.

Meg followed Mary's train of thought regarding the lack of common educational experience. She suggested that professors should step out of their college classrooms—also known as their "ivory towers"—and experience teaching in a high school classroom either to venture there for the first time in their teaching career or to repeat their previous high school teaching experience:

I think professors should get back into the high school classroom. The experience would keep them in touch with the realities of the classroom. I think it's really easy to get stuck in theory, but when you have time-of-day factors, socio-economic factors, and class-size factors, you realize that most of the time, the theory doesn't match what the reality is. It makes it really difficult. I would have preferred to have more content as far as literature is concerned. I wanted to learn ideas of how to deal with things in the classroom instead of hearing about educational theory. All of the theory went out the window the first day I taught a class.

Two of the participants negatively appraised their college courses, but they did allow for the fact that college education courses cannot prepare teachers for everything that will happen to them in their classrooms: Carol and Celia made concurring comments:

Carol: I don't think college courses can prepare teachers for everything that will happen in the classroom because the dynamics of the classrooms and students will be different in every situation.

Celia: I had not a clue how to manage a classroom. That's not something the professors prepare you for in college. Even the best programs can only teach you what *might happen* in your specific field. The professors cannot teach you how to deal with classroom management. It's something you have to learn when you are in an actual classroom.

Most of the participants expressed their concern that a major issue left unaddressed while they were in college was how to handle inclusion students. Carol shared her concern about her lack of training:

I had no idea how to deal with these disruptive students. The only thing I had learned about them in college was how to read their IEPs. Then add to this dynamic the legalities of working with them; I quickly learned I could get in serious trouble if I did something wrong. None of us first-year teachers knew how to handle the situation. I repeatedly remarked to my fellow colleagues that our education courses should have spent a great deal of time teaching us about inclusion issues rather than about students who had physical disabilities.

To summarize, the realities of classroom teaching had never been presented to the participants before they began what they *thought* would be their career. They agreed that the educational programs should have offered more practical courses rather than requiring students to take an overload of theoretical courses. Additionally, they noted that the professors should have had high school classroom experiences on the same grade level as the college students whom they were teaching.

Category 2: Induction

Sub-category 1: Experiences with administrators

Most of the participants used several words to describe their principals' *style* of leadership: *distant*, *abusive*, and *top-down*. Each of these styles did not allow the teachers' *voices*

to be heard regarding decisions that affected them. Four of the participants stated specific examples of these three styles.

The term *distant* refers to principals' style of leadership that is perceived to be non-communicative, uninvolved, and detached. An *abusive* style uses verbal and written reprimands and threats that ultimately cause teachers to feel resentment, anger, and disillusionment. A *top-down* style of leadership refers to the principals' power to dictate how, when, where, and to what extent teachers have to comply with their directives.

Distant:

Lisa stated,

I didn't have a positive or negative relationship with the administration—a little bit distant, maybe. I didn't feel it was by design, but it was just "It's nice to meet you." I did find it very telling that almost all the teachers addressed the principal as "Dr. __," never calling him by his first name. I found that very significant. I thought it odd that the teachers never addressed this man who is supposed to be first among equals by his first name.

Lisa added a further dimension about principals' involvement with their teachers:

Administrators have to be involved with their teachers. The attitude of "Us vs. Them" has got to stop. There is a permeating idea in educational circles that those who can, do; those who can't teach, administrate. This mentality frustrates me. Teachers need to see the administrators walking in the hallways. They should know their teachers well enough to be able to tell them something encouraging about their classrooms. These leaders need to offer help. Basically, this is human resources. It should be renamed Human Development Resources. Their focus should be on their teachers' professional and personal development.

Joyce experienced the same type of distant relationship with her administrators. She stated,

It was kind of a distant relationship. There was really no contact with them unless someone had a particular problem or issue that he/she had to consult with one of them. There never was any real contact outside of those type of situations. I never saw or talked to my administrators except when I saw them in the hallways. I don't think they even knew my name. It was very much a factory-type mentality. The message to the teachers was that they were to arrive, learn what they were supposed to do, and then they were on their own to get the job done—sort of like separate pieces of a machine that worked together. I really did not feel any level of collegiality with the administrators. There was

no contact between the teachers and administrators except for the times when information was passed on to us via e-mails or notes placed in our mailboxes. We thought it was very odd that we never consulted with our *boss*.

A third participant, Mary, concurred with Lisa and Joyce:

My administrator had an air about him. He had a very closed-door way of management. I never felt like I could just stop by and talk to him. I never called him by his first name. I always felt that if I were lucky enough to ask for an appointment, he might see me. A lot of the time, he ignored me. That was very intimidating to me.

Several of the participants noted that their administrators never visited their classrooms:

He didn't have a clue what was going on in my classroom.

The only time an administrator was in my room was when I as GTEPed.

I think my principal should have taken the time to get to know his teachers. I don't mean he has to have a heart-to-heart talk with us on a continual basis. I'm suggesting that he should come into our classrooms for five minutes at the beginning of the year, five more minutes at midpoint in the year, and then five minutes at the end of the year. It would have meant a lot to us if he had spoken to us in the hallways and asked us how we were doing. It seemed like we were invisible.

Principals have to make time to get to know their teachers because their number one resource is their teachers. Without the teachers, they do not have a school. Without the teachers being happy, my philosophy of management is if you want to have a human be productive, you encourage him/her.

Carol related an experience in which an administrator was asked to attend her department meeting. From Carol's point of view, "She was there physically, but she was not interested in hearing our opinions. She would nod her head like people tend to do when they don't care about what you're saying."

Abusive:

Five participants identified their administrators' style of leadership as abusive. Jill noted,

I learned my lesson the hard way several times not to approach anyone in the upper echelon. For example, when I talked to a principal about the contents of a meeting, he yelled at me. Whenever I would vent my concerns, I knew the superiors weren't going to do anything in response to my requests. I don't know if they felt attacked or if they felt they were in the same boat with the rest of us because they couldn't change certain

policies. My perception of these experiences was that the administrators “locked-in thinking” to shape their decisions.

Mary had an upsetting experience in her school. She was required to attend a meeting about testing on one of two days. On both days, she had scheduled administrative-approved meetings with her photography club and student council members. She did not go to the meeting. The result was quick and deliberate; she was written up immediately. She said,

I didn’t even receive a warning. I was told, “You’re officially sanctioned. If you do one more thing, you’re fired.” Those words were written on a piece of paper. I thought that was incredulous! I couldn’t believe that those words had been issued to me after all the blood and sweat and tears I had put into the school. I felt like this one insubordination was predictive that I was on my way out. I got angry.

This same teacher found herself in another altercation with the principal a few months later. After she gave a final exam, her students begged her to run their exams through a scantron machine. She debated with herself about whether she should leave her class unattended but decided to do so because she had observed many other teachers doing the same thing many times. While she was out of the classroom, one of the students accessed her computer and changed his grade. When she returned to the classroom and realized what had happened, she corrected the grade and reprimanded the student. She promised him she would not write him up, but after reflecting on the situation, she changed her mind. She reported herself to an administrator. She was written up again and told her contract would not be renewed. Her enthusiasm for the profession she loved was destroyed by the behavior of abusive administrators, causing her to resign. She stated,

What that action told me was that I made the wrong decision especially because of how it ended. But I did the right thing, even though I was punished. Nothing happened to the kid. When the principal talked to me, he said, “There’s a strong possibility that your name is on a list of teachers whose contracts I probably won’t renew.” He continued by saying, “I just want you to know that you’re on the thinnest of ice, and there’s a possibility that even if you don’t do anything else wrong for the rest of the year, I might have to dismiss you.” I was so upset that I couldn’t go back to my class. I felt like the

administration didn't even want to mentor me or help me even if they thought I had a problem. I wasn't even convinced I had a problem. I felt like I kept getting into trouble. I felt like someone should have come to me and had a talk to point out an area on which I needed to work. It was a really confusing time.

