MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

THE ROLE OF SELF IN TEACHERS' CAREER DEVELOPMENT

by

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Under the Direction of Shawn M. Glynn

ABSTRACT

Retaining qualified teachers within our schools is an increasing problem that affects all aspects of education. Current research has identified variables that contribute to teacher attrition, but have failed to examine how these lead to a decision to remain in or leave the profession. This study uses the motivational theory of possible selves to investigate the following questions: What role does self concept play in a teacher's career development? What are the hopes and fears that significantly influence teachers' decisions in their professional life? And how do competing aspects of teachers' possible selves result in a decision to remain in or leave the field of education? It was found that the participants had a strong desire to be in the classroom, however competing stressors, the strongest being factors of their careers that they perceived to have no control over, often caused doubt as to their ability to be effective teachers.

INDEX WORDS: Possible selves, Teacher retention, Self-concept, Motivation, Job satisfaction, Attrition

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"If we don't step up to the challenge of finding and supporting the best teachers, we'll undermine everything else we are trying to do to improve our schools. That's a conscious decision that would threaten our economic strength, political fabric, and stability as a nation. It's exactly that clear cut."

Louis V. Gerstner, Jr.,
Chairman, The Teaching Commission, 2004

In the next decade alone, the United States will need to bring 2 million teachers into the public school system, and 700,000 of those will be designated for urban schools (The Teaching Commission, 2004). A greater challenge than recruiting those teachers will be retaining them- it is currently reported that 1 out of every 2 new educators quit within the first 3-5 years of service (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Colbert & Wolff, 1992, Inman & Marlow, 2004 , Birkeland & Johnson, 2002). A shortage of qualified teachers has become increasingly problematic, yet despite the many studies on the attrition of teachers, there has yet to be a unified answer on how to resolve the issue.

It has been suggested that the primary determinant of the quality of education a student receives is the quality of teacher they have (Rowan, Correnti & Miller, 2002, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2004). The skills and knowledge of a teacher alone can account for up to 40% in the differences between students (National Governors Association [NGA], 2002). Researchers from the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) (1998) found that effective teachers were able to increase their students' learning by an entire grade level higher than the students of less effective teachers. Furthermore, the study showed that by replacing an average level teacher with one considered higher level, the gap in

math performance between high socioeconomic level and low socioeconomic level students was nearly eliminated. It therefore concluded by The Teaching Commission (2004) that, "The effectiveness of any broader education reform- including standards, smaller schools, and choice- is ultimately dependant on the quality of teachers in the classroom."

Given this information, it seems understandable why such emphasis is often placed on recruiting and retaining qualified college graduates to educate our youth. Theoretically, there should exist a large pool from which to choose skill candidates from. A poll administered by Public Agenda (2003b) reported the following information: 68% of college graduates in fields other than education would consider teaching as a career, half of all college graduates expect to change careers at some time, and 70% of the total people polled consider teaching to be a profession of "very great" or "considerable" prestige. It is no secret that pay is a factor of serious consideration in the decision to be a teacher, however that is not the only concern that is chasing away viable candidates. Seven out of ten graduates feel that if they went into teaching, they would have limited opportunities for advancement. Furthermore, they see teachers having to worry about personal safety and being made the "scapegoat" for the problems facing education, and finally that teachers are not offered the sense of respect or appreciation due to them. But these variables do not make the profession of education unappealing to all college graduates. A report by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) (2003), showed a steady increase of new teachers entering the classroom throughout the 1990's. But they compare teacher recruitment to a fist size hole in a bucket- no matter how many teachers were hired into the schools, the attrition was far greater. Another study supported this with a figure- only 57% of the teacher participants remained in teaching after 3 years (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Widely touted reports of schools hiring under-qualified teachers to fill the gaps perpetuate the thought that the problem lies in recruitment. Again, the issue does not necessarily fall on the ability of the teachers themselves, but a never-ending cycle of turnover. With every group of new teachers, schools have to re-address professional development already covered, and re-establish the direction in which the school is headed (cited in Darling-Hammond, 2003). In addition, the cost of early attrition is staggering- a Texas study estimated that the yearly turnover rate of 15%, of which 40% was teachers leaving within their first 3 years, cost the state $329 million annually, or at least $8,000 per recruit who leaves within the first few years (Texas Center of Educational Research [NCER], 2000). Darling-Hammond (2003) concludes that, "Given the strong evidence that teacher effectiveness increases sharply after the first few years of teaching, this kind of churning in the beginning teaching force reduces productivity of overall. The education system never gets a long term payoff from its investment in novices who leave."

Knowing of the retention problems that plague education, it is possible that the converse of the "quality teacher" who has such tremendous effect on student learning does not refer a teacher who lacks skill, but rather experience. Researchers have recognized the need to study why teachers leave the profession, and arguably more important, why they stay. Statistics show that many teachers love their job- one poll showed that 79% of respondents agreed to the statement: I am passionate about teaching (The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, 2001). Additionally, 74% of teachers in another survey stated that teaching is a lifelong career choice (Public Agenda, 2003b). But the ever increasing daily tribulations that teachers face truly affect their willingness to persist. There appears to be a widely reported consensus on the primary factors that act as obstacles in an educator's job- lack of parental support, lack of resources, poor working conditions, student behavior issues, and time constraints (Woods & Weasmer, 2004,

Inman & Marlow, 2004, Public Agenda, 2003b, Darling-Hammond, 2003, Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005). Surprisingly, while pay issues are prominent, they are not the most pressing concern. Given a choice between teaching in 2 otherwise identical schools, new teachers say they would rather work in a school where student behavior and parental support were significantly better (86% vs. 12%) and a school where administrators offered strong support (82% vs. 17%) than a school that paid a significantly higher salary (Public Agenda, 2003b).

While past studies have contributed extensive data to exploring educator's vocational decisions, there has been a lack of research that has presented a comprehensive model of how this information functions to understand the motivational aspects of teacher attrition. Research cannot dismiss the importance in identifying specific reasons why a teacher leaves the profession, their goals in aspiring to be a teacher, as well as their goals once in the classroom, or the emotional aspects of being an educator. However, this information only contributes a portion of what is a much larger and complex process, and fails to explain how goals, emotions, and social influences collaborate to prompt action. Furthermore, the individualized contexts from which these actions result are often lost in the reporting. The question still remains as to why, given similar experiences, similar benefits and stressors in the job, some teachers stay and some leave.

The present study explores these issues with the model of possible selves. The focus of this motivational theory is the self-system, and how cognitive, developmental and social influences shape ones thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Markus, 2006, Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006, Frazier & Hooker, 2006). Possible selves recognize life choices as a balance between an individual's aspirations, and the person they fear of becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986). They also take into account both past experiences that shape one's beliefs, values and actions, as well

as their thoughts of the future (Markus, 2006). Therefore, it is assumed that by exploring the goals, hopes, fears and threats of in-service teachers and how these variables have changed throughout their years in the classroom**,** researchers will be provided with a more holistic view of the role of motivation in vocational decision making among educators. Specifically, the following research questions are investigated utilizing the framework of possible selves:

1) What role does self concept[1] play in a teacher's career development?
2) What are the hopes and fears that significantly influence teachers' decisions in their professional life?
3) How do competing aspects of teachers' possible selves result in a decision to remain in or leave the field of education?

[1] Recent researchers have referred to self concept in a context that varies from that used in relation to possible selves theory. In the current study, self concept is used interchangeably with self-knowledge to reflect earlier perspectives of the construct.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Studies of the self

Studies of the components of self date back to research by William James (1890/1950), where it is stated that individuals have a propensity to imagine vast potential for their future, and only narrow these possibilities as needed. Developing a sense of self, therefore, includes both voluntary choices, and also involuntary choices when these possibilities conflict. Otherwise stated, one can wish to be all things, but cannot initiate a plan to achieve all. After a period of feedback attained from successes and failures, we develop a sense of self-knowledge that allows focus on those desires we strive for, further directing motivational attention and guiding behavior (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). Thus, cognitive theories view development of one's identity as a product of both past experiences as well as hypothetical images of one's future (Conway & Pleydell Pierce, 2000, Strahan & Wilson, 2006). This figurative repertoire of knowledge is often referred to as self concept.

Motivation and the resulting behavior are not just a result of one's personality, or identity, but also the influence of one's social environment (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). It is not assumed that every component of an individual's self concept is displayed extrinsically, or that they are deemed mutually important. Rather, behavior is coordinated by demands from both personal expectations, goals and desires, and by relevant constraints within the expectations, goals and needs of one's society (Oyserman, 2002). In contrast, behavior can also at times be socially regulated. That is one's actions seem to be controlled, rather than just influenced, by

others. An individual will be more vested in regulating their behavior and the pending outcomes when it is determined to be self relevant. When a situation removes the perceived locus of control from an individual and places it at the hands of society, that person tends to lack a sense of responsibility as to the resulting behavior. Therefore, it's self knowledge that "plays a significant role in determining the nature, direction and intensity of the behavior," as well as providing "the goals, standards, and strategies by which the individual can exert some influence over the outcome of behavior" (Markus, 1983). It is believed that the link between personality and behavior is most evident in situations which one perceives their behavior to be self defining, or in other words, in domains deemed most relevant within an individual's self concept.

From this perspective, as a person processes and organizes information relevant to experiences and social influences, knowledge structures called self schemas are created, which bear responsibility for shaping behavior. The primary function of these self schemas is to provide, "a point of view, an anchor, or a frame of reference," (Markus, 1983) for one's self concept, and these are believed to be stable over time. While schemas are derived from past selves, they also work to define future selves. That is they determine responsibility, control, and therefore self-relevance of a domain. In circumstances with an expected positive outcome, this would mean the engagement of behavior. Conversely, a self-schema may disengage oneself or avoid a situation completely (Yowell, 2000). Therefore, schemas provide information such as what a person would like to do, what they would like to avoid, and what they hope to do, for the purpose of bridging gap between personality and behavior.

Possible selves are considered the future oriented components of self schemas. Additionally, they are the representations of motives within the self concept, and they reflect awareness of one's potential. Possible selves give precise, relevant meaning and direction to

one's hopes and fears. They also characterize the personalized end state of a goal or threat. These ideas of oneself are not anchored in social reality; rather they are conceptions of the ideal self one would like to become. Oyserman and Markus (1990) define possible selves as "motivational resources that provide individuals with some control over their own behavior. They are conceived of as the self-relevant, internal structures that embody and give rise to generalized feelings of self efficacy, effectance, competence or control." Possible selves are important in that they motivate behavior and provide incentives for future behavior.

Hoped for selves, which are often termed dreams or aspirations, can be very abstract. These intrinsic events represent the self that is considered "ideal" within a person. Hoped for selves are not threatening- they can be elaborate or simple. Individuals often tend not to create concrete strategies to obtain this ideal self, therefore hoped for selves is only a view of an end result, an initiator of behavior, but not the force of goal actualization (Yowell, 2002).

Fear is the aspect of self concept that serves as a threat to an individual's ideas of their identity. Contrary to hoped for selves, feared selves do not produce the ideal self, but rather is the force behind avoidance behaviors that are instrumental in moving a person closer to obtaining their goals (Yowell, 2000). An example of this may be a person who fears living in poverty, therefore they continue their education in order to secure a lucrative job.

Possible selves are representative of those goals that produce major life events. We re-evaluate and create new goals every day, and each of these adds to a larger goal we have internalized. It is believed that modifications in behavior made by an individual toward these self defined goals constitute a developmental change (Dunkel, Kelts & Coon, 2006, Frazier & Hooker, 2006). Therefore, motivational functions of possible selves occur through a balance between hopes, fears, goals and threats in order to achieve the ideal self. For example, from this

perspective a hoped for state is better realized if accompanied by a feared state of what might happen if the desired state is not achieved (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). When individuals have a balance between desired states, the successful teacher versus the unsuccessful teacher, they tend to have more motivational resources than one might have with just one state. Thus, the individual may feel more invested and greater control over that particular domain, and will maintain the direction of behavior adaptation. Conversely, if action is initiated by avoidance behavior produced by fear, this will eventually lead to an approach behavior as the individual seeks to increase their distance from the threat (Carver & Scheier, 2000). The balance between positive possible selves and competing possible selves are the predicting variable in how long an individual's actions will be "focused, energized and organized" (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989).

Because possible selves are not directly derived from social experiences, Markus and Nurius (1986) state that they are "the most vulnerable and responsive to changes in the environment…they are the first elements of self concept to absorb and reveal such change." For example, when a teacher encounters a child with a behavior problem, they may not question their long term ability to teach, but yet they could challenge their effectiveness in managing a classroom. Therefore, the situation causes a change in the current self perception of themselves as a teacher. However, not all individuals are assumed to produce the same reaction or feel the same impact from such an event. While a sense of achievement may be desired in two individuals, the actions that follow are dependant on which possible self was initiated within each person, and the significance to their ideal self. It is in this manner that possible selves also serve as interpretive of the "now self". Further influencing the differences between individuals in terms of possible selves is one's representation of themselves in performance and outcome expectancies. As a person envisions a desired future state, there is a tendency to elaborately

picture themselves performing and completing the task that will produce the hoped for result. It is suggested that the greater the specificity of these representations, the greater the influence on motivation. However, when an individual separates performance and outcome expectancies, it is because they doubt their ability, efficacy or desire to achieve their goal, therefore they are unable to imagine the self performing the task (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989).

Possible Selves are not investigated for the purpose of predicting behavior, but rather to further understand how the social, developmental and cognitive aspects of self concept "mediate personal functioning" (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Motivation is not limited to how one sees themselves in a future state, but also involves values and ideals that have resulted from past occurrences (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). Therefore, justifying a study in the regulation of behavior should give equal priority to one's future goals and how that goal is represented, as well as to how the self concept has been shaped by experience.