Then she added,

I forgot to mention that after I was threatened by the principal, one of my department heads approached him and went to bat for me. He told him I was a great teacher and should not be dismissed. At that point, the principal said to me, "I want you to know you have just escaped under the gun." He then issued me a contract. I didn't sign it. I said to him, "I'm out of here!"

An even stronger type of abusive administrative behavior was reported by two of the eight participants: Kim and Celia. Kim related her experience:

When my department head was demoted, I was very angry about the sneaky, manipulative, backstabbing way the demotion was handled. So I vented to my peers in e-mails. I accidentally sent my feelings to the wrong person. I immediately saw my mistake and wrote another e-mail apologizing for my words. Well, that evening I learned that one of my peers had handed the message to my principal, and the principal pretty much berated me and said, "If you want out, I can get you out. I can fire you in a heartbeat." This really hurt me because for one thing this principal observed me in my class twice and I got rave reviews. My evaluations were marked "Excellent." It angered me that through hearsay, he was ready to get rid of me. I thought that wasn't fair. I said to him, "This is crazy."

Kim's strong opposition to the school's politics forced her to resign. Celia had the more traumatic event happen to her:

All year I had been having minor skirmishes with the administrators over minor issues. One day the situation finally escalated into an ugly confrontation between me and the administrators. I was yanked out of the hallway and told to go to the conference room. When I walked into the room, I looked at the administrators' faces and knew this was not a good situation. I started to cry and said, "I'm not comfortable with this situation. May I please have my mentor teacher with me?" I was told I couldn't. I was too young and naïve to know that I should have said, "I'm not going to say anything until my lawyer arrives. This is not right. Somebody needs to be in here with me or call my lawyer." But I was too stupid to know what to do. They brought up issues that countered my teaching policies. They told me they had talked to students who were critical of me before letting me tell my version about anything they were talking about. I knew I was defeated. The principal wouldn't even let me talk. He continually cut me off, wouldn't let me finish sentences or ask questions. So basically, they nailed me to a *cross* and then told me they were going to place me on a PDP which would be placed in my personnel file. Later, I

received an apology for their making unfounded accusations, but the emotional damage had already been done. I felt that unrealistic demands were placed on me from the first day I began teaching.

Carol was the only teacher in her department. She was trying to establish a new program in her school. When her principal approached her and told her to take her time working on her curriculum, she felt very assured. But then a different *message* was given to her that made her feel she was set up to fail:

At the time, I thought, “Wow!” That is so wonderful to have an administrator who understands the pressure and understands that I’m not going to be able to get everything done this first year. And yet, at the end of the first year, I heard that she had been saying things about me behind my back about how she wished things in my program had been going faster. Let me back up. I heard about the principal’s comments when my department head told me what she said. It was related to me that the principal had heard I had a tendency to say no to teachers when they asked me to help with extracurricular activities. I didn’t have time to do that and get my program started. It was a contradiction there. I was doing exactly what she told me, yet she had this feeling that I was not a team player. The end result was that my program was cut in half.

Top-down:

The third style of leadership exhibited by four of the participants’ principals was labeled *top-down*. Meg described it as being “slave driven.” Joyce described a typical faculty meeting at her school:

The information was disseminated in a top-down format, never the other way around. The teachers would sit in the auditorium. The lights were dimmed. The principal and assistant principals were always on the stage. They would talk with a microphone, directing us to refer to the handouts we received when we walked in. That was it. After the meeting, everyone would just walk out and go home.

Lisa had an identical experience:

I never heard the principal share his vision for the school. His leadership style was top down. The environment was very sterile. He basically said how it was going to be. He told us what standards the school must meet. I think the administrative team had a very condescending or elitist attitude about their position. At the faculty meetings, the administrators stood on the stage. We sat in the audience. We had no input about what was being said. The relationship was very one-sided.

Mary had a similar experience in meetings that her principal conducted: “He wanted to run them like we were in a classroom. When he would ask questions about how we felt about certain issues and we would respond, he would correct us. I did not respect him. I felt he was not modeling good teaching techniques.”

To summarize, teachers in this study felt that principals have a responsibility to encourage their teachers instead of making them feel ignored, intimidated, or abused. The experiences the participants had with their administrators were discouraging; as a result, they lost respect for their principals and felt devalued.

Sub-category 2: Experiences with professional development

The second area of induction discussed by three of the participants related to experiences with their professional development, which they hoped would be enhanced by taking required staff development courses that were offered by the Board during after-school hours. The responding participants expressed negative feelings about these courses. Joyce stated,

The staff development courses—the stuff we’re forced to attend—were a colossal waste of my time. I was not treated as a professional. I felt like I was a child being punished and made to stay after school for something I didn’t do. For example, I tried to exempt from taking the state’s required computer class. I was told I had to take the class or pass a ridiculously long test as an option. That was ridiculous. I’ve built a website. I could pretty much run circles around the IT guys at the school. I questioned why I was supposed to sit in a class two times a week with one of those guys. It was insulting to me.

Jill concurred with Joyce’s opinion:

I think most of the staff development courses were not valuable. I have a gifted add-on. Getting it was a waste of my time. I honestly don’t know anything more about teaching a gifted student than before I took the courses. I just put in seat hours. I think it’s ironic that the time spent is called “seat hours” because that is exactly what a person does—sit.

The participants not only resented the time involved but also the perception that the courses did not offer any concrete things they could use in their classrooms. One participant observed, “On teacher planning days, we had to sit in stupid staff development classes discussing

crap when we needed to be in our classrooms grading papers.” Their attitude toward the courses affected their perceptions. Carol stated, “I was bored when I had to attend the county meetings for first-year teachers. Some of the stuff they presented went totally over my head. For example, I didn’t understand the material about lawsuits. My attitude was: ‘Okay, if you say so.’”

A different kind of professional development offered to three of the participants was the opportunity to work with an assigned mentor. A mentor, defined as a veteran teacher who is teaching in the same school as the novice teacher, is supposed to serve as her listener and guide on a regular basis. They articulated different perspectives on the effectiveness of the mentoring program in their respective schools. Kim stated, “The whole mentoring process is a great idea, but it doesn’t work because when teachers are assigned a mentor, it’s very difficult to find time to go and help the mentee.”

Three of the participants did not have successful experiences with their mentors. Even though Carol and her mentor had classrooms adjacent to each other, Carol did not talk to her on a consistent basis because she did not think that her mentor had the same perspectives on educational issues. Other detrimental issues that affected their mentoring relationship were that they had different planning periods and taught different subjects. Meg did not have a positive impression of her mentor. Based on her experiences in her high school, she made the following observation: “I worked with teachers who were serving as mentors only because they were kissing up to the principal so they could be considered for an AP position. Jill had an experience in which she felt undermined by her mentor:

My mentor teacher nominated herself and got the award for writing a creative lesson. She didn’t recognize any of the stuff that I had done. Her classroom is right next door to mine. We talked about the stuff we did all the time. I wonder if she said something about the creative stuff that I was doing. I don’t think she did.

Two other participants recalled that there had been times when they expressed a desire to have a mentor, but no teacher was assigned to work with them. Lisa stated, “The biggest thing for me was learning how to deal with a group of people. I had to learn to be real careful about what I said and gauge how quickly I would react. I learned that many times, I had to put on a façade because I didn’t know what to say. I wish I had had a mentor to listen to me.” Kim stated her need for someone to whom she could talk:

I had somewhat of a conflict with a teacher. I didn’t know where to turn because I didn’t understand the dynamics involved. I’ve seen cases in which teachers would talk to other teachers to get advice only to have their comments get back to the person with whom they didn’t know how to work. The situation would escalate into something really ugly. There should be a neutral person on the staff—a mentor—to whom the teacher could talk in a confidential manner.

In summary, the professional development of teachers in this study might have been enhanced if opportunities had been provided that were practical to their teaching. If the recommended conditions had been met by the mentoring program, the relationship between the mentor and her mentee might have helped the teacher develop professionally. Lisa offered substantive thoughts regarding mentoring:

First-year teachers need someone in their field. I very strongly encourage that the teachers and their mentors have the same planning period. I feel like first-year teachers need to be hand held because teaching is so hard. I feel that baby teachers should be babied. Then as the teacher gains experience, the focus needs to change completely. It needs to progress from there to how the teacher is developing higher thinking skills. The question should be asked, “How is she growing professionally?” The mentoring needs to grow just as the teacher is growing and maturing.

Sub-category 3: Experiences with colleagues

The third area of induction is the experiences teachers have with each other. There was little time for teachers in this study to socialize during the school day. Kim stated, “I guess I could have sent an e-mail asking if anyone wanted to go out and have a drink with me, but I really wasn’t interested in doing that.” Several of the participants stated that the only time they

talked to other teachers was during their twenty-three minute lunch break. Mary observed that she did not see teachers trying to make contact with each other “except maybe when [they] were standing in the line in the copying room.”

Four participants chose not to foster collegiality with other faculty members. Carol stated, “I didn’t come into teaching looking for friends or colleagues in other departments. The other music teachers in the district and I would meet at various functions. I considered them my colleagues.” Lisa found that most of the teachers in her department were fairly indifferent to her situation. She taught science in a trailer and needed to use the labs inside the building twice a week. She found that some of the teachers in her department were not willing to exchange their classrooms with her; she stated that she didn’t “feel a tremendous outpouring of ‘Let me make sure you’re okay.’” Another reason she chose not to associate with her colleagues was that she did not like listening to the negative conversations they had with each other in the department workroom.

There were situations in which teachers were competitive. Kim had such an experience:

Sometimes there was competitiveness between some of the teachers. I remember when I won an award that was presented by the student body. The teachers were very mean to me because I had earned it. There was a tone that it was not really anything special. So that kind of minimizing hurt my feelings. I felt sabotaged. I perceived my school was a divisive community. I decided I did not want to be a part of it. I think all of us are responsible for that. I’m not going to alleviate myself from the responsibility of what I contribute or didn’t contribute to the school’s morale. I think that it comes down to the leadership allowing people to come to terms with what’s going on.

Of all the participants, Celia introduced the most sensitive reason for her lack of collegiality with the other teachers in her school:

Because of my sexual orientation, I did not feel comfortable being with faculty members at social activities outside of school. I was afraid of the comments they might make. I’ve heard teachers say derogatory things about people’s sexuality, and I’ve seen administrators laugh at their comments. It’s my perception that schools are not addressing this issue of insensitivity.

In summary, teachers in this study did not always work together to support a collegial atmosphere and felt that relationships in a school community cannot be forced.

Category 3: Demands

Sub-category 1: Management

In the teaching profession, the term *management* involves two distinct yet intertwined dilemmas of teachers' lives. The first kind of management placed upon teachers requires that they balance all of the physical and emotional demands that require high levels of energy while working in their schools a minimum of eight hours a day—plus spending many additional hours grading papers, composing tests, and attending after-school functions. An extreme example of these types of demands was addressed by four of the participants (i.e., the placement of inclusion students in their classes even though they had no training to work with them).

Carol noted,

I never felt I got away from teaching. There was always in the back of my mind a dread, even though I enjoyed it once I was in front of the class and knew my lessons would be fine. I worried constantly about all the myriad issues involved in my program. I never felt like I got on top of them—ever! As far as my week's worth of lesson plans—never. I was always feeling like I was behind.

Joyce shared Carol's sentiments:

Teaching had an effect on my overall life. I'm not a morning person. I had to get up at 5:30 in order to get to school by 7:30. I liked to have 45 minutes before my first class began to get things done like grading papers, get all my things in order, make sure that I have all the things that I need, make sure I haven't forgotten to print a test. I always tried to get there a little bit early because every minute of quiet time in my room without students was sacred. My day was hectic and nonstop. Supposedly, I got a planning period, but I never felt like I had a break all day. Even things like standing in the halls during class changes—they made us do that. Everybody had to be at his/her door, monitoring the students because there had been some pretty bad incidents in the school. In my *spare* time, I had to call parents if I was having trouble with their child; half the time they didn't return my call. There I was going out on a limb to help their child. Of course, if their child failed my class, all of a sudden they were jumping down my throat and asking me why they hadn't been made aware of the problem. The total accumulation

of all of the hours I spent on things related to school was mind boggling. I felt emotionally drained.

Katie felt as over extended as Joyce and Carol.

I felt overwhelmed because I would come home from work, make dinner, take a nap because I had gotten up so early. The rest of the evening I was planning lessons. Then I would go to bed, get up the next morning, and go to work. My teaching job was 24/7. On the weekends, maybe I would have time to clean my apartment. I washed my laundry at my parents' house while I graded papers. That was my social life. After going to church on Sundays, I came home, graded papers, and wrote my lesson plans for Monday's classes. I didn't have time to do long-term planning. I had no time to develop a structured way to handle my teaching load.

Katie also commented about the volume of "extras":

I wanted to be there to teach, but e-mail was my daily ritual. I had to make sure I was responding to a parent in an appropriate way. I was concerned about my wording. I didn't want anyone to come after me. I had had an experience with a couple of parents who misunderstood what I said. They took my words the wrong way.

Mary added her thoughts:

It wasn't that I didn't like teaching. It was the paperwork. And then everything was put on a computer. That sounded like a great idea. Instead, it meant that the administration could send more information to the teachers, expecting quicker responses. There are so many demands being placed on your time that you don't have time to be an effective teacher. That's what is so frustrating.

Even though these concerns were prevalent in the teachers' lives, the more demanding ones involved student behavior management. Classes in the school system involved in this study were large, averaging 25-30 students per class. Often, several of the teachers experienced a large number of students who were disruptive in their behavior patterns. The philosophy of some department heads is that a novice teacher should be *protected* from any disruptive students during her first year. However, after her first year, all types of students are scheduled for her classes. The fact that she has not had time to develop the skills nor be trained to handle these students is often not taken into account. Several of the participants said they did not know how to manage these students. They made comments such as "I had no idea how to handle those kids,"

“I was so out of my depth. I cried,” “I didn’t know how to manage a classroom,” and “I didn’t have a clue.” Katie related a first-year experience:

I knew first-year teaching was going to be horrible. I was going to come home crying several days, and I did cry a few times when I had to deal with disruptive students, but once I got through it, I thought it wasn’t nearly as bad as everybody had said it would be. So I signed a contract for the second year. Everybody said my second year was going to be so much easier. They lied! Part of the problem was that the first year I was in the school, my department head made sure I didn’t have any students who had reputations of being problem students. She made sure they were placed in classes of the more experienced teachers. My second year I had several difficult students, especially in one class. My fifth period class was filled with a very bad combination of students. I even had a student in that class who was on probation.

One type of disruptive student group is inclusion students (i.e., special education students who have emotional disabilities). All ten participants in the study stated that they had not received specific training in college about how to apply behavior modification strategies to these students. The only way the three participants who had inclusion students in their classes learned how to work with them was by talking to other teachers who had had them in their classes. Kim observed,

If an inclusion student was having a bad day and I thought to notify his/her special ed teacher, the student would be kept out of my class for one or more days. Whenever I had to deal with one of these students, I spent an exorbitant amount of time disciplining him/her. The student was a great distraction to the general flow of the instruction.

When teachers work effectively with inclusion students, counselors tend to overload their classes with this type of student. Meg was such a teacher. One year, she and a special education paraprofessional were assigned five classes that included many inclusion students. Whenever Meg told the counselors that she did not want any more students added to her large classes, the counselor ignored her requests. She felt the administration should have capped the class; instead, the administrators also ignored her requests.