Current research in the profession of education

Within the exploration of teachers' motivation for remaining in or leaving the classroom, educational researchers have provided us with some pieces of the figurative puzzle. As previously stated, studies have been cognizant in identifying specific variables that initiate a goal to be a teacher, as well as those that promote the idea of exiting the profession. For example, Huberman (1993) did a study of 156 teachers in which he inquired as to their motivation to become a teacher. He also noted, similar to the participants in the current study, that interest in teaching, "is thus a discovery, not a strong option at the start of university studies." He found that each of the teachers gave an average of three reasons why they became a teacher. Some of those reasons were material, such as job security, long vacations and salary, while others were more professional in nature, like a love for young people, a passion for a particular subject area,

or the willingness to help others. Of those teachers who did not originally set goals in college to be a teacher, Huberman distinguished between those who "discovered" education through extra-curricular activities, part-time jobs or community service and continued to actively pursue the field, and those who "backed into" the career due to what they felt were a lack of viable options in other areas. These teachers cited passive reasons for choosing education such as ruling out all other majors, their degree limiting their job choices, or following a friend who was going into teaching. Although these motives were not the strongest among the participants, they did make up 28% of responses.

A study by Schutz, Crowder and White (2001) corroborated the research done by Huberman in stating that teachers have multiple motivations in choosing their career. Many of the reasons offered by the participants were similar- love of children, to help society, or a passion for a specific subject. In addition, the study cited socio-historical factors affecting the career goal creating process, such as feedback from family, teachers and peers. Among the influencing behaviors was the suggestion to become a teacher, encouragement to become a teacher, the modeling of teaching practices, exposing the person to teaching experiences, and discouraging the person from becoming a teacher. Multiple studies have further examined the role of familial influence on vocational decisions, and have found that the development of a person's attitudes toward career and career choices begins at birth and continues through their adulthood (Betsworth & Fouad, 1997; Young, Friesen & Borycki, 1994; Lapan, Hinkleman, Adams, & Turner, 1999; Whinston & Keller, 2004). Many of the decisions that a person makes regarding their career are thought to be a result of their identification and relations with others (H.D Carter, 1940; Super, 1949). Sometimes these experienced interactions lead to what is considered a "critical incident". This refers to a self-environmental transaction in which a person places

meaning upon an event and the effect of its influence on their life, and as a result changes the direction of their actions (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tripp, 1994).

The process of creating a goal to be a teacher is often seen as being evolutionary- there is the emergence of the goal, the exploration of the field, addressing the cultural and environmental influences, and finally the actualization of the goal (Schutz, et al., 2001). It has been suggested that a teacher deciding to leave the field of education may also be the result of an emergent process. In Huberman's longitudinal study (1993), it was shown that teachers face definable stages in their career life cycle. Some of the events that teachers experience are stabilization of their careers (an increased efficacy, an affirmation, relaxation, or pedagogical mastery), self doubt or reassessment, experimentation or diversification (seeking increased impact in the classroom or by pursuit of administrative responsibilities), and serenity and affective distance (less concerned about problems of the classroom or less engaged). Research studying these phases has failed to produce a consensus as to when and under what circumstances these cycles may be initiated, or if there is a consistent pattern to the order in which they occur. It is within the self doubt or reassessment phase that certain motives were found which initiate the desire to leave. These were identified as positive (leaving without a crisis), institutional reasons (schedule, subject matter, school 'out of touch', poor interpersonal climate in the school), fatigue, routine and frustration, difficulties in adapting to students, too intrusive, too much personal investment, too much stifling of other interests, lack of real commitment, and family reasons. Most of these are consistent with, or encompass, those variables stated in other studies where teachers identified reasons that would cause them to consider or actually exit the profession (Woods & Weasmer, 2004, Inman & Marlow, 2004, Public Agenda, 2003b, Darling-Hammond, 2003, Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005).

Despite the numerous studies that have produced similar data, researchers are still posed with the query of why some teachers stay and some leave the profession. Huberman was unable to find significant evidence indicating that there are factors that vary between teachers which predispose some to giving into periods of self doubt, whereas others remain. He did find, however, that variables exist to prevent self-doubt from occurring all together. The prospect of change, which includes new opportunities and diversification within education, as well as advancement, or promotion, were positively correlated with eliminating and avoiding episodes of self doubt. Similarly, Hughes (2001) notes that teacher burnout is often caused by the absence of challenge and skill utilization within the job.

The theory can therefore be supported that job satisfaction is a primary and influential factor in ending attrition within the schools. Shann (1998) reports that teacher job satisfaction, "is a predictor of teacher retention, a determinant of teacher commitment, and, in turn, a contributor to school effectiveness." Additionally, Birkeland and Johnson (2002) state that "central to these teachers' satisfaction is the belief that they are teaching their students effectively." It is important to acknowledge that a teacher who remains within the profession of teaching is not assumed to have necessarily resolved self-doubt. In fact, a large number of teachers who suffer burnout stay in the classroom due to various personal factors that may prevent them from switching careers (Hughes, 2001). This negatively affects students at a similar or greater level than attrition, as burnout is characterized by work alienation, heightened self interest, great emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization (Burke & Greenglass, 1995, Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Therefore, it appears imperative that researchers continue to study job satisfaction as it can both alleviate and possibly eliminate teacher burnout.

Current vocational research in job satisfaction

Many of the current theories on job satisfaction are derived from the discipline of vocational development, and more specifically, the work of Donald Super, arguably one of the most influential researchers in the field. His models transcend from years of observation and inquiry, most notably the 25 year longitudinal Career Pattern Study. His life span, life space theory (Super, 1980) explores the multiple-role environment in which individuals live, lending merit to the interdependent relationship that family, community, education and work have within each domain. Furthermore, career behavior stems from various developmental tasks that are evoked by "contextual demands with which persons are observed to cope in different life stages" (Herr, 1997). This concept- A Segmental Model of Career Development- is represented as an arc (see figure 2.1). The right side of the arc is comprised of geographical factors that influence one's career decisions, such as the community, society and family, and the left side represents biological factors, such as intelligence, needs, and interests. At the center of this arc, and theoretically at the center of all decisions, is the self concept.

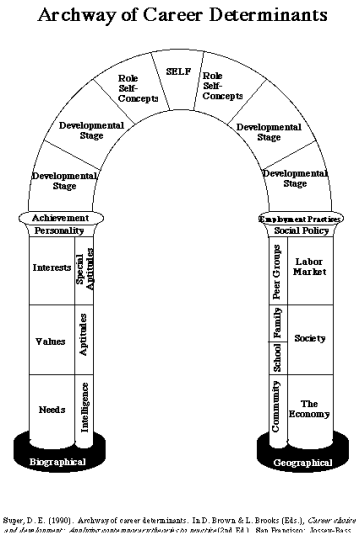

Figure 1: Super's Segmental Model of Career

Osipow (1990) expands on Super's theory to better explain the role of the self concept in career development. He investigates two processes, mastery of stages through the life stages, and the forces that shape and develop the self concept. The theory attempts to predict occupational preferences and choices first, followed by satisfaction with that choice. Therefore, it is surmised by Osipow that satisfaction with choice "should only change as it reflects changes in the self-concept."

There appears to be obvious similarities between career development theories and some of the previous research explored in the field of education. Super's life stages are similar to those observed by Huberman within the span of a teacher's career. The domain specificity, yet interdependence of family, society and community, is reflected in the data that details the reasons teachers offer as to why they leave the field of education. Lastly, the core of Osipow's research is career choice, consistent with those in education that examine motives for becoming a teacher, and satisfaction with those choices. It is here that education is limited on their resources for information. It has been stated that previous attempts to measure satisfaction have not been successful due to the widely varying thoughts by teachers on what would make their job experience positive (Woods & Weasmer, 2004). However, previously cited data shows that teachers are quite unified in stating exactly which variables produce increased stress in their job (Woods & Weasmer, 2004, Inman & Marlow, 2004, Public Agenda, 2003b, Darling-Hammond, 2003, Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005). It would seem that addressing those stressors and providing the opportunity for advancement and diversification would the logical step to increase teacher retention. Yet despite efforts, these steps alone have failed to work. Therefore, this study concludes that the anomaly does not lie solely within identifying the stress variables, but

rather developing an understanding as to how they affect the teacher in relation to the motivational process.

Veroff (as cited in Markus, 1983) testifies that motives "cannot be studied meaningfully apart from the contexts in which they occur. Attempts to find general, underlying, abstract motives that span situations or contexts are unlikely to be productive." This statement defines the premise of the present study. It is believed that research in attrition cannot solely label reasons why teachers leave, but also needs to identify the context in which these situations arise and are addressed. The key to understanding this transaction and the resulting behavior is to examine how the events are cognitively interpreted by the teachers themselves. Furthermore, studies have shown that decision making is also influenced by social constructs, and contain temporal orientations. This study attempts to address these variables through the investigation of teachers' possible selves, and specifically inquiries the role of self concept in their career development, how hopes and fears influence their professional decisions, and how competing possible selves result in a decision to remain or leave the field of education. Furthermore, this study contends that because skilled teachers have such a extraordinary impact on the quality of education offered to a student, there is much more at stake in ensuring job satisfaction than just the professional experiences of the teacher themselves.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN

Participants

Snowball sampling was used to recruit 7 in-service teachers. Participants were chosen to be interviewed based on the following: 1) They had to have at least 3 years in service, and 2) they had to be at least 10 years from retirement. The first requirement was deemed necessary to eliminate any participants who may represent the literature that reports up to 50% of new teachers are likely to resign their position within the first 3 years of service (Inman & Marlow, 2004, Birkeland & Johnson, 2002). Previous research have studied new teachers and experienced teachers leaving the profession separately due to a hypothesis that different factors influence these changes in career based on tenure. The present study was intended to examine teachers' attitudes about remaining or leaving the profession who had made a prior decision to make their career in education permanent. The second requirement was initiated in order to remove participants who may be close to retirement. It is believed that these individuals may have goals more focused on retirement rather than their vocation, and therefore not as reflective on their career choices.

As a result of the snowball sampling, 7 female participants were chosen- 2 taught at the high school level and 5 at the elementary level. Two male participants were also included in the original sample, however they declined the interview due to schedule conflicts. The experience of the participants ranged from 3 years to 18 years in service. All currently teach in the southeast region, but participants were from varying states. Involvement in the study was completely

voluntary, however the participants did receive a small token of gratitude upon completion of the interview. They were not informed that they would receive this gift prior to the interview.

Procedure

For the initial interview, a semi-structured protocol was used, and each conversation lasted 45 minutes to 1 hour. Participants were able to choose the location that they felt most comfortable being interviewed. Most requested their classroom, while one preferred the school library, and another a local coffee shop. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed. Follow-up was done with the participants during the analysis if clarification or additional information was needed, and each participant was contacted once the study was complete. This follow-up communication was all done through electronic mail.

The series of interviews questions encouraged responses in regard to the participant's background in teaching, school demographics, their vocational aspirations prior to deciding to be a teacher, the events leading to their decision, and their current consideration on future professional goals (See Appendix A). Possible selves were also explored through the interview questions by asking participants about their hopes and fears among the following timeline: reflection on hopes and fears in entering the profession, hopes and fears after having classroom experience, and hope and fears for their future career plans.

It should be noted that possible selves have been researched previously using two-separate measures- the interview and the possible selves questionnaire. It was determined that in the present study the teacher's experiences would offer greater depth by allowing the participants to speak freely rather than be constricted by a questionnaire. This decision was supported by research from Jennifer Lindholm (2004) that states:

> "While quantitative approaches to vocational choice research can inform us of how prevalent certain experiences, perceptions or personal characteristics are

> within a given profession, they are less informative for providing insight as to how, and why people make the choices they do. Qualitative approaches enable us to understand more fully both the processes by which career decisions are formed and the motivations that underlie people's differential attractions to various vocational pursuits" (pp. 607).

Analysis

The current study attempts to investigate the relationships of an educator's vocational decisions. It is believed that beyond identifying connections in the patterns of teachers remaining or leaving the profession, it is also critical to understand the explanations motivating the resulting behaviors. According to Tesch (1990), analysis procedures of this "pattern group" must facilitate theorizing so that, "a single research project does not produce an entire social theory, but it can develop a set of theoretical propositions." This study utilized the qualitative pattern analysis of constant comparison to identify and group categories of data from which an "emergent theme, pattern or explanation," (Miles & Huberman, 1984) could then be recognized. Constant comparison analysis is adapted from Strauss and Corbin's (1998) research methods, and theories influenced by this approach, "are drawn from data, [therefore] they are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action."

The constant comparative analysis utilized in the current study was continuous and iterative in that the interviews began with a series of questions that explored demographics, the participant's reasons for entering the profession of teaching, and their expectations for their career (see Appendix A). In addition, aspects of possible selves were inquired, specifically hopes and fears, with the questions containing temporal comparisons. As the interviews ensued and analysis was conducted on each, patterns emerged from the data which incited revisions to original questions, as well as providing

opportunity for new areas of exploration. For example, the first participants identified that they often felt responsible for the well-being of the students both inside and outside of the classroom, prompting the addition of the question, “If a child in not receiving the help they need at home, as a teacher do you feel responsible for that?”

The levels of analysis in constant comparative are meant to build upon each other, with categorization and contrast becoming more generalized. Coding, or conceptual ordering, allows the realization of phenomena that group together and label similar information provided in the interviews. This process begins with the identification and naming of specific events, ideas or acts. In the current study, it is from this step that new questions were added to the interviews. The data was then categorized with descriptive titles, such as “learning goals”, “family”, “parents”, etc. These are represented as subcategories in the results section. Systematic comparison was used in which incidents in the data were often relayed to data recalled from the literature. This form of analysis places emphasis on how often a concept emerges and its properties under various conditions, rather than quantifying how many participants exhibited it.