Jill taught music. If the counselors needed to place an inclusion student in an elective class, many times the student was enrolled in one of hers. This enrollment proved to be detrimental to her choral program because the students were grouped according to their ability and singing experience. The inclusion student did not have the background to qualify him/her for the class. She explained,

I had a problem with mainstreaming special ed students into my classes. Some of them created stress in the classroom due to their bad behavior. I had to spend so much of my time and energy every day dealing with a particular student and looking into his discipline record. I found that the things he had done were far more serious than were stated in his IEP. He was extremely disruptive and distracting to the other students. I tried to have him removed from my class, but I was told that I had to be understanding. I was instructed to accommodate this student. The subtle message was that this one student's self-esteem was more important than that of all the other students. I perceived that these students were considered to be untouchable. If I tried to suggest that perception, I was labeled as a horribly mean person who just didn't understand the situation.

The second area involving management in teachers' lives is their feeling that they have great difficulty "turning off" their thoughts about school-related events when they need to devote a full measure of energy and devotion to their families. For example, Lisa stated,

My husband was very frustrated that I brought work home frequently. It worked well for me to bring stuff home and crank through it out on Saturday morning. It wasn't anything we had huge fights about, but I heard a fairly constant stream of comments like: Are you still grading?

Ann was the only participant in the study who had children. She noted that her family was severely impacted while she was teaching in a high school:

The worse aspect of my teaching occurred when I got home each day. I was so tired that I would just drop off to sleep. When I would awaken, it was too late to help my children with their homework or fix their supper. I received notes from their teachers, telling me that they had commented I was meaner than before I started teaching high school. They didn't like the long hours I was teaching. The cost to my family was more than I could afford.

In summary, teachers in this study felt that management did not always connote control. Many extenuating circumstances determined how well a teacher could attempt to control the demands placed on her personal and professional life.

Sub-category 2: Course load

The term *course load* is defined as the number of courses a teacher has to teach during a semester. In most school systems, when a novice teacher reports to her high school, she is handed her daily schedule, which includes times for scheduled classes, lunch break, and planning period. This procedure may look *innocent* on the surface, but it can be an ominous occurrence that tells a teacher that her preferences concerning how many students she *should* have in a class versus how many she *will* have in a class, what types of students she is better trained to teach, how many preparations she will have, and the quality of the textbook are not usually considered. Instead, the department heads make all the assignments.

Eight of the ten participants taught academic courses. Each of them expressed that they expected to have a predominant number of lower-level classes assigned to them because that is “just the nature of the beast.” Karen stated,

The veteran teachers always teach the third- and fourth-level students. When I accepted that fact, I began to wonder how long I would have to stay in a school before I would *earn* the right to teach the upper-level classes. I knew that because I was a first-year teacher, I was at the bottom of the teachers’ totem pole.

When Ann resigned after teaching one semester, the teachers in her department encouraged her to ask for higher level classes if she were to teach again in a high school because they respected her expertise in her field (she had her doctorate) and had taught her subject on the college level for several years. Her response was typical of teachers who are new in a school: “Surely everyone asks for those [higher level] classes. I felt that since I was coming in as a new teacher, I didn’t have the right to make those demands. I felt I had to pay my dues.” Meg observed,

I was totally crazy to have taught in my school. What the administrators expected me and the other teachers to do was disgusting. It was outrageous. The only reason we teachers accomplished all we did was because we were conscientious. That's how teachers are. No one asked me if I liked my level of students I was teaching, if my textbook met the students' needs, or how I was coping with my schedule. I was thrown in the room and had to tell myself daily that I would survive.

Celia made a poignant observation: "You would think that the administrators would give the good positions to the new teachers because they are the ones who need them the most. They should not expect the teachers to travel over the school."

Three of the participants expressed that they should have had fewer preparations. Katie stated, "Teaching all the same prep would have been tedious grading all the papers, but I think my prep time would have been cut in half because I could learn how to use the book really well. A second planning period would have been wonderful to have a little bit more time to do things. And a better textbook would have helped."

Kim, who was an English teacher, taught on the block schedule. She observed that she thought English teachers were more stressed than any other teachers due to the extreme load of grading discussion tests and essays on a weekly basis:

I had high expectations for myself that I would have quick turnaround to have the papers graded, but most of the time, it didn't happen. I found myself apologizing to my students and making excuses to them. I didn't think that was beneficial, either. I really felt that if I had had either smaller classes or fewer classes, I could have given my all, which was important to me, and do the job that I wanted to do and feel good about it.

Mary expressed a real concern about her teaching assignment:

Believe it or not, I didn't mind teaching the lower-level students my first two years, but I was afraid I was going to get this type of student from then on out because the special ed. teacher with whom I worked during my first year told my department heads that I was doing a good job. I guess I did an okay job, but I was not enjoying myself.

Meg explained a similar experience:

When you develop a reputation, it can be a curse. The counselors knew I could work well with lower-level students, so they felt they could dump a kid in my class anytime. It

became a dumping situation. It really wasn't helping me be a better team teacher or work with these kids better. I kept saying to them, "Don't give me ten kids when everyone else has five special ed kids." That's not fair. It made my teaching so much harder.

Celia was completely overwhelmed with the job expectations from the first day she arrived at her school. She had no assigned classroom and yet was scheduled to teach a choral class that required her to use a piano. Her first semester, she taught one music class of 57 students in the theater. Her other two classes were English, a subject she was not qualified to teach. During her second semester, she had two choral classes and one English class. One of the choral classes met in an art room. She had to roll a piano down the crowded halls to the room. The second choral class was located at the opposite end of the building. Again, she would make her way through the hallways and usually arrive late for the class. She described her course work as being extremely difficult, if not almost impossible.

In summary, few, if any, considerations were given to new teachers in this study concerning their expectations, needs, or abilities. The mentality of the administration and senior teachers was "sink-or-swim." Many "drowned" under these circumstances.

Sub-category 3: Extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities require many additional hours of after-school time. Often, teachers have to attend club meetings, coach sports, and attend weekend conferences and competitions. Most of these activities are officially defined as "voluntary," so teachers who "offer" their time receive little or no stipend. One of the reasons so many novice teachers sponsor extracurricular activities is that their professors advise them to make themselves *marketable*. They tell their students that every principal expects novice teachers to assume some type of extracurricular responsibility. Five of the participants sponsored extracurricular activities. For example, Jill was lured into a subtle form of *entrapment* when she filled out her application

for the school system. One part of the application contained a checklist of activities that she would be willing to sponsor. Based on her professors' advice, she checked several of them.

When she arrived at her high school on the first day, she heard her name announced at the faculty meeting as the dance team sponsor. She stated,

When I heard my name and my assignment, I was shocked. I don't even dance. No one asked me if I wanted to do this or not. I felt it was a sign of disrespect for the use of my time past the required school hours. I was already concerned about the time that would be required for me to do my job well after looking at my schedule and number of students I had in my classes.

During Meg's fifth year, she volunteered to coach cheerleading. She said,

It was my passion, but I wish someone had said to me, "You're not allowed to do that because it will take too much of your time and energy." I stayed late on game nights. The reason I accepted the cheerleading sponsorship was because that was the only place I felt validated. It gave me a chance to work with a group of people who were on the same page.

Celia determined that she did not have time to sponsor any extracurricular activities because she was already spending an inordinate number of hours after school trying to build up her music program. She had 80 students involved in musical productions. She felt like she was drowning all the time because she had no time for herself.

Mary had an unusual experience when she was interviewed for her position:

I remember when the principal interviewed me. He asked me what I could do for the school—not teaching-wise, but extracurricular. The school needed a softball coach. I told him I played softball in high school, but I didn't consider myself an expert by any means. He replied, "Well, that's what we need." At that point in my career, I felt like I had to accept the offer. I was under the impression that I wouldn't get the job unless I took the assignment. Everyday after school, I went to practice for four hours unless we had a game. There were weekend tournaments. It was the craziest thing I have ever done. The little amount of stipend I received could not possibly make it worth my time to do what I did.

Because Joyce was a one-member department, she had no choice but to sponsor her subject's club. She had to do all the logistical things associated with the meetings, i.e., supervise

and collect money for fund-raising events and schedule the meetings. She was also expected to transport the students to and from weekend competitions. She was literally away from her home six days out of seven, two weeks out of four each month.

In summary, teachers in this study could not keep up with their course loads and outside activities. The required number of hours that were involved when a teacher sponsored extracurricular activities made it almost impossible for her to prepare for her classes adequately. The participants felt that it was too much to ask of new teachers to make their work with the students several hours past their stipulated contract hours.

Sub-category 4: Isolation

Teachers often experience physical isolation due to their classroom assignments which are determined by the administration. When several of the novice teachers in this study reported to their schools, they were not surprised to learn that their classes were located in trailers. Karen stated,

Most teachers who were new to my school were placed in trailers because of the fact that the veteran teachers had first dibs. If you had first dibs, your classes were in the building. All of us inexperienced teachers were out in the trailers. When a teacher is moved into the building, she is perceived as “moving up” the academic ladder.

Katie made the same observation: “I guess I could have requested to be moved into the building, but I feel sure I would not have gotten in because I was at the bottom of the totem pole in terms of years of experience.” Meg discussed a different viewpoint about teaching in a trailer:

I loved teaching in a trailer because no one usually floats into a trailer. I found that when I taught in the building, my students stopped by my room quite often to chat. But if your classroom is in a trailer, they don’t come by as often and intrude on your time. Rarely does anyone bother you either. If a teacher’s classroom is in the building and a teacher on her hallway gets sick, she is often asked to cover that teacher’s class until a sub can arrive. Another advantage of teaching in a trailer is no one seems to know where you are. I was out of sight, out of mind. Teaching in a trailer isn’t as bad as some teachers think it is.

Katie felt that teachers who had classrooms in the building had the advantage of being able to step out of their rooms and talk to other teachers during class changes: “When I stepped out of my trailer, I usually only saw students.” Conversely, Jill reported that even though her classroom was in the building, she still felt isolated because her classroom was not on the hall with the other teachers in her department: “My being the ‘new kid on the block’ forced me to come out of my comfort zone—my classroom—and meet other teachers in different departments. I didn’t like it at first, but I must admit that once I did step out into *another world*, I enjoyed it.”

Isolation can also occur when a teacher is a one-person department because she is not a member of a particular group, per se, even though her teaching assignment might place her under the title of a department (e.g., a music teacher is usually assigned to the fine arts department).

Celia stated,

I felt very isolated because I was not in a department. I was my own island because I was the only person teaching that subject even though there were two other teachers who were teaching a different kind of music. Plus, the location of our classes was on the other end of the building. Music is an isolated field on top of the whole isolation situation.

In summary, the *voice* of the novice teacher in this study was not heard concerning her classroom location. The effect of isolation was determined by the teacher’s perception of its being good or bad.

Theme 2: Outcomes of Experiences

Category 1: Physical Strain

The physical toll that some teachers in this study experienced was extensive. During her fourth year of teaching, Lisa developed fibromyalgia. She stated, “I ached all the time. Then I began to experience IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome), headaches, chronic fatigue, and exhaustion. I felt bad most of the days I taught.” Jill reported that while she was teaching, she

had a hernia, an “ulcer type of thing.” She had stomach problems because of the stress she felt. One participant reported that she gained weight and began to drink. All of the participants stated that they felt exhausted at the end of each day and especially at the end of the school year.

Mary stated that when she coached softball, she suffered from sleep deprivation. Karen had the same experience:

Several times during my first year of teaching, I would drag myself to school even if I were ill. My second year, there were days when I awoke at 3:00 a.m. and couldn’t go back to sleep. I felt like I had been hit by a bus. I would decide that I wasn’t going to work because the students would walk over me. I don’t think I could have taught on those days. I got a sub, stayed home, slept, and graded some papers.

Joyce reported that she was sick all the time:

I started having migraine headaches due to the stress. In fact, from September to November during my first year of teaching, I think I lost about seven or eight pounds because I was so busy. I wouldn’t even think about eating. Teachers kept telling me that the reason I stayed sick was I was constantly exposed to the kids’ germs.

In summary, teachers in this study experienced numerous health problems and were not able to function in this demanding profession.

Category 2: Psychological Damage

The psychological damage caused by the teachers’ experiences resulted in self doubt, resentment, and anger. Lisa stated that she felt tremendous pressure due to the lack of respect society showed her and her colleagues:

Society shows disrespect to its teachers. I think teachers absorb that because the kids as well as their parents disrespect us. Teachers start to feel like: ‘Well, we’re *just* teachers.’ There is no value placed on what teachers do even though we change the world through our students’ thinking and actions.

She also noted that disrespect was shown in the schools. Administrators frequently showed disrespect to their first-year teachers by “tossing them in the deep end.” Lisa observed, “Some teachers are naturally skilled at *swimming*, while others are *drowning*.”

The issue of evaluations frustrated several of the participants. Seven participants stated that they felt intimidated when an evaluator came into their classrooms to observe them. They commented that they probably wouldn't have felt that way if the administrators had visited their classrooms casually during the school year. Lisa stated,

I get frustrated because I feel like I'm getting the same marks during my evaluations that weak teachers get. It just so happens that when the observing evaluator comes into a weak teacher's room, everything is going well. That is not the case on a day-by-day basis. I'm never going to be Teacher-of-the-Year, but I'm good. I can hold my own. I don't necessarily want any recognition of that; I just want the respect that comes with being skilled at what I do. So I found the evaluations very frustrating. I found there was very little personal touches being given.

One participant also performed an evaluation of her own work and how it impacted her. She stated,

I was very insecure about things I was doing in my classroom because maybe they weren't following what other teachers in my department did. So I would try to find out what other teachers thought about what I was doing. I always wondered how I would know if something I did didn't meet the expectations of the people around me. I needed feedback that I never received.

Some of the relationships the teachers had with each other proved to be threatening. Kim had heard by hearsay that a teacher felt great animosity towards her. Her principal was aware of the problem, but he wouldn't tell Kim who the teacher was. She said,

I'm not a wimp. I do not like confrontation. It makes me uncomfortable. But I knew there was a teacher on the faculty who was trying to sabotage me. The principal refused to schedule a meeting between the teacher and me. I felt like I was in a hopeless situation. Now, if the principal had said, "I'm going to pull this person and you into my office so you can talk about this," I would have felt I had had closure and could have moved on. But because this was open ended, my paranoia began to set in. I really thought the issue needed to be addressed. I felt very unsupported.

Two participants faced ethical issues. Jill had a student in one of her classes who failed the course second semester. During the summer months, her principal called her and told her the student's mother was putting so much pressure on her that she felt she needed to change the

grade. Jill went to the school and showed the principal the student's failing grades. Instead of being supported, the principal told her she had no choice but to change the grade. Jill felt like she had been "sold down the river." She lost all respect for the administrator. She made a conclusive statement: "I lost faith in the profession."

Carol's perception about her principal's political behavior was based on her principal's own words: 'I have been doing this for so long. I know I've gotten political. Sometimes I just have to be that way.' The principal's mindset became very evident when Carol was in charge of a musical competition. One day her principal approached her and asked her to *bend* the rules so the school's PTA president's son could audition even though a student could not audition unless he/she was involved in the school's music program. Carol explained that she was asking her to do something that was illegal. The principal's response was "I want you to overrule that. You have to let this kid audition. You don't want to step on the president's toes." At first, Carol didn't think she had done anything wrong because her principal had made the request, but in retrospect, she regretted giving in to the request. She lost her respect for the administrator. She felt all her idealistic perceptions of teaching had "been beaten to a pulp." Carol further explained, "At first, the principal had a really good way of manipulating you to get her way. You would walk out of her office feeling really good. But later on, you would ask yourself: wait a minute. What just happened? She was good at doing that."