Microanalysis was done concurrently which allowed deeper understanding of the data. This procedure allowed me to take into account interpretation and meaning of the participant’s statements, as well as narrow potential meanings. The result is categories which represent the ideas that I saw in the data. In the current study, the identification of these categories was driven by the possible selves framework. The possibilities for grouping were derived from the major components of possible selves- goals, hopes, fears, threats, aspirations, motives and ideal selves. Each of the lower order concepts (“learning goals”, “family”, “parents”, etc.) were placed under a possible selves component based

on the context in which it was discussed by the participant. Some of the concepts fit into multiple categories, for instance ideas of future education or career changes could be sorted into “goals” or “aspirations”. Further analysis, a step of axial coding, was performed on the context of the statements, and in the above example, evidence of a plan to pursue that idea indicated a goal rather than an aspiration (Strahan & Wilson, 2006). Possible selves components that were not fully supported by the data also allowed for these concepts to be included under other headings, and therefore eliminated from the study. In situations where one participant’s statements fell under a similar category as the others in subject matter, but the manner in which they discussed that item contradicted with the others, this notation was added within the text. An example is the participant who credits stable pay as a reason that she went into the profession, as opposed to a majority of the other participants who cited it as an obstacle in their decision. This strategy was used as representation that while these concepts and categories are generalizations of the majority of participants, they do necessarily reflect an absolute and complete consensus.

Final analysis used the emergent categories to answer the stated research questions in this study. As the result of this research was intended as a “theoretical proposition”, further courses of study are suggested as well.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The primary issues that emerged from the interview data are highlighted below, organized in the manner in which they are identifiable with the possible selves components. Commencing each category is a definable explanation of the concept in relation to this theory for the purpose of distinguishing it from other psychological theories that may employ the same term within a different context. Graphs have also been included to characterize the diverse professional and educational backgrounds of the participants, as well as to demonstrate some of the responses given to specific questions. To begin the discussion, the experiences of an individual teacher is presented for the purpose of offering saliency and understanding to the concepts being portrayed, the interaction between these, as well as to signify the uniqueness and depth given within each account.

The following account is a portrayal of how a teacher approaches the decision to go into teaching, and then continues to negotiate the hopes, fears and threats that accompany the job in order to make the decision if she will remain in the profession for the length of her career.

Eileen's story

Eileen discovered a passion for marketing in high school when she took elective courses in the business department for the purpose of fulfilling requirements for a college scholarship. Following high school, she obtained a bachelors degree in marketing, with a minor in business management. Upon graduating from college, she found that most of the jobs offered in her area

were not marketing alone, but also consisted of sales. She was not interested in that aspect of the business field, but still took a job with a minor league sports team. She states,

> "…I enjoyed the marketing part of it, but I guess I hated the hours because…I would work nights, weekends, everything- I worked *a lot* of hours. My husband was a teacher, and I thought, 'I could teach these kids everything I know with the business end of it, the computer end of it, and work 7:30-2:30.' I think what kind of lead me here is thinking into the future of having kids, and if you have kids, this is really, really flexible. [My husband] was in teaching, and I thought…when we have kids, he is going to be the one spending all the time with them because he gets done [with work] at 2:30."

Eileen began to imagine herself as a teacher, and felt satisfied that she could combine her passion for marketing and technology with the knowledge that she may influence a student to go into business just as she experienced in school. She recalls her computer teacher in high school encouraging her to go into teaching:

> "[She] use to always tell me 'You need to be a teacher, you could really do this.' When she had a kid that needed help and she was busy helping someone else, she'd say 'Eileen, go help so and so." I would do it, and I would be great! I always thought, 'you know, I could do that, but then the pay is really, really bad, so I'm not.' I think I wanted to [teach] all along, but the pay was so bad [I] wouldn't even consider it at the time. A lot of people think, 'I am going to make a lot of money when I come out [of college]. These four years have to be worth something."

Despite her developing desire to switch careers after working in marketing for a while, holding her back from pursuing teaching was her perception of her mom as a successful business woman and financial earner. She recalls a car trip they took which became a critical incident in her career:

> "[My husband] and my mom were the two that made the biggest factor in what I did. Seeing my mom be so successful and make so much money…she was one of the ones [saying] 'The pay for [teaching] is horrible, Eileen- you are so much smarter, you are so much better than that.' And so I guess I needed that from my mom to say it's ok, you can do that, you're not going to be a failure if you go be a teacher and don't make any money."

More than five years following Eileen's decision to change her career and go into teaching, she maintains that it is her ideal job. Her anticipation of better hours and the ability to spend time with her children has been met, although she has realized that her teaching day is longer than 7:00-2:30, as originally predicted. She has come to the realization that although her mom is a successful business woman and produces a generous salary as Eileen aspired to do, there is a quality of life that she has had to sacrifice due to an inflexible schedule, unreasonable job demands, and terribly long hours. Eileen looks at what is best for her family, and knows that she is not willing to make those same sacrifices. She claims,

> "I also see the flip side of [my mom] being busy all the time, her schedule is not flexible, it is very, very demanding, very stressful. Ours is stressful, too, but we get summers off, we get fall break, a Christmas break, a spring break, so those aspects were, hands down, much better."

Eileen is satisfied with her decision to go into teaching, and states, "I think it is wonderful now- I love it most days. To see how you affect the kids, and to see that you are making a difference in their lives. I think it is great." When asked the reason for her optimism, she states,

> "The kids. I feel like sometimes you make a bigger impact [teaching in high school] because they are at that point in their lives where they make the decision- do they go to college, do they drop out, do they go to technical school, or do they go straight to work? And I think making that impact on them and helping them with those decisions is a big part of wanting to be a teacher. Your hope is always to make a difference in their lives and to see the difference that you make in them."

Eileen enjoys working at the school she is currently at- the administration and other teachers are supportive, and what she calls "family oriented." She claims that the principal and deans, "Back you up, which is very good for teachers. You say the kid did this, and the administration says [to the student], 'Oh, no, you are in trouble now." She believes that the teachers do not question their boundaries, and feel in control of the management of their classroom, making for an overall satisfying work environment. Also, the administrators

understand that family is the first priority for the teachers. She says, "Our principal is wonderful…if you need a day to spend with your kids, absolutely." Administration has also created a mentoring program for the staff, encouraging communication and guidance for less experienced teachers. This has proven successful for all teachers involved, and provides for an open, friendly atmosphere at the school. It helps teachers, "To feel comfortable and know that you can go to that one person." In contrast, Eileen previously taught at another school where administration was not at all supportive, and she contemplates whether or not she would still be teaching if she had remained in that school:

> "Administration is huge…a lot of decisions I would make at the old school, I would be like, 'Can I even do this? Are they going to back up what I do? And it makes you question every little thing instead of just acting. The administration did not back you up at all, and the parents came in- teaching over here is night and day. If I had to stay at that school…I would have left [teaching] a long time ago."

Despite her seemingly positive outlook on her career, Eileen is adamant about not making a commitment to remaining in education for more than another 2 years. Her reason for seriously considering a change is concern over the direction in which the federal government is taking education with increased testing, and particularly distress over her state's adopted policy to vary teacher's pay based on the student's test performance:

> "A lot of teachers are actually thinking about moving on and finding something that's better pay for all of the different things we have to do. You would be surprised at how many teachers are thinking about leaving…the state has mandated all of these different regulations, and basically a bunch of hoops that you have to jump through to be a teacher. The kid's [test] scores have to be a certain amount, your pay…they are talking about making your pay as a teacher be based on the kid's test scores and how they produce in school. And when you teach, all of your kids are not the greatest kids, the smartest kids, and that does affect your pay. [The state] just started all of these other regulations, like a professional development plan, and it is just a ton of paperwork…and it is getting to be very overwhelming. [Remaining in teaching] kind of depends on the next [gubernatorial election] and what comes next- it is something we are all pretty much thinking about. I have to make that decision- but if I stay here, I am here for good."

Eileen's perspective represents findings from the cited research that teacher's experience satisfaction and dissatisfaction from their career in stages (Huberman, 1993). At times she has been accepting of the pros and cons of the job requirements, and looks to the future with optimism by creating goals for her career. She says,

> "I think if [the state] would take the pressures out and let [teachers] do what we do, the kids would succeed if they would give them a chance. Teaching would be enjoyable again, and we would all want to stay because we'd all think about the difference that we make."

At other times she feels like she continues to accept mounting responsibilities for less pay, while she perceives her peers who work outside of education as having less work with better income. She believes that, "As a teacher, it's amazing- we have so many more things that we have to do, hoops that we have to jump through, than somebody in [another] profession. It is just ridiculous." And although Eileen has demonstrated a commitment to her students, she is currently evaluating the balance between what she enjoys doing and the impact she could have on her students in the future, and her fears that a concentration on testing, as well as stricter policies and standards, will prevent her from continuing to guide her students' development. Her job satisfaction is dwindling as she perceives herself losing control over the direction of her career. She states,

> "It is getting more difficult every year. With the background that I have, I could leave and go into another company, and with the marketing and computer skills that I have, it probably wouldn't be that hard for me to find another job. Daily I think some days [my ideal job] is teaching, and some days I think I need to get out of here. I think that's always in the back of my mind, if something opened up where I would have the flexibility of hours and it would be more marketing related, I might leave. Especially with everything going on right now."

Also weighing on the decision is the question of what is best for her family, and she believes that given a choice between business and teaching, it would be to remain in education. The hours she commits to her job as a teacher are much more conducive to raising her young children than

what she would find in a marketing job. So it is possible that despite her dissatisfaction with changes made in the schools, she may remain a teacher solely due to the priority of family. She speaks passionately that:

> "I also have to look at what is best for my kids- and that might be teaching. Even though the pay is terrible, teaching may be what's best for my family unless you find just that perfect job with flexible hours. So there is a lot to go over with that decision. My kids at home are my biggest factor in what I do for that, I think."

Eileen feels an overwhelming sense of frustration in her job currently. She knows that she is a good teacher and can achieve her professional goals if given the opportunity to do so. However, based on recent laws, the attitudes of her colleagues and increased measures of teacher accountability that she feels are beyond what she does in the classroom, she cannot resolve the future of her career at this time. She is delaying her decision until it is determined if she will have to sacrifice the pleasures of the job to adhere to increasingly strict guidelines and standards that limit her creativeness as a teacher. She believes that the choice would be easier if,

> "You increase teacher pay and take some of the pressure off, and make it an environment where it's fun to learn and not test, test, test. I think it would make a huge difference and people would want to stay."

Eileen's story represents the conflict that many teachers face in achieving their goals as an educator and making a difference in the life of their students, and dealing with those factors that threaten this pursuit. Furthermore, her narrative demonstrates how the balance between possible selves is affected by experiences and social influences. We will now explore in further detail those possible selves that have the been identified by the participants as having the greatest impact on their career development.

Goals

The term "goal" is used by researchers to describe a vast number of processes in which the significance and meaning to a person widely vary depending on the psychological discipline. Additionally, researchers often use concepts such as will, attributions, expectancies, beliefs and motivation interchangeably with goals (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989), making it difficult to explicitly define the term without extensive discussion as to differences in personality, cognitive and motivational theories. In the present study, goals are viewed as a component of the self-concept which regulates behavior by linking various self representations between a person's current state and one's desired state.

Becoming a teacher

As expected in most professions, the experiences and education that the participants in this study bring to the classroom widely varies. None of the teachers interviewed began their post secondary school lives, whether that was attending college or obtaining their first full time job, with the expectation of becoming an educator (See Table 1: Teacher Backgrounds). However in speaking retrospectively about their career decisions, most saw themselves expressing an appreciation or desire for teaching earlier in life, whether it was from helping out by tutoring peers in high school, admiring a former teacher, or demonstrating a fondness for helping out a special group of people, such as disabled students or young children. Marilyn recalls a fellow student in kindergarten who had a significant impact on her future as a special education teacher:

> "There was a boy who was mentally handicapped- he was marked differently, you could tell. And [because we were seated alphabetically] I always had to sit by him. Looking back now, I know that my exposure to him at that point made me

> so much more comfortable. I think after that, I just had a love for kids like that and people like that."

This penchant for instruction was often noticed by family members and friends before it was ever noticed by the participant's themselves, making the transition to the field of education a relatively supported event for the teachers. Kathy remembers when announced that she was going to change careers, her "whole family" said to her, "I don't know why you didn't see that because you love kids! You should have known that you wanted to be a teacher!" Those participants who described any type of negative reaction to their decision in becoming a teacher stated only one thing- that the comment was often made that they will never earn much money by going into the field of education. Debbie recalls that her parents and friends "just wanted me to be happy, but they said 'You know you are never going to make any money.'" As this was an issue that many of the teachers had already considered in the decision to change their career goals, it was not a deterring factor.

The participants in the current study were commonly representative of the research literature of Huberman (1993) and Schutz, Crowder and White (2001), which states that teachers tend to state multitudinous reasons (an average of three) as to why they went into the field of education. The decisions of the participants were a result of material, professional and passive motivations. All declared support for their careers from family, friends, and spouses, but did not credit input from these sources as a contributor to their initial interest in education. In other words, none of the participants noted active encouragement or suggestion from social influences during their development of their teaching career goal. Inadvertently, however, some participants expressed the effect that their families and friends had on their vocational aspirations leading up to their switch to the educational field. Allison chose a major of accounting because "I really like math and my dad is an accountant," therefore she felt it was natural choice to

follow in his footsteps. Kathy, who also majored in accounting, "followed friends in college- they went into accounting." Sybil, on the other hand, had expressed a prior interest in both teaching and criminology, however her husband did not approve of her working in the field of criminal justice, therefore limiting her options. Other teachers did not necessarily have a conscious awareness as to why they chose their initial career direction, other than just possessing an interest in that area of study.