The last psychologically damaging incident happened to Katie. She wrote her principal a note and naively commented that she felt that the time she spent in faculty meetings was a waste of her time. She asked if she could be excused from the meetings and spend needed time in her classroom. The principal called in Katie's department head and showed her the note. The next thing Katie knew, she was verbally accosted by her department head and called a "bitch."

In summary, teachers in this study clarified how lack of respect shown to them by society and, more importantly by their colleagues, can cause overwhelming stress. The psychological damage that was done to these teachers was still detectable even after they had left the profession.

Category 3: Family Stress

When a teacher is affected emotionally and physically, her relationships with her family members are often affected. A major dilemma with which teachers had to contend was trying to balance their time and energy between their professional and personal obligations. The husbands of eight participants were not teachers; therefore, they did not have any sense of the pressures their wives were under in their professional settings, nor did they show sympathy when their wives would try to explain to them why they were still upset about an incident. One husband responded ‘Just forget it. Those kids are not worth the stress you’re feeling.’ Jill said that her husband didn’t want to hear about what happened to her at school. He resented the fact that she chose to attend some school activities on the weekends because he felt she was choosing to spend time with her students instead of him.

Meg’s husband told her he didn’t like her when she was teaching. He explained: “‘Your personality changes when you get under the amount of stress you experience in the classroom. I am sympathetic to what you have to do for and at school, but only to a point. You are the one who chose to teach. Either hush talking about it or get out.’” Jill was surprised by her husband’s reaction when she told him she was going to quit teaching. Instead of responding emotionally, he was pragmatic:

When I told my husband I was quitting my job, he didn’t know what to say. He presented a tough picture for me by asking me what I could do with my training in my specific foreign language field other than teach. I think he was more concerned about how I was going to pay off my student loans if I quit.

The final observation was value laden. Joyce explained,

Even though my husband did not understand totally consuming efforts when I was teaching, he admired and respected my work. Yet he was also jealous of my job. He realized that I was doing something that made a difference in the world. Secondly, he realized that his job enabled corporations to make more money, but in actuality, his job impacted no one's life.

In summary, the viewpoints of the teachers regarding their teaching experiences differed greatly from those held by their spouses. There was a conflict of interest.

To conclude, this chapter presented teachers' perspectives on how their experiences had impacted their decision to leave the teaching profession. Individual participants were introduced and common themes were discussed in detail. Two common themes emerged from the data: the teachers' experiences and the outcomes of those experiences. Within these themes, six categories were presented, supported by the words of the participants. The following chapter summarizes the study, thoroughly discusses the findings, and explains the implications.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study explored the perspectives of ten former high school teachers in one of the largest school system in the state of Georgia. In this chapter, the study is summarized, the findings are discussed, and the implications for further research for the specified school system in the study are presented.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the perspectives of former female high school teachers who had left the profession and to propose themes, grounded in the data, to explain those perspectives. The research was guided by two research questions: (a) what were the resigning teachers' experiences with teaching? (b) what did those experiences mean to the teachers who resigned? The study did not require a specific site due to the fact that the participants had resigned from the school system.

The research methodology used in the study was grounded theory. In accordance with grounded theory methodology, theoretical sampling was used to select ten former high school teachers to participate, and in-depth, face-to-face initial and follow-up interviews were conducted with the participants in the spring and summer of 2004. Constant comparative analysis was used to collect, code, and analyze the data, which included interviews, documents, and researcher's memos. Recurring concepts in the participants' perspectives were identified and organized into two main themes and six categories. Several themes emerged from on-going analysis and interpretation of the data.

In Chapter 4, the research findings were presented. Based on the experiences of the participants, two main themes and six categories emerged as significant for explaining the teachers' perspectives on why they left the profession. The main themes addressed their experiences in teaching and what those experiences meant to them.

The perspectives of the participants in this study provided pertinent information that will be helpful to Boards of Education and other policy-making bodies because the results revealed that the participants' decision to leave teaching in five or fewer years was a result of their perceptions of the realities of teaching. Furthermore, the results highlighted the need for support and guidance of new teachers; if not, high attrition rates will continue.

Currently, most annual reports of attrition offer no reasons for teachers' resignations at the end of the each school year. This study demonstrates the value of disaggregated data and also expands a nascent understanding of research regarding teacher attrition. Disaggregated reports that indicate reasons teachers resign, whether to become a stay-at-home mother, be employed in a different school system, retire, or leave the profession permanently for other reasons, provide specific information about teacher attrition.

Discussion

Themes that emerged from this study are related to the findings that were presented in Chapter 4 in light of extant research on teacher attrition and demonstrated how the experiences of the teachers in the study mirror and add to the findings in the literature. The purpose of this section is to discuss the major findings. This section begins by establishing connections between the two main themes: the resigning teachers' experiences and the outcomes of those experiences.

This study confirms previous findings that novice teachers face challenges from the first day they enter a classroom. They are expected to handle daily demands as if they were veteran

teachers. Scott (1999) observed, “Beginning teachers are not finished products. Expecting them to perform all the duties that we expect seasoned teachers to do is unrealistic” (p. 6). The pervasive atmosphere of the school is the “sink-or-swim” approach (Lortie, 1975). It has been noted that in the first years of teaching, “only the strongest and most determined teachers survive” (Croasmun et al., 2000). Some of the participants in the study realized the nuances involved in teaching very quickly and decided to leave the profession. Other participants stayed in their schools two to four more years, hoping that the expectations placed upon them and the treatment they had received would improve. When they perceived that nothing was going to change, they joined the group of other teachers who had resigned from this school system, ending careers before they had a chance to begin.

Findings demonstrate that the experiences of the participants in the study contribute to teacher attrition literature that examines the reasons teachers leave the profession in five or fewer years, specifically, the lack of administrative support, legal rights of teachers, mainstreaming of inclusion students, and overload of work (Farber, 1991a; Fox & Certo, 1990). Participants in the study left their chosen profession for reasons heretofore unexamined in the literature, including (a) destructive behavior of principals, (b) physical dangers to teachers, and (c) forcing teachers to commit unethical and illegal acts.

For example, even though some administrators respect their colleagues, a study conducted by Blase and Blase (2003) reported that some principals engage in destructive behaviors; consistent with that research, this researcher found that one participant experienced a destructive closed-door administrative conference. Although the teacher requested that a mentor or legal advisor be present to help her answer allegations presented by the administrators, she was denied access to any advisement; her reaction was one of fear, indignation, and anger. The

legality of the events that transpired during the conference is in question, but to date, there is scant literature that discusses teachers' legal rights when dealing with their administrators (Ricken, 1980). In addition, new teachers are especially vulnerable given their lack of experience and tenure in the profession. This combination of factors makes them particularly susceptible to abuse.

A second reason for teachers leaving the profession that was revealed in the study is the potentially volatile situation that can develop when teachers have one or more inclusion students in a classroom. Gold and Roth (1993) stated, "The most dangerous threats to the physical, emotional, and intellectual welfare of teachers are the stressful and emotional dilemmas they encounter almost daily" (p. 3). The participants in the study acknowledged that they had no training about how to work with inclusion students who tend to be disruptive and can become physically violent. These teachers expressed concern for their physical safety—particularly if an inclusion student were to become upset, block the teacher's access to the panic button in her classroom, or hurt herself or himself. Material that discusses the options that regular classroom teachers have to protect themselves is not extensive. Two issues are evident in this volatile situation for new teachers. One is the real possibility of physical harm to both the teacher and the student; the other is the possibility of legal action, of which many new teachers are unfortunately unaware.

The study also revealed a third reason that teachers leave the profession: the power an administrator can exert to force them to commit unethical, illegal acts without taking the responsibility for instigating the action involved. During teachers' college training, legal issues are superficially discussed, and seldom is anything mentioned about the possibility that an administrator might commit such an act. Yet two participants in the study experienced this

situation. Again, the teachers' lack of training made them vulnerable. Because administrators have been treated as paragons of integrity in past years (Lynn, 2003), novice teachers do not expect to be placed in compromising situations with their principals.

In this study, one teacher was *requested strongly* to allow a student to compete in a competition even though he did not meet the criteria that would have made him eligible, and a second teacher was asked to change a student's failing grade to a passing one. When she refused her principal's "offer," the principal changed the grade on the teacher's computer. Clearly, such indiscretions should have been reported to the Board of Education of this school system, but teachers were not informed of procedures, if indeed such procedures exist, that are used to report wrongdoings committed by their principals (Blase & Blase, 2003). Furthermore, a teacher who disagrees with her administrator risks creating a field of tension (Kelchtermans & Strittmatter, 1999) and suffering retaliation by the principal. The double bind that results from these requests is a no-win situation for the novice teacher, who may be considered insubordinate by the administration. Potential damage to a teacher's career can be significant.

Themes

Based on the findings, three themes emerged. These themes will be presented with evidence from the data and will be related to the research in the area of teacher attrition.

Administration

When teachers are inducted into the profession, a potential negative source of influence is the principal. This study showed that these participants had little contact with their principals. The principals' *style* of leadership was identified as being distant, abusive, or top-down. The level of detachment teachers perceived in their principals' leadership made them feel that the administrators chose not to be involved in their teachers' professional or personal lives. The

principals' top-down attitude, as evidenced by their behavior during faculty meetings, was perceived to be power-driven. As a result, the teachers perceived that their opinions were not valued, and they felt as if they did not play a role in any decision-making programs in their schools.

Past research has shown that the pivotal person who affects teacher attrition is the principal (Lecompte & Dworkin, 1991; Lynn, 1994). A principal's leadership or lack of leadership abilities deeply impacts his/her teachers' perceptions of teaching. According to Certo and Fox (2002), administration is the second most frequently perceived reason why teachers leave the profession. This study further illustrated the importance of not only the leadership ability but also the ethical behavior of the principals. Novice teachers need role models, not only older teachers who can mentor them but also administrators whom they can trust and admire. Professional behavior is important in all professions, but it is especially important in a profession that also serves to guide and educate young people.

Personal and Professional Lives

Teachers' personal and professional lives are strongly affected by the demands placed upon them. In this study, the participants' spouses did not sympathize or empathize with their wives' stressful situations in their classrooms nor with the strained relationships with their principals. For example, one spouse resented the time his wife spent away from him dash particularly if she attended school-related events. Another spouse told his wife that he didn't like her when she taught because her personality changed due to the stress resulting from the demands placed at school. A third spouse was jealous of his wife's work because he felt she was making a difference in the world, in contrast to his perception of his own non-influential job in the corporate world. A fourth spouse resented the fact that his wife's music program was cut in

half. The perceived the reason for the reduction was because she tried to stop her principal from committing an illegal act. Her husband resented her principal's action because he felt his wife's honesty had been compromised.

Teachers' relationships with their colleagues and family members are often ignored due to the time constraints placed on them (Travers & Cooper, 1996). Dinham and Scott (2000) reported that teachers experienced difficulty setting aside their concerns related to their work when they returned to their homes. Conversely, when they were at school, they thought about their family relationships. The teachers in this study reported difficulty with both colleagues and home life as a result of the stress of their working. While this sample is small, coupled with previous research studies, the mounting evidence is that the amount of stress they are under and lack of support that new teachers receive from either school or home is a leading contributor to the high attrition rate among them.

Collegiality is encouraged in most school settings. However, some teachers prefer *teacher isolation* as defined by Travers and Cooper (1996): "Teacher isolation is the extent to which teachers are [minimally] restricted from or restrict themselves from interactions with other individuals or groups in the school" (p. 168). One teacher commented that she did not choose the profession of teaching so that she would have colleagues. The other teachers in the study indicated that they would have preferred to have more time to talk to their colleagues, but the limited opportunities provided time for superficial conversation. Regardless of their needs, it is becoming increasingly clearer that there is often a mismatch between the needs of the novice teacher and what is provided by the school and/or the school system.

Work Assignments

When teachers are placed in difficult overload assignments, they are more likely to fail and leave teaching. The overload comes in several different formats, including teaching assignments, student population, and after-school activities. Several of the teachers in this study were assigned large classes that required them to prepare several different lesson plans. A further complication of these large classes was the presence of inclusion students. Finally, all but one of the teachers in this study were assigned at least one after-school activity to sponsor, whether or not the activity was related to their field. The teachers commented that they never had time to finish all their work. Frustration and resentment were logical reactions that exacerbated their desire to leave the profession.

Yee (1990) made the following observation about new teachers: “[They] are often given those students or courses with which experienced teachers do not wish to deal. Instead of giving beginning teachers a nurturing environment in which to grow, educators throw them into a war zone where both the demands and the mortality rate are excessively high” (p. 424). This potential failure is fostered by several factors: (a) beginning teachers are typically assigned to teach first- and second-level courses with little hope of teaching upper-level courses unless the veteran teachers either die or retire; (b) many of the beginning teachers’ classrooms are located in trailers; and (c) they are assigned large classes in which special education students might be placed (Moir, 1999).

Renard (2003) noted that if school systems are serious about retaining new teachers past their third years and want to help them become effective classroom teachers, then the demands placed on them must be examined. In many schools, the teaching loads and work schedules set beginning teachers up for failure rather than success. Lortie (1975) observed that beginning

teachers' tasks are not added sequentially to allow for gradual improvement of their skills and knowledge. Instead, they learn while performing all of their teaching duties. Consequently, they often experience anxiety.

These three themes, administration, personal and professional lives, and work assignments, often combine to create a very negative atmosphere for novice teachers. The further combination of an uncaring attitude of administration, a lack of knowledge about rules, regulations, and rights that novice teachers have, and a lack of collegiality among cohorts of teachers often results in both the disenfranchisement and disempowerment of the novice teacher.

Implications

In this section, the implications derived from the findings of the study will be presented.

Implications for Principals

Research addressing principals' leadership offers positive instruction regarding how they should set up collaborative environments in which teachers know they are respected and considered equals with their administrators. Research also states that principals are the pivotal persons in every school. However, this study cited numerous incidents in which the principals' potentially positive influence was non-discernible because it was distant. The teachers in this study never had direct contact with their principals during the regular school day unless there was a conflict.

Whenever a conflict arose concerning such issues as disciplining a disruptive student, talking to the student's parent, arbitrating a disagreement between faculty members, or questioning a teacher's behavior or decision, these teachers did not perceive that their principal did not support them. Their reactions were anger, disillusionment, and devaluation. Without support of their principals, these teachers felt they were not respected decision-makers and were

forced to “sink-or-swim”. As a result, the teachers in this study felt a loss of respect for their administrators. Clearly, the teachers were not willing to follow principals who did not support them educationally or emotionally. The lack of their principals sensitivity created a sterile, unemotional environment in which these teachers carried out their daily instruction.

Furthermore, this study cited situations in which principals used their influence to be either abusive or top-down. One teacher in the study was not granted her legal right to have an attorney present during a conference with several administrators. The psychological effect of their accusations was devastating. The behavior exhibited by the attending administrators was a clear ethical violation. This study also highlighted two situations in which teachers were forced by their administrations to commit unethical and illegal acts. They felt they had no choice but to follow their administrators’ orders. When this type of behavior is exhibited by principals, the resulting dilemma that these teachers faced was to either commit the act or be labeled insubordinate and have a report placed in their personnel file.

The principals’ top-down behavior was non-democratic and power driven. This study has found that these teachers did not have input in their assignments, their course loads, their classroom locations; they did not have a voice. Shared governance, in which all teachers have some input into their role as teachers, is a vital first step in both the empowerment and retention of teachers. These teachers approached their careers with enthusiasm and wanted to be involved in all aspects of their jobs. However, their ideas were never solicited, resulting in their feelings of isolation and insignificance. Some of the respondents went so far as to link their decision to leave the teaching profession directly to the behavior of their principal.