A number of the participants in the present study reflect findings by Miles and Huberman (1994), as well as Tripp (1994), in noting the occurrence of critical incidents in the formation of their goals to become a teacher. In responses prompted by the question, "Do you remember the exact moment that you decided to become a teacher?" Allison recalled participating in her college sorority's "read aloud" volunteer work with 2nd grade students, and she stated that she decided to change her major, "The first day I walked into that classroom- I just loved it." Similarly, Sybil remembers a growing feeling that she needed to leave her job as a cosmetologist in order to provide a more stable and financially sound lifestyle for her child. She states, "I just had to settle down and have a more subtle life, and have insurance, and a life like that, so it was time to really decide what I was going to do and go back." She felt it was "that big adult decision, so I can tell you probably the exact day and time [I decided to go into teaching]." Kathy saw her young daughter struggle with basic reading aptitude as she entered kindergarten, and realized that she didn't possess the skills or knowledge needed to help her child learn. She was worried that her daughter, upon leaving pre-kindergarten, "Couldn't identify her alphabet- she was struggling with that, and I didn't know how to teach her to read. So I knew I needed to go to school to learn what to do to help her." She also said that she was

motivated because of wanting to be “abreast of the things (her daughter) was learning, and make sure she excelled” and therefore initiated her change of career in order to become more involved.

The participants who expressed an acute awareness of their personal transition process from a former major or career to teaching were asked if they ever reflect on what their life would have been like had they remained in their former field. Most responded that occasionally they do, but they all felt strongly that they made right choice going into teaching. Gladys says that although she wanted to be a Pediatrician from the time she was small, she has accepted that a medical career would, “never have worked for (her).” She felt like the hours involved would have comprised her ability to enjoy “fun things.” In teaching she found, “a niche where I can go out and be as active as I like to be and have time to enjoy life like I want.” Allison predicted that if she had gone into accounting, she “probably would have wished that I had gone into teaching.”

Overwhelmingly, the participants expressed no regrets that they went into teaching as a career. Despite demanding days, sometimes extremely difficult years, and the general hardships that come with teaching, such as unsatisfactory pay and increased performance expectations, the teachers are adamant that they made a suitable vocational choice. As discussed later, this does not necessarily indicate a commitment to the field of education for the entirety of their career, however the teachers felt like their time in the classroom was worthwhile and rewarding.

Table 1: Teacher Backgrounds

Teacher	Previous Aspirations	Grade levels Taught	Prior work	When did you decide?	Years Teaching
Eileen	Law	Grades 9-12- Computers & Technology	marketing	After being in workforce	5
Marilyn	Nurse	Grades 9-12 Exceptional Education	None	Sophomore year of college	16
Gladys	Doctor	Pre-K	Nursing Assistant	College	3
Allison	Architect/ Accountant	K, K-1, 1st, 2nd	None	Sophomore year of college	4
Debbie	International Studies	K, 2nd, 5th, Reading EIP	None	Sophomore year of college	11
Sybil	Criminologist /Teaching	Pre-K, K, 1st, 5th	Cosmetology/ Paraprofessional	After son was born	10
Kathy	Legal secretary/Accounting	4th	Accountant	After daughter was born	18

Looking Ahead

In discussing current thoughts on vocational goals, teachers cited two different areas- education and career. All the teachers, with the exception of Eileen who already held a graduate degree, had a very strong desire to further their education. All credited an intense personal motivation to continue their own learning, although most could not identify where that desire stemmed from. Only one teacher mentioned a small salary increase as an additional reason for her to obtain a graduate degree, but the other participants didn't see the degree as offering any benefits other than a feeling of accomplishment.

Most of the teachers did not express such certainty for their career goals as they did for their education. Those participants who discussed wanting to move into other positions within education stated that they wanted to contribute in ways other than the classroom, however they expressed uncertainty as to whether or not they would actually pursue that goal. Marilyn stated she was interested in counseling; because she works in exceptional education, she is faced with

addressing the many emotional, mental and physical issues of the students. She finds it difficult to balance teaching with helping the children on a different level due to time restraints, and with counseling, "Once again, [you are] able to make a difference, but it is a little bit different [than being a teacher] because people would voluntarily come and ask you for help, you wouldn't have to just perceive or infer it." Debbie wants to make a difference in the schools by assisting the teachers with their mission to teach kids. She has strong feelings about an administrator's role in retaining good teachers and she believes that they have the power to, "institute some programs that can make a difference for kids." She states that she "wants to be part of the change." She also sees the benefits of being an educator of future teachers, and would consider a position within an institute of higher learning. While Kathy wants to remain in the classroom, she sees herself moving into teaching a different age level, with her motives being two-fold. Her work with at-risk kids has given her the insight of what she perceives to be a turning point in a child's life, the middle school grades, where they need increased guidance to adjust with the transition to high school. She feels that they "are still babies and they're going into a new situation, and I think they still need a little bit of mothering in order to be able to cope with the next grade." In addition, she has found great success over the years in helping students turn around failing grades, and has offered new hope and opportunities to these kids who many teachers "wrote off" as being future delinquents or dropping out of school. She chose to teach only at-risk students because, "I kept hearing teachers say, 'Oh those boys, they are going to jail.' But I didn't like that, so I wanted to make a difference- I wanted to prove them wrong." The past few classes, however, she has experienced new challenges in children that she has not been able to "reach", and finds herself doubting her ability to continue to be effective:

> "I think that is what I am scared of the most- am I going to lose that oomph that I have of getting these students back on track? So that's my biggest fear- that I

> won't be able to reach them- that I'm losing my touch…I think [switching to middle school] is going to be a new challenge. I think it will be something new to work with, get a new perspective…just get some change."

Most of the participants in the study maintain that teaching is their ideal job. Of those who claimed otherwise, Gladys expresses that she really would like to become an interior designer, but she has no efficacy in her ability to be successful in the area of design. She states, "I have no niche for that at all- but it looks like a cool job." If she was given the opportunity to train in that field, she, "probably wouldn't give up teaching- I might go to night school and see how it worked out. I'm a little more cautious than throwing it to the wind." As described previously Eileen believes most days that teaching is her ideal job, but also retains her love for marketing, and is open minded about returning to the field if the right job were to present itself. Her thoughts about leaving teaching are based primarily on the mounting work and expectations being placed on teachers, and the knowledge that her skills are very marketable to higher paying jobs. Those teachers who want to continue in education but switch to positions outside the classroom agree with Eileen in expressing conflict between pursuing other career goals and continuing to work with the students. While they have a desire to further their education and get experience in other areas, the participants feel like they would miss interacting with the students on the level that they do as a teacher. Similarly, the participants who see themselves continuing to teach assert that the students are the primary reason for their decision to remain where they are. Diane proclaims, "I don't want to do anything else…I like working with the kids, I like being in the classroom. I don't want to be anyplace else."

Table 2: Teacher Goals

Teacher	Educational goal	Timeline	Career goal	Timeline	Ideal job
Eileen	None	N/A	Stay in teaching/teach upper level courses/ marketing	2 years	Teaching/ Marketing
Marilyn	Masters in Counseling	5-10 years	Private or School Counseling	5-10 years	Teaching
Gladys	Masters/Doctorate	Immediate	Remain in teaching	N/A	Interior Designer
Allison	Specialist	5 years	Curriculum/Teaching	Not Specified	Teaching
Debbie	Specialist /Doctorate	10 years	Administration/ College Educator	10 yrs	Teaching
Sybil	Masters	Unknown	Remain in teaching	N/A	Teaching
Kathy	Masters	will complete this year	Teach Middle/High School Spanish and/or Reading	3 years	Teaching

Hoped For Selves

Researchers often refer to hopes as positive motives (Oyserman & Markus 1990), the way a person expects things to be (Markus, 1983), or the ideal self that one would like to become (Markus & Nurius 1986). Hopes tend to be the most abstract of possible selves, yet they remain domain specific. For instance, instead of "I hope to be a successful person," a more accurate possible self would be, "I hope to be a successful teacher." Hopes reflect the end state that a person conceptualizes for themselves, and in the current study this is reflected by the participants expressing what they wish to accomplish within their role as a teacher.

"I blame you for everything that has gone right with me"

The participants were very explicit and surprisingly unanimous in their hopes as a teacher- "to make a difference." Their elaboration on this was expressed at two levels that were dependant of each other, the first being their aspirations for their students, and the second being their role in securing those expectations. There was even very little variation found between participants responses within those statements, with the teachers wanting their students to live up to their potential and create opportunities for themselves (Kathy), "have more of a sense of how to make better choices in life" (Marilyn), and be "good, productive citizens" (Debbie). Their desire for helping the students achieve these standards were to make a "positive impact on their lives" (Sybil), "to be a teacher the students remember" (Kathy), and to teach more than academics, "but also life skills" (Allison). The participants responded that their hopes prior to becoming a teacher and their hopes now that they have experience are still the same, the only difference being, in Allison's words,

> "I still feel like those same hopes (to make a difference) are still there, but now that I am actually in the classroom…I can see ways I can make a difference, and see ways I can help. You see all the different needs of the students and stuff, as opposed to before…I just think, 'I want to help children.'"

In contrasting teacher's hopes, as stated there was no difference found *between* the participants' responses, with all of them wanting to make a difference in the lives of their students, however there was a noticeable discrepancy *within* many of their individual statements. Explicated in Table 3, the participants offered their ideas for what a teacher's role should be in society. It is assumed from the interview data that in their efforts to be a successful teacher, these are statements of the standards to which the participants aspire to achieve. As shown, some of the teachers describe their role as being collective- not solely providing academic learning to the students, but to affect them in many aspects of their lives, for example Sybil and Gladys.

These teachers are comfortable with that task, and see it as being a rewarding element of their job. Other teachers, such as Eileen and Allison, see themselves as being a major contributor to a child's learning, but are obstinate in stating that they should be a supporting figure, not the primary or sole influence. Each of the participants at varying points in their interview offered narratives of times that they went beyond their classroom duties to help students- for example, Marilyn has taken students to get their drivers license, and Kathy sees children come to school "hungry and dirty," so she keeps shirts, ties, toothbrushes, deodorant and snacks in her class, and then takes the laundry home to wash and iron it for the next day. These stories prompted the question, "Do you feel responsible for providing to your students that things that they do not receive at home?" Despite the teacher's perception of the role a teacher should play, their answer was an unequivocal yes. Eileen struggles with this duality in her ideas of what she should be as a teacher and her actual level of involvement-"I know I shouldn't (feel responsible), but I do. Because you want them to succeed, and you want them to be good." Marilyn confirms that being so emotionally invested in each student's life is can be stressful and sometimes frustrating- "It is a lot of responsibility to try to impact young people. But I just try to look at it- well, if I don't, who will?" Gladys discusses how being a teacher can extend outside of just the school, "You can't help but get involved with the kids. I went to a karate thing for one of kids earlier this year… I was invited to that and I went…you know, (to) make them feel better and make them know they are appreciated and loved."

The teacher's level of involvement with the students is embodied in their statements of how they want to be remembered as a teacher. Eileen states, "I think it is wonderful…to see that you are making a difference in their lives not only educationally, but you are leading them, you are an example, a role model for them." She recalls the "wonderful" feeling when former

students tell her, “You were my favorite teacher, and you really made me think I wanted to do this and this with my life, and you really kept me going.” Marilyn’s hope going into teaching was that “somebody’s life would have been altered by something I said or did with them.” She has been collecting notes and cards from her students for the entirety of her teaching career, and when she is having a bad day or doubts whether what she is doing matters, she looks through the file. It gives her the perspective that “If I have impacted just one person, it has been worth it…that is really the reason I am here.” Kathy finds a student “lifting her name” up as the definitive measurement of success in her career- she says, “I think that’s the highest standard I can hope for, somebody coming back and saying something good about me, that I made a difference in their life.” Other teachers, such as Sybil, do not put merit in hearing praise from their students, but “likes when *they* make a difference.” In other words, the reward comes from seeing the student become successful as a result of her guidance.

At times, the participant’s perceived success as a teacher is limited by their own expectations. Ten years ago when Kathy first requested that the at-risk students be placed in her class, she “wanted to make a difference.” She felt like each of the students had potential, but “they needed the right person to pull it out of them.” She felt like she had to, “stay in this job to show them another way of life.” She has been labeled by her principal a child advocate, and she agrees, stating that, “I am always fighting, no matter what the child does, I am always fighting for that child- I will not give up on that child.” Kathy applies for federal grants to fund additional opportunities for students to learn and grow outside the classroom, and she also enlists the help of her family so that they can understand her mission. Her son comes into the classroom and acts as an older brother role model for the children, her husband purchases food for her to take into school, and her mother has recruited her employer to send boxes of office supplies at

the beginning of every school year to ensure that there are adequate amounts of paper, pens, binders, etc. Every year Kathy brings entire classes of failing students to passing levels, ready to be placed into the mainstream 5th grade classes the following school year. She says that they have all become more "responsible for their actions, they've learned manners, (and) they've learned social skills." Despite all that she has accomplished, Kathy still struggles with self doubt about her ability to affect the lives of these children to the extent that she strives. This is due to her realizing in recent years that no matter how hard she tries, she may be unable to reach some students. However, it is unlikely that most of her students would agree that this is the case, as apparent in the following story:

> "One of (my) students recognized me (in the bank) - I have all my kid's pictures that I have ever taught, and I remembered his face when he told me his name. And this boy is now, he's a sophomore in college majoring in something to do with medicine, he told me, but it is not a doctor, I don't know what it is. But he is doing good, and this is one of the children that I would have thought wouldn't amount to much, and he told me, "You know I blame you for everything that has gone right with me." And I said, "Well I like to be blamed for that, thank you so much!"