These findings suggest that some principals either do not know how to lead effectively or they are ignoring the training they have received. One way that principals can support novice

teachers is to visit their classrooms in an effort to provide instructional and emotional support while giving them constructive feedback about their teaching. Additionally, principals can protect beginning teachers in several ways: by not overloading their schedules with more than two preparations; by not allowing inclusion students to be placed in their classes until the teachers have received adequate training and had opportunities to observe veteran teachers working with these students; by not allowing them to sponsor any extracurricular activities during their first year; and by encouraging them to participate in mentoring programs.

This study showed that teachers need the support of their principals when dealing with disruptive students and their parents. In several incidents, these teachers were angered by the lack of support from their principals when discipline issues arose. The teachers' decisions about how to discipline certain students were often not supported. Unless there is determination that a teacher has made a decision based on unsound educational judgment, support from the principal is vital for the teacher's morale. If not, she feels both undermined in her classroom and a loss of respect for the principal.

Implications for Teachers

In this study, these teachers exhibited feelings that they were not prepared for the real vicissitudes of the classroom. They felt they did not have anyone to whom they could talk and from whom they could seek guidance. The few participants who had mentors did not feel that could talk to them. It was shown in the study that there was a void between what was the desired effect of the mentoring program versus its actuality.

These teachers needed staff development courses that would be applicable to the classroom, not instruction that was perceived to be useless. They also wanted practical instruction concerning such issues as lesson preparation, grading procedures, and reporting

procedures. Without this instruction, new teachers spend numerous hours figuring out how to use the computer systems, complying to administrative requests for reports, rather than planning for their new classes. Support training before inclusion students are placed in their classes is believed to be an important element for success in the classroom . Training can include not only course work but also observation of veteran teachers. It is important that novice teachers are supported in their ability to say no to the administration when asked to spend many extra hours each week coaching and/or sponsoring student activities.

Emotional support can be offered by teachers' colleagues. If new teachers are given time within a school day to develop and maintain relationships, natural mentoring can occur. As this study revealed, the only time the participants had time to talk to each other was during their twenty-three-minute lunch break. Indeed, the environment that promotes teachers being concerned about the professional growth of their colleagues includes opportunities for establishing relationships.

The demands placed on their time often results in stress-related illness and can cost the school in terms of teachers' absenteeism and possible resignation from their teaching position. While the administration may see their unwillingness to take on these extracurricular activities as a negative attitude, in reality, both win. It is likely that novice teachers who are supported early in their careers and given time to grow as educators will not leave the profession, thus benefiting both the administration and the community.

Consistent supervision by administration was another issue for these teachers. Some of these teachers experienced mixed messages about their performances from their principals, thus keeping them unsure of "proper behavior." These mixed messages help to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and distrust. Finally, new teachers would be well served to have a thorough

understanding of both their legal rights and their legal responsibilities. Regardless of where the responsibility for the dissemination of this information lies, it behooves both the teachers and the school system to ensure that every teacher has this information.

Communication with the principals is a two-way process. Efforts by new teachers to connect with their principals, to engage them in a dialogue about school policies, will only be beneficial. While this communication can occur on a casual basis, it is recommended that both the teachers and the principals establish monthly meetings during which current information, issues, and Board policies are discussed. This format will address the isolation that many new teachers feel and will allow the teachers the opportunity to feel better informed.

Implications for the Board

As a result of this and other studies, it would be beneficial for school boards to develop policies that would allow teachers to report principals' abusive treatment without fear of retribution. An additional feature of this policy would be to maintain a set of checks and balances to control the power that principals can exert. These policies should also include clear consequences of abusive or unethical behavior on the part of the principal. Most of the participants in this study experienced abuse by their principal; it is likely that this phenomenon is occurring in schools throughout the state. The Board that is represented in this study did not have such a policy, adding to the feeling of helplessness experienced by these teachers. Longitudinal data, comparing reasons for voluntary teacher turnover among teachers is a necessary beginning step for a clearer understanding of the problem on new teacher attrition rates. While it is understood that young teachers leave for a variety of reasons, those reasons that directly affect the morale of the school – administrative abuse, workload, and family issues – need to be addressed by school systems. Additionally, proper use of this data, for example, use of attrition

data in the evaluation of principals, can be linked to both overall improvement in the schools and teacher morale. Some principals may not understand the long term effects of their leadership styles. Using data to enhance both policies and evaluation standards can only serve to strengthen the leadership within the system.

One way to gather this attrition data is an exit interview with teachers who are leaving the profession. Rather than hypothesize why they have left the system at the same time that they have left the profession, they could use an confidential, information-filled exit interview to gather information. Teachers who are in the schools on a daily basis know their schools better than any agency or person outside the school's walls. These interviews can provide direction on the development of Board policies that will enhance the involvement of the teachers who are still in the system. Finally, if Board members visit classes, they can form observation-based opinions about the effectiveness of the teaching and leadership in the system's schools as well as the problems that these teachers face on a daily basis.

Implications for Research

Little if any research has been conducted regarding teachers' legal rights when they experience abuse at the hands of their principals. Further research needs to be conducted to understand the scope and the depth of this abuse and the lack of understanding of their rights among teachers. Additionally, the resulting lack of Board policies which address the issue of administrative abuse is an area that needs further investigation. These problems certainly co-exist. This study demonstrated a beginning understanding of the problem of inclusion students. Further research should be conducted to better understand the training needs of new teachers. It appears that neither college preparatory nor staff development courses offered by the school systems have been helpful in training these beginning teachers. Further research can aid in the

development of practical courses that will address both the skills and techniques needed to teach inclusion students.

This research was conducted in a large urban area. Further research needs to be conducted in semi-rural, rural, suburban areas to ascertain the extent of the problem in these areas. It may be that some of the difficulty experienced by these teachers was directly correlated with the size of their school system. Comparisons of other systems would be add a crucial dimension to the understanding of the problem of teacher retention.

Further, there may also be a gender difference in perception of principal abuse, workload, and family issues. Novice male teachers' response to these issues may be very different than that of their female colleagues. It is also possible that family issues are not as stressful for a novice male teacher. If indeed there is a gender difference, research can help ascertain the issues that are germane to each gender.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN STUDY

I agree to participate in the research titled “Female High School Teachers’ Perceptions of Reasons for Leaving the Profession,” which is being conducted by Joyce Carol Mitchiner-Leathers, for the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of Georgia, and whose telephone number is (XXX) XXX-XXXX, under the direction of Dr. Jo Blasé in the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of Georgia. Her contact telephone number is (XXX) XXX-XXXX. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary. I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for the research is to answer the following questions: (1) What were the resigning teachers’ experiences who resigned from Gwinnett County? (2) What did those experiences mean to the teachers who resigned?

I understand that my part in this study will include participation in an interview that will last approximately one (1) hour. I understand that the questions will be open ended and audio taped. During the taping, I will feel free to ask the researcher to clarify one or more of her questions.

No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.

No risks are foreseen.

Any information the researcher obtains about me as a participant in this study, including my identity, will be held confidential. I understand that after the audio tape has been coded with a pseudonym of my choosing, the data will be kept in a secured, limited-access location, accessible to the researcher only. This recorded information will be kept for one (1) year once the tape has been transcribed. After that time, the tape will be destroyed. During the year of data collection for the dissertation, it is understood that my words will be used solely for research. The results of this participation will be confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law.

My signature below indicates that the researcher has answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature of Researcher

Date of Interview

Signature of Participant (Please print)

Date

Signature of Participant

Research of the University of Georgia that involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to: Dr. Chris Joseph, Ph.D., Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, 606 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX; E-mail address: IRB@uga.ed.