Every participant offered an image of their ideal career self being a teacher who cares for their students and wants the best for them, and also to have been a significant contributor to the children achieving success in their life. They all admittedly grow emotionally attached, sometimes to such an extent that in the case of Sybil she claims, "I think when they come in here they are mine. They become mine, and I do worry about them and take care of them. They are mine, they are mine forever." It is undeniable to the teachers that such personal involvement with the students can often create additional stress and frustration in their jobs. Debbie states, "We're the nurse, we are the psychologist, we're the family, we're everything to the child instead of just the teacher, and we can't be everything." When asked why they see teaching as being so

rewarding with that level of responsibility, the answer is summed up by Eileen's statement, "The kids, the kids, the kids. Absolutely- the kids."

Table 3: Teachers' Perceived Role of a Teacher in Society

Teacher	Perceived role of a teacher in society
Eileen	"I think it is to help the kids grow. I think they should get the foundation at home, and then you should reinforce that here. You should be the reinforcer, not the one who gives them the foundation of how to act. Because a lot of these kids, they don't know morally, in society, 'what do you do?'"
Marilyn	"Whenever I think about it, I just think whatever job someone has, they have had a teacher that has brought them that far. I mean I feel like it is the backbone of all education, the teacher's role."
Gladys	"To influence children to become the best people that they can be. And I think that you take special interest… in some students that you know maybe don't get as much love at home and try to give them the best life that they can have through education by showing them that they have a bright spot…you can grow up to be whatever you want…and instilling that in every child I think is very important- one of the most important things teachers can do."
Allison	"I think a teacher would play a role as a leader, and a helper, someone who plays a major role in teaching children, but should not be the only (one). But I think a lot of times society, or parents in the community, view teachers sometimes as a babysitter, sometimes as somebody that their job is to their (the parent's) children- like it is not their responsibility."
Sybil	"I definitely think it is to shape and change lives. To make them change their lives, to change society, what else? And you *can*…"
Kathy	"She has to be a mother, father, doctor, lawyer- she has a variety of roles. And police officer. But most of all I just think more teachers need to listen to kids, they need to just let them speak…Listen to what they want to say- and I think if you do that, if they notice that you are listening to them, then it is your turn to teach…"

Feared Selves

Fear is the component of motive that describes the selves that an individual is afraid of becoming. These fears often encompass dread and the fear of being alone, afraid, or incompetent (Markus 1983). An image of one's self being unsuccessful at achieving their desired end state, such as being an effective teacher, can increase the possibility of inaction. Yet feared selves can also

contribute to an increase in action when being viewed as an end state that one would like to avoid (Oyserman & Markus 1990). Therefore, feared selves are often referred to as being "instrumental in the maintenance and direction of behavioral adaptation" (Yowell 2002). While fear's role in motivation is not to organize the activity, it can guide avoidance behavior, therefore sometimes acting as an adversary to one's hoped for self. Fear is often a reflection of an individual's self efficacy in attaining their ideal self.

The participants in this study were more specific and profuse in identifying their fears than their hopes, yet each of these components continued to be consistent among all teachers interviewed. Each discussed how they often feel limited in their careers by a lack of proper training and knowledge, and also how issues with administration, student parents and their colleagues significantly affected their attitude toward their job and what they have the potential to accomplish. Based on the response data, the teacher's feared selves have therefore been organized in two categories- lack of knowledge and lack of support.

Within these groups, the expressed fears will be discussed independently of each other. While the teachers offered experiences that appear to weigh some of the variables, such as support from administration, as being much more influential in their vocational outlook than others, such as support from colleagues, this study does not attempt to determine the degree to which these variables work collectively or autonomously to produce fear.

Lack of knowledge and skills

While many teachers attributed their fears prior to being in the classroom to a lack of applicable experience, most of them stated that they continue to feel a lack of efficacy in certain areas of their pedagogy and content knowledge. First, the fears going into teaching with respect

to lack of knowledge will be addressed, and then those fears that persist along with fears discovered with experience will be examined.

Being a new teacher

In reflecting on their adjustment to the classroom environment after exiting college, the teachers stated that some of the most important things that they deal with on a daily basis were never addressed in their program of study. Some of these issues were personal, such as Eileen's fear that the students would not take her seriously because she looks exceptionally young, and could often be mistaken for a high school student herself. She wasn't sure if they would listen to her during lessons, or if she would be effective in disciplining them. Other concerns were more pedagogical in nature- Gladys was afraid that she "wouldn't be able to explain things well enough, or that I wouldn't be able to find a way to reach the children." Similarly, Kathy feared that she "didn't know enough and that I wasn't equipped with all the right tools to teach them what they needed to know to be out in the world." Marilyn was just uncertain about where to begin in her teaching. Behavior management and communicating with parents were also areas in which the teachers felt they had no applicable training. Sybil and Debbie separately stated that sociocultural training in addition to cultural knowledge is especially critical in dealing with both students and parents. As Debbie explains with regard to speaking with parents,

> "When you are talking to people who you really don't have anything in common with, a different socio-economic (status), a different race, I don't know- sometimes they are put off when they come in. To have that open communication with them- sometimes they are intimidated when the come in already because you can't them in until you have already been through the wire with them, and then now you are fed up to shreds with kids and them…and then you are already defensive…"

Eileen felt like the psychological aspects of students were addressed in her classes, but never the topic of effective disciplining methods. She stated that because of that, she was not prepared for handling these issues, and had had to learn them through time, experience, and "trial and error."

There was a noticeable difference in the efficacy of teachers at the beginning stages of their careers which had opportunities for internships and practicums while in college to those who did not have much exposure to the classroom. Gladys and Allison both had numerous placements in different grades prior to graduating, and Sybil worked as a paraprofessional. All of them still had fears being on their own in the classroom, but from their statements they seemed to be less affected in the transition from student to teacher. Eileen and Kathy both attained their bachelor degree in fields other than education and therefore were not afforded applicable experience in a school prior to becoming a teacher. These teachers expressed a greater sense of astonishment for the differences in their academic training and the skills actually needed for successful classroom management. Eileen recalls feeling like, "the walls are closing in on me. How do I teach? How do I use the book to figure it out? I don't know what I am doing."

The participants also discussed lack of preparation from the perspective of having observed new teachers coming into their schools over the years. They see many of the same issues that they encountered, such as difficulty with discipline and communication, but they also find that the new educators have no insight into the amount of paperwork required of the job, or the expectations for performance accountability that will be placed on them. Consequently, the participants said they have witnessed many teachers quit during the first couple of years of their career. Kathy asserts,

> "I think every new teacher goes through the same things I went through except nowadays I think they don't teach them the real world, what's actually reality. I

> don't think they let them know exactly what they are going into because a lot of first year teachers quit. But you've got to have a backbone to deal with these kids"

With the exception of Kathy, who explained her reason for going into teaching as being that she did not know how to teach her daughter, the participants see their initial fears as a teacher being primarily a result of pedagogical things they did not learn in college rather than fearing a lack of content knowledge.

Through the eyes of experience…

The participants acknowledge that after a couple of years of teaching, many of their early fears were eliminated. Discipline became easier- although some of the teachers, especially those at the high school level, feel that it is an issue that is always beneficial to address. They all became more confident in their ability to communicate lessons, how to plan and organize curriculum, and they no longer struggle over where to begin their teaching. They have developed their persona as teachers, and those who felt they needed to establish boundaries of respect with the students, such as Eileen and Debbie, say they are no longer as stringent with what Debbie terms, "tough love." Yet some issues persist, such as communication with parents and understanding ways to reach the students on a personal level. There are also new fears, such as lack of time management skills, and most prevalent, concern over lack of content knowledge.

The participants discuss a growing sense of frustration when it comes to balancing paperwork, assessments and test preparation and offering their students the attention they demand during school hours. With increased standards and accountability procedures assigned to the teachers by administration, the teachers felt as if they are being forced to choose between using time in class that was once reserved for individualized instruction of students needing additional help, or making their work days longer by staying after hours to complete these tasks.

Those teachers of the younger grades find this particularly overwhelming as the children are not yet at the age where they can self regulate their own learning and activities, therefore needing constant direction. Allison explains, “When the kids are in the room, you are constantly having to teach them or interact with them. They are depending on you, and wanting your attention.” Also, those teachers fear that the curriculum for young children is no longer developmentally appropriate, and by requiring difficult levels of reading, writing and math skills by the time they leave kindergarten, so much is demanded of the students that they never have the opportunity to discover that education can be fun. Sybil believes that, “We push [the kids] really hard. And pushing them hard is not a problem, but I think we need to let them be kids, too. I don’t want the fun to get so out of touch” As the grade levels increase, the teachers cite the necessity of preparing for achievement tests as the primary obstacle in their ability to teach students all they need to before advancing to the next grade. While some of these issues addressed by teachers are not likely to be eradicated anytime soon, every year they are handed mounting responsibilities with no instruction from administration on methods to balance their work load. Debbie feels “there is not enough time in the day- I know all teachers feel that way.”

Adding to the matter of time management is the teachers’ concerns over maintaining and increasing their own knowledge by continued education. Many feel that if they don’t have time to complete their teaching responsibilities during the day, when do they find the chance to discover new information to pass along to the students? Eileen discussed the struggle with trying to keep high school age persons focused on lessons, and how she needs to, “stay on top of what they are doing and what they like,” in order to relate the curriculum to things that they understand and can get excited about. She also stated that teaching computers creates a unique problem- technology use is so widespread among children now, “a lot of times they will surpass

you in what they know." She said that the schools block certain websites from being accessed, but her students, "always find a way around it, and you are going, 'How in the world did they figure that out?' They are so smart- it is just amazing" She feels like she is forced into a constant state of learning just to match the skills of the students, and it takes much more than knowledge, but also, "your creative side has to grow." Marilyn would also like to increase her knowledge of technology in order to be able to challenge her students in new ways. Now she concentrates on "basic functional things that we are going to need in life," but sees opportunities to be more innovative. Similarly, Debbie sees value in learning new techniques for teaching, but says there are issues that accompany the vast number of educational resources being introduced- "I can see little tidbits of each thing and like to try that more and more, but it seems like there's so many demands on your time and so many kids that it is hard to do all those things."

Some teachers allow their fears over lack of content and pedagogical knowledge to amplify into new concerns. Allison describes anxiety over the possibility of having to teach one of the late elementary grades at some point in the future. She explains,

> "…This is kinda bad, but like in the 4th and 5th grade some of the stuff I knew, I had learned it, but you really had to go back and study and research and stuff to be able to teach it to the kids. I think I have just gotten all these ideas…for what I teach now, I would feel like it would be hard to start all over again. That's what I would have to do- start all over if I taught upper grades."

Kathy also attributes her reason for remaining at the elementary level for so many years as being a lack of confidence in her knowledge for teaching older students. She feels like she has finally conquered that fear by devoting years to educating herself, especially through enrolling in a master's program, and she is now ready to move on and experience teaching at a new grade level. However, she recalls the early years of her career and her insecurities about teaching:

> "I knew the basic stuff, and I think that is why I went into elementary, because I knew basically what I needed to know. [In the beginning] I wrote down

> everything I wanted to say, everything I wanted to tell the kids, I wrote everything from, 'Hello, good morning, this is so and so, and today we are going to learn this..." I would write everything on the board. I would have my notes, and I would memorize them the night before. And when I got ready to teach science…the weekend before I was going to teach the lesson, I would study and stand up in my room and practice exactly how I was going to do it, I would practice the experiment, I would let my children pretend they were working on the problems... [I would rehearse]whatever I was going to teach that week because I knew I wasn't equipped in science- I knew I didn't have everything that I needed to know."

Despite the fears cited by the participants over having the adequate skills and knowledge to be successful in their career, many feel that to be a good teacher, you have to already possess something special and different. Kathy feels like many of the skills she has, especially in being able to manage "veering off the subject" in a lesson and allowing the students to express themselves while relating that back the curriculum, is something that is not available in books. In her opinion, "Sometimes you just have to be a people person to become a great teacher-and if you're not, than you are not going to survive in the education field." Marilyn agrees, and states, "You really have a knack for it or you don't. You have to have a knack for managing kids, or you don't, you have to have a knack for being able to make something up on the spot, or you don't. And it's hard to know if you have it or you don't until you've tried it."

Lack of support

The teachers discussed extensively how a lack of support from others involved in the school system negatively impedes their attainment of goals, and how that affects their outlook on their job. They identified three primary sources from which a partnership with the teacher is critical in aiding a child's education- these were administration, parents, and colleagues. Below is an illustration of the ways that people outside the classroom have an impact on the teachers' job, and the ways that the participants would like to use their involvement for collaboration in improving education.

Administration

School administrators assume a role in which they become the direct link between federal, state and local laws governing education and the teachers. They are also the managing source between parents of the students and teachers. They hold a position with many facets, giving them tremendous opportunity to affect the experiences that both the teachers and students have at school. In certain situations, such as with Eileen, a principal can potentially be the cause of a teacher leaving the profession of education completely. She recalls the first school that she worked at, and how her principal never aided in disciplining the students, did not defend teacher's actions to angry parents, and viewed the teachers as employees rather than team members with a common mission. Eileen contends that had she not had the chance to switch to a school where administration was supportive, she would have left teaching after only a couple of years. In her words, "I would have left a long time ago…I'd *die*!" Conversely, Kathy praises the support her principal offers with her class of at-risk students,

> "The principal works very closely with me monitoring these kids. I go to her all the time…when I feel I am overwhelmed, I go to her and cry on her shoulders. I complain to her a lot and she listens, and then she gives me encouragement. [Administration] is great- they can tell when I need a [rest], and they will send someone in here and tell [me], 'Go take a break.'"

Like Eileen, Kathy recognizes that her satisfaction as a teacher is directly impacted by the relationship she has with the administrators.

The primary essential that all the participants looked for from their administration was a sense of leadership. Some teachers discussed this in the way of discipline, and the fear that they would not receive reinforcement from their administrators for rules they established in their classroom. Debbie recalls a situation in a previous school where a teacher told a student that he could not participate in a field trip unless he was accompanied by a parent because he had been

exhibiting behavior problems. The principal reproached the teacher's request and told her she did not have the authority to prevent the child from going, therefore undermining the teacher's credibility with the parent and student. She says that in situations such as these,

> "You feel like you are banging your head against the wall if you don't have the support. Especially if no one appreciates you or cares about you- sometimes you know the parents don't and the children don't- you at least expect the administration to support you."

Eileen reflected that as a result of being uncertain about the support that administration will offer, "It makes you question every single thing instead of just acting."

Leadership from administrators also extended to providing resources to teachers in order to do their jobs more effectively. Debbie states that she has to be proactive in searching for professional development opportunities, and then if she asks the administrators if she can attend, "you *might* get the chance to go." She would like for the principal to take more of an interest in what additional training the individual teachers need, and then make appropriate recommendations. Additionally, Debbie believes if principals were aware of the areas that teachers feel they need development, it is possible that they could initiate new workshops that benefit a wide number of educators, such as parental communication. She states, "I haven't seen workshops about communication- it means that nobody teaches that, they just assume [teachers know how]." Gladys discusses how her principal has helped in her continued learning by being available: "You can always approach them…they've set up a literary resource room for us now, and they are always coming up with ideas to help our job be easier."

However, providing resources often goes beyond professional classes and books. Many teachers complain that they are responsible for making sure their students have papers and pencils in class. While this is usually left to parents, those that are part of a lower socioeconomic

class may simply not have the money to buy supplies for their children. Debbie strongly feels that teachers having to bear this responsibility is "wrong":

> "What do you want me to do? It's on me at the end of the year! So I buy them paper and pencil because the school does not want to provide it. Their tax money is not going for paper and pencil for these kids- that is something they have to do on their own! But they don't! Money is always and issue…some schools are a lot better that others. That depends on the administration [and] how they spend their money."

Curriculum policies are currently at the forefront of every participant's mind. Concentration on testing can cause issues on both extremes. Many teachers complain that their principals push so hard on testing preparation that students are no longer having fun learning new things. They discuss pep rally events, contests and weeks and weeks of practice tests, all for the benefit of one achievement measure. Allison, on the other hand, is in a school where the principal has yet to mention testing in the current year:

> "At the school I am at now, nobody has said anything…I feel like I am the only one [concerned]. We have started practicing for the test and doing practice tests, but I have never felt like I have heard anyone talk about it. I feel like there hasn't been any leadership, and student achievement has not been a major [concern]"

Debbie complains that policies often fluctuate with the administrators, and it is then left to the teacher to uphold and defend these with the parents. She spoke of the changing thoughts on mainstreaming special education students into standard classrooms:

> "Two years ago those kids need special ed classes, they need to be in self contained classrooms, and then in two [more] years the turn around and say, 'Nope, we were totally wrong- they need to be in the [regular] classroom. So we spent all that time, that work, that paperwork, meeting with parents saying, 'This is going to be best for your child," and then the next year we say we were wrong- the total opposite is the best thing."

Likewise, when the principal makes a decision, such as mainstreaming, they often fail to prepare teachers for handling new situations, and new types of students. Debbie recounts that this not

only leaves the teacher struggling with the new circumstances, but then they also need to know how to instruct students on coping with the changes:

> "The students are all back into the classrooms to teachers who had *no* special ed training. Kids who aren't potty trained, kids who don't speak- they are going to totally take the teacher off task trying to deal with those behaviors. I think the only value the rest of the children get is seeing that there are kids who are not like them. If [the child] needs special help in everything and the teacher has to spend most of her day helping that one child so that the other children don't get as much one on one help, I don't think it is a good thing. And I think it is not a good thing for that [special needs] child either. "

The participants also looked to their administrators for guidance in avoiding legal issues often brought about by the parents. Marilyn states that in working with Special Education students, their parents are often low functioning. She says, "They're very much defensive…very much always looking for a lawsuit kind of thing." She expects her administration to be supportive so that an issue never is escalated to that point. Debbie explained that one of her fears going into teaching, and it still remains to this day, is that, "If a kid wants to say something about you, all they have to do is say it, and your career could be over. It doesn't have to be true- they could ruin your life just because they are mad." The only advice she feels that she has received from administration is, "Don't ever be alone with them." She says that this has altered her persona in the classroom, and she tries to keep a certain personal distance from her students. A parent once accused her of not being "warm and fuzzy," and her response was, "Nope, I am not warm and fuzzy, and I won't be." She states her resistance comes from fear that if she was ever accused of behaving inappropriately with a child, she would not be defended by administration. Likewise, she has avoided helping students at times who come to school dirty and who have a bad odor, because she feels,

> "It is hard to show them that you care and get involved in their life, but not ask them their personal business. It is hard in this day and age to send [a child] to the nurse [because they smell]- someone might get offended, someone might get mad.

> But you try to talk about that, that's not school…that's for the counselor. But how do you relate to that child without relating to everything that is going on in their life? It is like a big border you don't know if you can cross."

Sybil has experienced another legal issue that may not be common, however it possibly tells of how teachers feel many times about their job and lack of support. Her son was labeled gifted in school until he chose to move in with his father after her divorce. His father never required him to go to school, and now that the child is a senior in high school and is suppose to graduate, he is being blocked from doing so because of the number of times he skipped school. Sybil realizes that there are rules that govern graduation, but being part of the school system she has begged and pleaded for guidance in how to help her son obtain his diploma, and all to no avail. Sybil testified, "I feel like I fight for these kids every day, I do- I fight for these kids every day, and nobody fights for mine."

It is evident that the impact that administration has on the quality of life a teacher has within their school is great. Providing resources, support and guidance is crucial for the teachers to be able to perform their jobs well. Being available to the teachers is not the only quality that teachers look for their principals. Allison tells of a principal that was "nice" to everyone, but "I don't really feel like he was much of a leader- he was more of a friend to people." She also said there was no appreciation, and that many times "I have to choose whether or not to [give additional help to the student]…nobody else knows if I help or not." When administration does not show gratitude, it makes teachers wonder if spending extra time with the children is worth it. Debbie discussed the stress in working in an inner city school where, "you can get burned out so easily." She admires her principal for making a point to recognize teachers for all that they did, whether she knew specifically all their labor or not. The principal showed recognition for things that teachers were not rewarded for in other ways, such as monetarily, and as Debbie says, "That

makes you willing to do more and be happier in your work place." Kathy also agrees, saying that in tough times, her principal offers encouragement, "and I am back in the saddle the next day."

Parents

The extent of parental involvement and the influence that it has in assisting or hindering a teacher's role has been cited in previously discussed hopes and fears. As stated by the teachers, they feel responsible for providing students with tools that are necessary to living life as a successful person when they do not receive that type of foundation in the home. This adds additional stress to their job, especially emotionally. Some teachers fear parents taking legal action whether warranted or not, and always reserve themselves from the students whether it is in their best interest or not. Other teachers, such as Kathy, go so far as to provide basic needs to the children, such as food, toiletries, and clothes. There are multiple reasons for this type of involvement by teachers- the first having been previously discussed as their desire to make a difference in the lives of the students, and the other is because, as stated by Debbie,

> "If the child doesn't have those basic things met, he is not going to learn 5+4. And if he is being abused at home or his mom is switching houses every three months because they are just above poverty…he's not going to pass his test because he has other things going on in his life that are more important."

There are the extreme circumstances that warrant special attention from the teachers, such as if their students are being neglected or abused at home. There are also issues that arise when teaching at a school in low socioeconomic areas, such as students being moved around constantly, or not having needed supplies. However, removing all those variables, teachers still feel like for the most part parents can be doing so much more to help aid in the education of their children. Many of the participants disclaimed their discussion on this topic with the statement, "It depends on what you consider

parental involvement." Some in the education community see involvement as a parent coming in and volunteering to work school events. They attend PTA meetings, they know the principal and the teachers, and they know the other students in their child's class. Yet all of the participants in this study view the importance of parental involvement as being more academics based than requesting that they come in and donate their time. Debbie explains it in this manner:

> "When you say parental involvement to me, I don't want the parents sitting here in my classroom, I want them to be signing the homework sheet and going over what the homework is, and know what is going on. Know that we are talking about bugs, or about the civil war. If I call you, you call me back. To me *that's* parental involvement."

Gladys agrees, and says, "If they (the parents) are showing interest, that is going to show their children that education matters."

Instead of a unity between teachers and parents, often the participants feel as if the parents are working against them. Allison says that sometimes she feels like parents view her as a babysitter, or "as somebody that their job is to teach their children- like it is not their responsibility." Eileen recalls many situations in which a parent has come to her angry because, "they think their kid is telling them 100% the truth- it's got to be the teacher's fault." She believes that many times parents are too critical and want to do the job for the teacher. She would like to handle that situation by reminding parents that she has the teaching degree, and to "back off," but refrains from doing so. Kathy has the opposite problem- her parents do not attempt to get involved at all. Her experience has been that,

> "They (the parents) are not disciplining them at home, they are not making sure their homework is done- I send home daily homework sheets, and they aren't signing them. I have to call parents *every day* if I see that a child is misbehaving because they are not responding to the paperwork.

> And normally they will just sign and I'll circle that your homework was not turned it, and when they see the report card or progress report, they will say, "well, you didn't tell me he wasn't doing his homework." I will say yeah I did, and you have all these signatures here, and you are not coming to conferences, so I can't show you the grades, but here they are."

Kathy says that she noticed this occurrence increasing about 10 years ago, and she attributes the lack of parental involvement to the parents of the students being younger and younger. She believes that, "The parents are growing up with their kids instead of being a mother or father figure. [Instead] they are like an older brother, older sister."

The participants discussed how the involvement of parents in the child's education seems to change over their years in school. Gladys and Sybil usually experience better participation by the parents because they teach the younger grades. They claim that because the child is often experiencing school for the first time, parents show more concern over the student's well being. The teachers receive notes about a child scraping their knee and alerting them to the fact it might start bleeding again, or if the child has family in town so they may gotten to bed late the previous night. Sybil compares her experiences with parental involvement in different grades by stating, "[in the higher grades] you don't get as much of the well being stuff. For the most part, the questions are more academic based." When the child gets to high school age, the teachers feel like the level of participation that the parent exhibits has long been determined-Allison thinks that, "a lot of that has to start at the elementary and middle school level. By the time they get here, if their parents aren't involved…than you lose them."

Teachers feel that their job would be easier if the parents were to support and reiterate the education given to the child in the classroom at home. The quality of learning for the child would be much improved if the parents collaborated with teachers rather than worked against them, if they were proactive in contacting and consulting with a teacher about the curriculum and

behavior of the student, and mostly if the parents accepted accountability for the education of their child instead of deferring that responsibility solely to the schools. Sybil persists that a parents involvement being any less is, "educational neglect." And she increasingly feels that the "the more [the teachers] do, the less [the parents] do. I'll take care of my kids in here, but it just seems sad that [the parents] wouldn't want to do it themselves."

Colleagues

Often teachers can get preoccupied with all there is to do in their own classroom. With students, administration and parents all demanding their time, how important is it for them to interact and work with other teachers in their school? According to the participants in this study, it is incredibly important. From collaborating on curriculum, to being involved in mentoring programs, to partnering with a colleague to further your education, the teachers feel like despite time constraints, doing so is highly worthwhile.

Not one of the participants dismissed the importance of mentoring programs for new teachers to a school both with experience and right out of college. All found their situation coming out of school and starting their career as especially daunting, and many did not have another person to go as a resource for information. Similarly, most schools are managed differently, so even for someone who has experience but is coming into a new environment, having someone to go to is incredibly important for questions on discipline, classroom management, administration, or just general expectations of the school. As Sybil explains, some things are just learned through experience, but it is helpful to have, "someone showing you actually what you need to know so you don't have egg on your face."

Beyond teachers first coming into a school, maintaining good communication and supportive relationships between colleagues is vital to job satisfaction. The participants say that

when they have particularly hard day or a situation they cannot figure out on their own, there is a lack of understanding when they go home and consult a spouse or friend who are not also educators. It is difficult for anyone outside the classroom to fully relate to the teacher's dilemma. Therefore, having a support system within the school helps prevent the teachers from feeling isolated and helpless when trying to solve problems. Kathy talks about how the other 4th grade teachers are there for her: "The other 4th grade teachers, they support me by if I want to stay in and keep the kids who didn't behave that day, they'll take my good kids outside." In return, she often shares with the other teachers the techniques she learns from her graduate classes, which they been able to successfully incorporate into their lessons. Allison says that in moving to a new school where no one has reached out,

> "I feel like I don't really have anyone on my team, We don't really work together, so I don't have any friends at school, so I don't really feel like I have other teachers I can go to and say, 'help me out with this, I'm not sure how to do this, or I am really having a hard time with this child.'"

Allison claims that one of the things holding her back in getting her specialist degree through an online program is the fear of going through it without help and encouragement from her colleagues. Teachers at her previous school would enroll and work through the classes together, but Allison says now that she has changed schools, "I just would not want to go through by myself doing it on the internet- to me, that is a little scary." Kathy also used coworkers as support in obtaining her graduate degree. Not only does she share ideas, as mentioned previously, but she also persuades other teachers to take the classes with her. Eileen and the other teachers at her school often discuss their career plans openly, which allows them to offer guidance to one another in times of extreme uncertainty and fear.

Many teachers also work together to plan the curriculum for their students. Gladys states that even if they are not actually writing down an outline for the lesson

plan, her and the other Pre-K teachers are talking about it and "bouncing ideas off each other." At least once a week the teachers discuss standards, or what they would like to do in upcoming weeks, or trying to find solutions for behavioral problems of the students. Allison also sees the benefit in discussing curriculum with her colleagues. She says that at her former school,

> "We had to meet twice a week with our team and we had to plan and work together. [At this school] we are not required to necessarily work together…here [we get together] like once every two weeks, and when we meet it's for something that is really useless. I don't know what they (the other teachers) teach, I don't know how they teach. I was assigned a mentor, but she never asked, 'How was your first day or is there anything that I can help you with? I have to go ask the questions. And if I don't know to ask the questions, than I either don't find out about it, or I find out after it has already happened."

Some of the participants had very strong ideas on how to balance workloads so that teachers work to support one another and remain effective in the classrooms. Kathy and Debbie both believe that the school board regulating teachers in changing schools after a certain period of time is a vital way all educators can work together as a team to deliver the best education possible to the students. Debbie spoke from the perspective of having taught in an inner city school, and the tribulations of the teachers who are there, as well as children who "are losing out." Because there is a severe lack of appreciation and often decreased achievement demonstrated in lower socioeconomic schools, many times the teachers placed there are just out of college, and "paying their dues." The turnover rate of educators in increasingly high, and therefore the staff is always in a transitionary phase. Debbie believes that the students in these schools could benefit the most from what she considers "master teachers" who would be able to reach the kids and make a difference. Furthermore, once new teachers have put in their time at inner city schools, they typically move to a suburban school where they never leave, perpetuating the cycle.

Debbie believes the solution lies in educators rotating their service between different types of schools, therefore offering students at all socioeconomic levels the opportunity to study under qualified and experienced teachers. She acknowledges that there are many schools that the teachers would prefer not to work at, her included, but she says, "If they tell me, than you've got to go." Kathy observes teachers getting burned out from teaching the same curriculum year after year. She also believes that by making it mandatory to switch schools, educators can explore new challenges, and by remaining in the same position year after year, "I think we get so tied down in this little job." She notes that many schools require a change in principal every 5 years, therefore teachers should be held to the same standards.

Teachers believe that the only other people who can fully understand their experiences in the classroom are other teachers. Therefore it makes sense that when looking for support or sympathy, educators will seek out advice from other educators. However, when that support system does not exist, teachers can begin to detach themselves and feel isolated and helpless in achieving their goals as a teacher. Gladys has experienced that type of school, and describes it this way, "Everybody had their own space, and it was very 'don't tough my stuff' kind of atmosphere. It just wasn't warm and inviting…if I felt that being there as a teacher, you know the kids and the parents felt it." Sybil also talks about how the negative attitude of other teachers can spread across the entire staff. She says usually you can identify those teachers immediately when they first enter the school- they are there, "just for the summers off…they had to pick something (in college), this looked easy…they don't care." She says that if new to the profession,

> "Anybody should be given the benefit of the doubt for a year a two, but after that I think they should either get with it or go. I mean, you are hurting children

> beyond a year or two if you are not getting it. That's all there is- they're not rats in an experiment. Don't hurt the kids in the process."

The message from the participants is that teachers should be aware that when they are unhappy in their job, they are not the only ones who are affected- the other teachers and the children are suffering also. Allison describes her experiences with having a lack of support from colleagues:

> "I use to think there was a secret email that went out that I never got because I think…did the other teachers work together? I don't know if other people feel that same way, or if they just don't care and they want to do their own thing and don't want anyone to bother them- I don't know."

Threats

Threats are variables or events that challenge one's control over behaviors that will lead to a desired outcome. Different than a fear, a threat is perceived to be out of an individual's hands, and moreover, a factor that cannot be avoided. Threats can also be self schemas in other domains that are deemed equally or more important than the threatened possible self. In this situation, re-evaluation of the self concept may be necessary.

Threats identified by the participants were factors they were unable to control directly, such as pay and testing, as well as their competing self schema of being a good parent. The threats of pay and testing were noted as increasing in intensity in recent years as legislation changes with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 made them prominent issues within the educational system. In regards to balancing family life with their position as a teacher, the participants often spoke of the reasons why being in the school offered flexibility in the time they spent with their children, but also how it conflicted with their role as a parent.

Pay

Teachers have always shown great concern about the lack of pay in the profession. As previously expressed by the participants, the only negative feedback they received about going into the field of education was that they would never make significant money. As responsibilities, demands and accountability on teachers are amplified, the participants are growing concerned over whether there will be a change in salary to compensate for their increased workload.

Some of the teachers saw pay as being a more important issue than others. While all recognized that they would not become materially wealthy from their job, some actually were more ambivalent towards the issue. Betty actually went into teaching for the pay- she knew that the job did not pay well, but appreciated the steady paycheck unlike at her previous job as a cosmetologist. Gladys approaches the subject by realizing that "proportional to the income, we don't work that many days. If you think about it, we kind of have a part-time job because it is only one-hundred-ninety-two days a year. So having the summers off doesn't make working hard three-quarters of the year as difficult." Eileen does not share the same point of view necessarily, but she does agree that the vacations and time off are a necessary benefit to reducing some of the stress in the job.

Most of the teachers do not dwell on the subject of salary much, other than the occasional, "They could pay us more" comments- that is until they begin discussing pay variations based on school performance. All the teachers saw this as a concern as they felt there were factors effecting student achievement that they had no control over. Debbie discusses how students from low socioeconomic areas face many issues outside of school that can impact their grades:

> "If the child doesn't have his basic physical needs, if he is being abused at home, or his mom is switching houses every 3 months because they are just above

> poverty, he's not going to pass his test because he has other things going on in his life that are more important. And that's reflected on me, which I think is crazy. I can teach him my heart out, but if he is not ready to get it in his mind because he is worried about what is going on with Momma, or worried about what's going on at home than he is not going to get what I am giving to him. I have child who needs glasses- can't see for nothing. It is going to be 6 weeks before Medicaid gets her glasses, but she can't see the board, and that's a reflection on me?!"

Gladys also demonstrated concern over the way teacher evaluations are conducted at her school, and the determination of her pay based on that. She states that a review is done three times a year, however, "I don't think your pay should be dependant on one lesson. Everybody has a bad lesson occasionally. I mean there is that one lesson that you walk away and you go, well, that was just worthless." She says that she would prefer to see to see a more comprehensive review, with a unit being observed by the principal rather than just one lesson, and also the evaluation consisting of measures that are less subjective and more objective,

The participants expressed that they have strong opinions of the lack of salary offered to teachers. Like most teachers, it was a concern they had to address when they first made the decision to go into the field of education, so most do not continue to dwell on it with the same ferocity as they allow other issues. However, recent policies within their respective states and districts that are mandating pay be varied depending on school ratings and student test scores have again started to fuel the fire on the pay debate.

Family

Noting family as a threat seems odd, especially given that many of the participants cited flexibility to raise their family as a reason why they went into teaching. However, in discussing issues that they have faced while in service, many of the participants stated that their parent self has always taken priority over their professional self.

Most often, the teachers acknowledged that they have delayed furthering their education because of their own personal children, and at times this has equated into deferring future career plans. Kathy has known that she wanted to obtain her master's for a while, but waited until her children were older before she felt comfortable dedicating the time needed to the endeavor. Debbie is similar in that she wants to get her specialist or doctorate in order to pursue an administrative position, but has decided to wait until her children are old enough not to need a babysitter. Marilyn is also waiting to be certified as a counselor until her kids have all graduated high school. On the contrary, Allison, who currently does not have children, sees herself taking a break from teaching once she does, and using that time to take classes towards her specialist degree.

Time spent with the participant's own children has often limited the involvement teachers have with their students outside of school. Eileen use to coach cheerleading and dance, but now is committed to maintaining the school website- a task she can complete from home, allowing her to be with her children. Debbie states that she is satisfied in her role as a resource teacher because, "right now I'm selfish in saying I want to walk away at the end of the day. I don't want to check forty zillion papers, and make forty zillion plans because I have my three little ones in elementary school, and I want to be involved in them." She says in the future she would like to return to a full time classroom because that is where, "you can make the most difference for those kids." She tries to make her job "as 9-5" as possible, and refrains from participating in school events other than PTA night, which is required for the teachers. Marilyn sees her involvement as having increased in the past 10 years as her children at home have become older and more independent, allowing her more time to spend with her students after school. Kathy says that she was able to balance her commitment to her students by involving her husband and

children in the mission to help them see a better life. Although she spends a lot of time outside the classroom working on things for her students, she does not feel her children ever felt neglected as she helped them understand what she was doing, and encouraged them to also be involved by being volunteers in the classroom, or helping her prepare lessons.

Regardless of the issues that arise from having to negotiate time spent in the classroom and the time spent with their own children, participants recognize the benefit to them and their families having a teacher's schedule. Out of the 5 participants who currently have children, all bring up how valuable it has been to them through the years having the same vacations as their children. At times, however, it has been that very convenience that has prevented the teachers from pursuing other professions. Sybil speaks of the difficult time she has had emotionally in coping with her son not being allowed to graduate from high school. Leaving the field altogether would be an option she considered, however she still has another young child, and feels that she, "does not have a choice, I've got to work…I have too much vested right now." Eileen faces the same dilemma in her frustration with the policies and standards at her school, but maintains that she has to consider what is best for her family despite her marketability for other jobs.

Testing

Based on the frequency and depth at which participants discussed achievement assessments, as well as the passion they demonstrated in these conversations, testing may be the greatest threat facing teachers currently. They mentioned testing negatively affecting their future career planning, their pay, their time management abilities, and their relationship with administration. Beyond those issues already discussed, the teachers also shared their concerns of how testing was affecting student attitudes towards schools, as well as how the skills being taught in school were narrowing as a result of the time spent on the assessments.

Most of the teachers are worried about the curriculum, and show concern for students not having exposure to those subjects that just are not taught much anymore, like science, history and physical education/health. They say the concentration is solely on reading and math since those are the only disciplines tested on the assessments. Yet, Eileen is even anxious about her students' math scores, as she says, "I am really worried to see what our math scores are going to look like on this year because we focus so much on reading." The participants all used the phrase, "teaching to the test" regularly, and state how difficult it is help students learn "functional things," "how to be good citizens", or "what they could use when they get in the real world." Sybil feels in neglecting to teach students certain critical skills, "I think they are less prone to make positive decisions about things. Like they are less likely to become scientists or mathematicians later in life…we take those choices away just to emphasize reading so hard." Debbie's concern is that the children are not taught, "how to be good citizens- we don't teach them life skills…how to get along with each other, how to work together…character education, leadership skills- we don't teach them any of that because none of that stuff is tested."

The participants have consistent views that the concentration on testing is taking the fun out of learning for the students. Kathy asserts that she and her students have all lost their "get up and go" towards the end of the school year because now every day is the same, doing practice tests and reviewing the same material. She has lost flexibility in diversifying her lessons to keep the attention of the students. The teachers see most of the ill affects on student attitudes coming from the difficulty of the test, and the pressures placed on students to pass. Eileen finds the level at which proficiencies are tested at to be "ridiculous," and ponders whether, "half the teachers here could pass the [graduation] test." Sybil sees a difference in her own children's approaches to school- her son did not endure testing as presented in classrooms now, and he thoroughly

enjoyed school and sought out additional learning on his own, which lead to placement in gifted classes. Her young daughter, on the other hand, is "pushed" so hard to learn what is necessary to pass the test that she "can't stand (school)." Sybil sees what she considers feelings of relief in her daughter when it comes to the weekend and she has a choice not to work so hard on her studies. She states, "Kid's shouldn't be like that, school shouldn't be like that." Another compliant by teachers is how students are being graded only on results from their tests. Eileen claims that, "some kids just simply have the knowledge, but they don't test well in a structured testing environment." As a result, the participants worry that these students may be unfairly and inaccurately assessed, further perpetuating poor performance.

The participants were asked how testing has changed their classroom over the years, and is there a better way to assess accountability for student learning besides the tests? Most teachers felt that standards and measures are acceptable, however current approaches are not effective. They remember learning when they were in school to be fun, not so laborious and stressful. Many also recalled taking standardized tests, such as Debbie, but there was a difference:

> "When I was a child, I know we took a bubble-in test maybe once a year. We didn't have pep rallies, we didn't talk about it for months on end, it wasn't the end all, be all like it is now. To me- it's one day!"

Kathy's agrees, and states,

> "I think they (the tests) are a waste of time. Because kids really have to work hard for those grades, and I think they should pass their academic status on what they actually do in the classroom, not on these standardized tests, not on these high school graduation tests."

Further, Eileen suggests the following:

> "Take off all that pressure (of the tests) and just say, 'Hey, let's see what you can produce if we do this.' Instead of teaching them what they could use when they get in the real world, [we] are teaching to the test. I think looking at their grades and looking at their achievements, instead of a strict, structured test that is the same through the entire state is the way to go."

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The questions researched in this study- the role of self concept in a teacher's career development, the hopes and fears that influence decisions in their professional life, and how competing aspects of possible selves lead to action- are all extrapolated from motivational theories developed to explain behavior. Motivational processes that focus on outcome expectancies most efficiently and thoroughly embrace what researchers currently know about the lives of teachers, and what is most influential in their decisions to remain in teaching. Research beyond that in education, specifically in the field of vocational choice, development and counseling, has based much of their studies for more than 50 years on similar theories. It is widely believed that within the process of making decisions about one's career, goals, self efficacy, perceived priority of the decision and how the individual pictures themselves in the end state all contribute to determining the course of behavior (Super, 1980, Osipow, 1990, Markus & Nurius, 1986). The current study utilized the motivational concept of possible selves- exploring the hopes, fears, threats and goals of teachers- to encourage teachers to openly discuss and reflect on how the transaction of these result in the decision to remain in their current profession.

From the data presented in these interviews, it seems apparent that the concepts and events that comprise a teacher's perception of their career are numerous as well as complex. The opportunities that contribute to the development of hopes, fears, threats and goals which shape a teacher's attitude about their role, and their career as a whole, are incessant. Daily transactions among those involved in education- students, administrators, and colleagues- all have a

significant impact on teachers, and contribute to their job satisfaction as well as their efficacy in fulfilling their role as an educator. Many of the motivational factors, both positive and negative, identified by the participants in this study have been documented in previous research (Woods & Weasmer, 2004, Inman & Marlow, 2004, Public Agenda, 2003b, Darling-Hammond, 2003, Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005). This demonstrates that a majority of teachers may be unified in their beliefs regarding what needs to be addressed to provide a satisfying work environment, as well as what opportunities they need to be offered in order to accomplish their personal goals. However, identifying these factors alone does not represent the depth at which they impact and influence one's self knowledge and self schema as a teacher of children. The participants were forthcoming in providing insight to their intentions of being an effective teacher, and how this desire is often marred by conditions they feel are beyond their control, as well as how these circumstances impact their motivation to maintain their career in education.

The teachers who contributed to this study strongly attest that they became a teacher and will remain in teaching for the purpose of making a difference in the lives of their students. The knowledge of their contribution in providing better life opportunities for children is the primary factor in sustaining their careers. Yet all of them possess some of level of doubt as to their future in education due to obstacles that prevent them from accomplishing their hopes. The threats to the teachers' job were expressed as policy making that they believe is detrimental to education yet they feel they have no influence over, and also the priority of family obligations over their career. The uncertainty that results from competing aspects of teachers wanting to feel valued in their contribution to society as a teacher, them needing to feel in control of their career, and also the importance of them tending to their role of spouse and/or parent before all else demonstrates

that self concept is the principal influence in decisions that direct the development of their careers.

The hopes and fears of teachers were exemplified as competing constructs that motivate the decisions and actions in their careers. The hope of making a difference and the fear of lack of knowledge and support were constructs that were stable between and within each participant. However, where hope was represented as being consistently strong for the teachers, the intensity of fear seemed to fluctuate based on situational factors. More specifically, fear produced by a lack of knowledge was shown to decrease through experience, or increase as teachers were presented with increased demands and less tools for meeting those demands. Trepidation as a result of lack of support differed depending on the school environment in which the teacher was currently employed. The example of Eileen demonstrates how the transaction between hopes and fears can lead to important decisions about a teacher's career. While her reason for being a teacher never faltered or changed, increasing worries over pay and testing are leading her to consider abandoning what she considers her ideal job. Similarly, if she found herself in a school environment identical to her first teaching placement, she would also consider changing careers. Because she is offered support from her current administration and colleagues, that fear is latent, although still present.

Of the data that was presented by the participants in this study, possibly the most representative finding is that most of the events that the teachers perceive as fears and threats are manageable by the surrounding participants in education. Also significant is that the teachers themselves are able to specifically identify ways that their fears may be alleviated. For instance, the participants stated that they would like for parents to work with them in the education of their students, and to work toward this goal, training in communication would be highly beneficial.

Also, principals being cognizant in showing appreciation to the teachers for their hard work, offering them opportunities to further their knowledge, and demonstrating trust by backing them when a student or parent challenges their actions. Educators should embrace any effort of support to and from their co-workers, especially since most of them are experiencing similar triumphs and problems. Teachers should share ideas and information when planning their curriculum, as well as be available for mentoring.

Many of the participants also commented on various issues in which they did not feel teachers were given the chance to provide feedback on a policy or idea implemented in their school. They expressed being perplexed over school reforms that were negligent in including the perspective of the teachers as they are possibly the ones most affected by these changes since they are called upon to employ the new strategies, policies and curriculum in the classroom. When discussing topics such as testing strategies, what to teach, and merit based pay, many of the participants made comments such as, “it wasn’t made up by teachers, that’s for sure” (Debbie).

Perhaps central to all concerns expressed within the cited hopes and threats are the discussions from self knowledge theory that have established a person is more vested in regulating their behavior and accepting increased accountability for outcome when the decisions are self relevant rather than indoctrinated. Specific to the present study, it is possible that teachers may demonstrate a long term dedication to their careers and accept more responsibility if they perceive that they hold some influence over the decisions that affect them, their students, and their school. This represents the societal component of self concept in a teacher’s career, and their authority in controlling the product of their labor. Also important to self concept is personality factors such as beliefs regarding ability. The participants firmly believed that in

order to be an effective teacher, one needed to possess “special” qualities. Each of them felt that they embodied that gift, portraying a strong sense of efficacy for their careers. This knowledge further supports the idea that teachers’ concerns are not derived from the value they believe that they bring to education, but rather the extent to which they are permitted to demonstrate their worth.

The greatest instrument those in education currently have in controlling the growing problems in teacher retention is the teachers themselves. The information is available that job satisfaction is the primary predictor of teacher commitment, which in turn lends to school effectiveness. It is therefore necessary for those in the educational community- teachers, researchers, administrators, lawmakers, and parents- to understand what specific factors define a satisfactory working environment. Beyond solely identifying these, it is also necessary to understand the process by which each of affects a teacher’s motivational self and how that translates into sustaining or recanting their careers. The interviews in the current study demonstrated interdependence in the participant’s self concept and their hopes in being a teacher. In other words, their reason for being a teacher, and therefore the value they placed on the job, was attributed to what they felt they had and could continue to accomplish. Likewise, the concerns they have for their career were firmly entrenched in their fears of not attaining their goals, or when they perceived their ability to make a difference was impeded by uncontrollable factors. The threat to one’s self knowledge will greatly influence the subsequent direction of their actions, and consequently, efforts to attain their goals (i.e. remain in teaching) become less desirable and therefore less systematic, as evidenced by Eileen’s uncertainty in the future allegiance to her career.

Following an understanding of motivational aspects in teachers' career trajectory, the educational community needs to be active in implementing specific strategies that support a goal of job satisfaction, which would encompass use of creativity, personal skills, and independence in the classroom, as well as offering challenge and growth opportunities. It appears from the current study, as well as supporting research, that teachers have a strong desire to be "listened to." Within the classroom, they command the stage and possess confidence in their ability to affect students. However, outside the classroom, where decisions are made, strategies are created, and factors impacting the fate of their careers are determined, teachers feel like they lose their presence. Rectifying this does not necessitate much additional knowledge than what those in education already possess; rather it means continuously acknowledging the impact the teachers have on student performance, and including strategies for their growth in reform. Previously initiated professional development plans such as teacher to teacher mentoring (Woods & Weasmer, 2004, Inman & Marlow, 2004), teacher reflection (Freese, 2006, Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005), and teacher initiated research (Black, 2005) have all proven to be effective in increasing teacher motivation. The relation between these is a teacher's "ownership" of their career- their ability to effectively use their talents, have a role in the direction of the school's curriculum, and practice independence in their pedagogy.

The consequence of ensuring job satisfaction would theoretically have a tremendous impact upon education as a whole. In revisiting the previously cited statistics, teachers not only see the profession as a lifelong career choice, but they state they are passionate about their job. If priority was given to addressing teacher needs and promoting enjoyment of their job, the field should see less and less educator attrition. Possibly the most important result of this is being able to offer more experienced teachers to the students. Studies have shown that beyond the obvious

benefits of increasing learners' knowledge, this could also help to narrow the socioeconomic gaps in certain subjects. Furthermore, the enormous amount of money that is now allotted to training new teachers to replace those lost could be used for other improvements desperately needed in our schools. In addition, better job satisfaction for current teachers might encourage professionals from other fields to lend their experience and knowledge to the classroom. Previous studies demonstrated that over 70% of those surveyed found teaching to be a prestigious and honorable job, yet they would not enter the field because they felt there would be a lack of advancement, and were concerned about becoming "scapegoats" for education. If teachers were given more control in the development of their careers, as well as being active participants in curriculum and policy enhancement, these concerns would be alleviated, and possibly eliminated. This would produce a more positive outlook for those who are considering entering the profession.

While educational researchers argue over the many obstacles facing our schools today, much of the focus goes to studying the students directly, or politicizing changes to the system. Enough has been found to determine that the quality of teacher provided has a direct influence on student learning. Furthermore, teachers have one of the greatest stakes in the success of our educational system, and are valuable in offering feedback on what policies and curriculums are effective, and which ones are not. By offering greater attention to the educator's themselves and prioritizing their job satisfaction, schools benefit not only by retaining experienced, confident and passionate teachers, but also assist in eradicating other problems that affect our students' learning.

CHAPTER 6

CHALLENGES

Possibly the greatest challenge in studying motivational process is the continuous fluctuation of factors that influence and individualize the experience for each person. In the current study, it is recognized that teachers will always possess a certain amount of fears and threats within their career, and these will intensify and subside as environments and situations change. In studying affect on teacher retention, it is important that researchers, as well as teachers and administrators, keep in perspective a goal of not eliminating all fears, which is unattainable, but rather minimizing the impact on teachers so that they do not outweigh hopes and the drive to create further career goals. It is here that the importance in understanding teacher self concept is significant. Every policy, curriculum, and rule that affects a teacher will not be agreed upon by everyone, and should not be created based on solely a teacher perspective. However, the participants in this study have demonstrated that it is important that they, at the very least, are solicited for their ideas, and also that policies are not so structured and restrictive that educators act as merely catalysts for disseminating information.

Another challenge is the extent of change that would need to be implemented in order to create a satisfactory working environment for all involved. It is necessary to enact this on multiple levels- policymakers should include strategies for teacher growth and learning in reform in order to promote consistency within districts, administrators should work closely and comprehensively with teachers in their career development, as well as implement programs that solicit teacher ideas on school issues, such as curriculum and testing preparation, colleagues

should be cognizant of the value that collaboration with other teachers has on their effectiveness as a teacher, and proactively seek to execute teamwork within their schools, and parents should be responsive to invitations from teacher to participate in their child's education. However, forming a cohesive partnership between all involved in the educational community has proven to be a most difficult feat. Often effort on the part of one group or another is abandoned when there fails to be a positive response from other groups. Perhaps the solution is to continue to educate the community of the tremendous impact that teachers have on all aspects of issues involving the schools, and to work towards creating a learning environment representative of the seemingly long forgotten adage "it takes a village."

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me a little about your education- where did you get your degree? What was your major? Do you have any post-baccalaureate education?
2. How long have you been teaching? Tell me a little about your teaching history- what grades have you taught? Subjects? What were your favorites? Tell me a little about the grade level/subject you teach now.
3. Have you worked professionally in any field besides education?
4. Is teaching what you intended to do once graduating from college? If no- what was your goal?
5. Did you consider any other career fields in college?
6. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
7. Do you remember the moment that you decided to become a teacher? Tell me about it.
8. What were your fears about becoming a teacher?
9. What are your fears now that you are a teacher?
10. What made you decide the level at which you wanted to teach?
11. In what ways are you satisfied with this decision?
12. Tell me how your decision to become a teacher was/was not supported by your family/friends?
13. What kind of teacher are you? What kind of teacher do you want to be?

14. What kind of involvement do you have with your students? Give me some specific examples.
15. How has your involvement changed over the years? (If they have taught different grade levels, has involvement changed among grade levels?)
16. What are your hopes as a teacher?
17. Professionally speaking, what are your hopes outside of teaching?
18. What are your career plans for the future?
19. How and why have these career plans changed over the years?
20. Is teaching your ideal job?

    If not, what is it? Why did you not pursue this? Will you in the future?

    If so, what is it about teaching that makes it ideal?
21. What do you think the role of a teacher is in society?

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

I agree to take part in a research study titled "How does teachers' sense of self effect their long term career goals?", which is being conducted by Jennifer N. Osbon, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Georgia (407-252-3115) under the direction of Paul Schutz, Department of Educational Psychology (706-542-4247). My participation is voluntary; I can stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of this study is to develop an understating of why teachers chose their career in education, and what factors may influence their decision to remain in education long term or to initiate a change of career. I will not benefit directly from this research.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

1) **Answer questions about my career choice, and thoughts about my career choices in the future, which will take approximately 1-2 hours. These interviews will take place either in my classroom or at the University of Georgia campus, as chosen by myself prior to the interview.**
2) **My participation in this study will last 6 months. During that time, I will engage in the first interview, and will later be contacted for a second interview which will verify information collected in the first interview, and may or may not include additional questions.**
3) **Each interview will be audio taped.**
4) **All audio taped interviews will be retained for a period of 1 year, and then destroyed.**

No risk is expected, but I may experience some discomfort or stress with the questions asked during the initial or follow up interview.

The only people who will know that I am a research subject are members of the research team. No information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission, except if it is necessary to protect my welfare (for example, if I were injured and need physician care) or if required by law. I will be assigned a pseudonym, and will be referred to by that name in all written or verbal discussions outside of my interviews. I will be given the opportunity to review the audio tape of my interview upon written request to the researcher. I understand that the information given in my interviews will not be edited except upon written request, and I can request an additional interview to clarify or add to information previously given. Audio tapes of my interviews, as well as any documents that identify me with a pseudonym, will be available only to the research team, and will be retained for a period of no more than 1 year.

The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project (407-252-3115).

My signature below indicates that the researchers have 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.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	**Signature**	**Date**
Telephone: _____		
Email: _____		
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	**Signature**	**Date**

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu