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An exploration of factors influencing effective teachers' decisions to remain in urban school settings

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Alison Grizzle

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2010

ABSTRACT

An Exploration of Factors Influencing Effective Teachers' Decisions to Remain in Urban
School Settings

by

Alison L. Grizzle

M.A., University of Alabama at Birmingham, 1999
B.A., Denison University, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
Teacher Leadership

Walden University
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ABSTRACT

Existing problems identified in the literature on teacher retention and resilience include (a) a gap in understanding factors influencing urban teacher retention; (b) lack of clarity on multiple factors swaying teachers' decisions to remain despite challenges; (c) overlapping definitions of teacher retention, attrition, and resilience; and (d) absence of a theoretical framework for a potential relationship between retention and resilience. This embedded-case study sought to identify factors influencing effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting and to examine the role of teachers' resilience, retention, and effectiveness with respect to this decision. Fourteen core-area secondary teachers, identified through criterion reference sampling by National Board Certification status and administrators' assessment of characteristics derived from studies on effective urban teaching, participated in a focus group and individual interviews and supplied archival data. Line-by-line coding and data grouping revealed that (a) passion for students, dedication to reflection, a sense of spiritual calling, and dedication to social justice influenced both retention and resilience; (b) professional development increased resilience but had little influence on the decision to remain; and (c) teacher community influenced resilience at varying levels. The findings indicate a relationship between retention and resilience, yet they are not synonymous, suggesting caution when using resilience studies to create retention models. Outcomes suggest professional development that emphasizes reflection on one's purpose and practice and the linkage of reflection, pedagogical changes, and student achievement. This study contributes to positive social change by providing insight into retention of effective urban teachers and a foundation for further research on urban teacher retention and its impact on student performance.

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DEDICATION

To Shane and Noah, As you each begin your journey, may you learn to dance in life's storms and bask in the sunlight of the abundant blessings embedded in your life. You are loved by me and many others. Walk with purpose along your path and smell the flowers along the way. Fill your soul with music, dance, smiles, and love. Know my hugs, kisses, and prayers surround you everyday as you each find your footing and your pace. With love, Aunt Alabama/ Aunt Alison

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privilege of being the aunt to the beautiful baby boys who came into my life as I entered the final stages of my study.

Many others along the way have added to this process and my life. I am lacking the room to thank everyone who has contributed directly or indirectly to this accomplishment.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

This case study, utilizing an embedded-case design, focused on the factors that influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban school district in the southeastern United States. The study sought, in part, to fill empirical gaps in existing research and literature on urban education while focusing on teacher retention and teacher resilience. Teacher retention and teacher resilience, then, provided the main thrust of this inquiry. This section introduces the basic elements that shaped, guided, and helped formulate this investigation of a specific aspect of the broad field of teacher retention. Specifically, the study explored intrinsic and extrinsic factors that contribute to teachers' decisions to remain in the specific research setting.

The retention of effective teachers is an essential component to urban school reform and to closing the achievement gap, which some scholars refer to as the most "critical problem in education that faces Black America" (Gordon, 2006, p. 26). Researchers have identified the teacher as the single most important factor in student achievement (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003; Haberman & Post, 1998; Haycock, 1998; Marzano, 2003; Nieto, 2006a; Schon, 1983). Haycock (1998), for example, argued that if poor children and children of color were to have access to highly effective teachers, the discrepancy between student achievement in suburban and urban education would lessen significantly. Thus, as part of understanding the dynamics of teacher retention in urban schools, identifying and analyzing the factors that influence effective teachers' decisions to remain are essential to retaining high-quality teachers in urban districts.

Typically, the literature on urban education and urban school reform has focused on the challenges of the urban district (Anyon, 1995; Kozol, 1991), the negative effects

of these challenges on teachers (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2001; Farkas, Johnson, & Foleno, 2000;), and the impact of the challenges on high teacher attrition rates (Ingersoll, 2006; Smith & Smith, 2006). The high teacher turnover in urban districts has resulted in the assignment of substitute teachers and out-of-content-area teachers to students who are already at a disadvantage in life with respect to available resources (Education Development Center, 2005a; Haycock, 1998; Ingersoll, 2005). Thus, the "revolving door" of teacher attrition exacerbates existing systemic inequities.

While understanding factors contributing to teacher attrition is significant, identifying and exploring the factors that contribute to teachers' decisions to remain in the urban district are equally important. Research on teacher attrition and retention provided the framework and historical context for this research study, while emerging research on urban teacher resilience and perseverance offered preliminary insights into factors contributing to urban teachers' abilities to keep going despite the challenges.

Problem Statement

This study explored the following problems in the literature: (a) a gap in the research of factors influencing urban teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2006; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Thompson, 2007), (b) lack of clarity about the multiple, interlocking factors that influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in the urban setting (Easley, 2006; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Margolis, 2008), (c) overlapping definitions and muddled areas within the literature on teacher retention, teacher attrition, and teacher resilience (Brunetti, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 2006; Nieto, 2003), and (d) the absence of a theoretical

framework that identifies a potential intersectional relationship between teacher resilience, teacher retention, and teacher effectiveness as these constructs relate to teachers' decisions to remain.

Although much of the broader literature on the experience of teachers in urban school settings contains empirical analyses and discussions of the challenges of urban school teachers (Anyon, 1995; Delpit, 1995; Kozol, 1991), the same literature is practically silent on the reasons that effective teachers choose to remain in urban settings given those challenges. Identifying the factors associated with teachers' decisions to remain in the urban setting is complicated because the potential factors associated with these decisions are spread throughout literature concerning teacher attrition, teacher retention, and teacher resilience. A teacher's decision to remain should be considered a subcategory of the broader literature on retention; however, the identification of factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain currently constitutes an empirical gap in knowledge.

Studies concerning teacher retention generally have addressed models, programs, or initiatives designed to increase teacher retention by raising teacher satisfaction. These studies have included redefining new teacher support (Buttery, Haberman, & Houston, 1990; Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2007; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Hare, Heap, & Raack, 2001; Moore, 2008) changes in professional development, models for increasing teacher leadership (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Margolis, 2008; Quartz, et al., 2008), proposals to improve school facilities (Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005;

Stallings, 2008), and programs to increase administrative effectiveness (McKee, 2003; Zwicky, 2008). Researchers, however, have compiled retention data based on a teacher's return to a specific site, school district, or to teaching in general, depending on the goals of the study. Retention researchers often have failed to consider the multiple factors influencing a teacher's decision to remain; instead, such researchers often simply have judged the retention program as "effective" based on a comparison of the retention data of participants and nonparticipants (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2007). A gap inherently exists between operational definitions and practice when researchers collect retention data merely on the basis of a teacher's returning and restrict retention studies to analyses of outside sources' attempts to actively retain a teacher. Thus, this study sought to provide a broader understanding of the multiple, complex, interlocking factors influencing a teacher's decision to remain in an effort to facilitate a better understanding of retention data. The researcher hypothesized that the motivation underlying a teacher's choosing to return to an urban district may go far beyond external attempts of the district to retain the teacher. Though potential factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain have been explored in retention studies, researchers have defined the focus of these studies narrowly, preventing the creation of a complete picture of teacher retention (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Gerstan, 2001).

The assumption of some researchers that eliminating or modifying factors identified as influences on teacher attrition will undeniably raise retention rates (Cashwell, 2008; McKee, 2003; Stallings, 2008) has created a further complication in

understanding the dynamics of teacher retention. Some researchers, such as Cashwell (2008), have identified factors that influence teachers' decisions to leave a school and then erroneously concluded that changing these factors may increase retention, while ignoring that many teachers remained despite the factors identified in their studies. Some potential factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain may have remained unidentified in these studies because of researchers' attempts to use attrition data to produce retention models, but the muddled relationship between attrition and retention has further complicated the creation of a model that explains factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting.

A relatively new and sparse body of empirical research on urban teacher resilience and perseverance has explored the internal and external factors contributing to teachers' abilities to keep going despite the challenges associated with the urban district (Brunetti, 2006; Nieto, 2003; Patterson, Collins, & Abbott, 2004). The findings of these studies have offered a preliminary understanding of factors such as professional development, student achievement, and issues of social justice that influence effective teachers' drive and determination. Teacher resilience studies seek to identify strategies that teachers use to build their own resilience with respect to teaching and employ to help themselves persevere despite the challenges associated with teaching in an urban setting. The identification of a factor, such as professional development, as influential in resilience-building is significant in that districts can use the findings in the creation of programs or initiatives to lessen teacher burnout. The researchers, however, did not

design these studies to link clearly the discovered factors to retention and a teacher's decision to remain. The assumption that strategies used to build resilience are synonymous with factors influencing a teacher's decision to remain is not currently grounded in empirical data. Factors influencing a teacher's decision to remain in an urban setting could very well lie at the intersection of teacher retention and teacher resilience.

Though the synthesis of literature on teacher retention and teacher resilience suggests factors influencing effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting, the isolation of data collection to effective teachers is a significant component to this study. Though some resilience and retention studies have purported to examine effective teachers, they have either not defined clearly the designation, "effective teachers," (Brunetti, 2006), have defined the designation in ways that limit generalizability (Patterson, et al., 2004), or have asked participants to self-assess their effectiveness (Rice, 2006). For example, Brunetti's (2006) resilience study sought to understand factors influencing teachers to remain and strategies employed to increase resilience, but he relied solely on his own assessment of teachers' effectiveness. In contrast, Patterson et al. (2004) utilized student testing data to diagnose effective teachers but limited the collection of data to high-performing urban schools, whose characteristics were probably not representative of the typical inner-city school.

The identification of factors influencing effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting requires an open-ended, explorative design. In the present study, a case-study design allowed the data to unfold and drove subsequent data collection by revealing

additional documents that may lead to additional answers to the research questions (Merriam, 1998). A case study, with an embedded-case design, helped to combat some of the existing problems and gaps in the literature, allowed the data to refine preexisting categories and guided the emergent categories (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995), and respected the complexity of the issue by respecting the role of context within the study (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995). In a retention study of teachers who graduated from the University of North Texas, McKee (2003) concluded that teachers remain for both emotionally charged and practical reasons; Morris' (2007) conclusions about why teachers remain appeared primarily linked to intrinsic rewards experienced by a group of elementary teachers; and Easley (2006) focused on environmental factors, such as administrative support, as being fundamental to influencing a teacher's decision to remain. Thus, existing literature has attributed a teacher's return to a school, otherwise known as retention, to multiple, complex, interlocking factors including school-based or district-based initiatives, internal factors that may or may not be related to the school or the district, and external factors that may or may not be related to the school or the district. The researcher hypothesized that the identification of patterns and themes associated with effective urban teachers' decisions to remain would add an important component to the broader literature on urban teacher retention and urban teacher resilience.

This nondeficit approach to understanding urban teachers' decisions adds a missing component to the literature on urban school reform. While studying urban school

reform, some researchers, such as Quint (2006), have focused on the difficulty faced by urban districts in recruiting and retaining high-quality, effective teachers. Other researchers, such as Smith and Smith (2006) and Hanushek et al. (2001), have worked to explain this phenomenon by focusing on factors, such as community violence and complicated contextual issues, which contribute to urban teacher attrition. Though establishing why teachers leave the urban district is essential to urban school reform and policy changes, understanding why effective teachers choose to remain in this environment is equally important in the creation of long-term district plans, initiatives, and policies.

To date, few researchers have explored the factors contributing to long-term retention in the urban district. Some retention studies, such as those conducted by Holt and Garcia (2005) and the Consortium on Chicago School Research (2007), have focused on the development and implementation of programs and initiatives to raise retention rates rather than on creating an understanding of the factors contributing to an urban teacher's decision to remain. A few studies that have attempted to delineate the factors associated with a teacher's intent to stay have further blurred the line not only between retention and attrition but also between the complexity of retention and a teachers' active decision to return. For example, a study by Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, and Harniss (2001) used a sociological lens to analyze factors influencing special education teachers' intent to stay. They focused only on factors that a school district can control, potentially creating an incomplete picture as to the complexity of the decision-making process.

Moreover, this study utilized findings from attrition studies in the development of the survey and viewed attrition and retention and the factors associated with each as inversely related. Assuming that inverting the findings on attrition can explain the motivations of the teachers who remain seems unjustified without using empirical evidence to support this strategy.

The absence of key components in other studies purporting to identify the factors contributing to an urban teacher's decision to remain helped create both the foundation and justification for the current study. Some studies, such as those conducted by Morris (2007) and Thompson (2007), have limited their examination to elementary or K-8 environments, raising the important question as to whether elementary teachers remain for the same reason as secondary teachers remain. Others, such as those by Thompson (2007) and Inman and Marlow (2004), have limited their examination to teachers within their first few years of teaching, raising the questions: Do influencing factors change over time? Are factors that strongly influence teachers in their first few years powerful enough to influence long-term staying power? Brunetti (2006) focused on factors contributing to inner-city teachers' decisions to remain, but he served as the sole judge of teachers as "good teachers" and did not link the determination of teacher effectiveness to his methodology. While Brunetti created a foundation for a potential intersectional relationship between retention and resilience, his subjective assumption of teacher effectiveness gives additional merit to the importance of this particular study.

The researcher hypothesized that the research on teacher resilience could prove to

intersect with research on teacher retention to form an important component of defining teachers' decisions to remain. Prior to this study, empirical data had not linked clearly the factors influencing a teacher's intent to stay and those influencing a teacher's resilience and perseverance; thus, treating them as identical prior to establishing their relationship is problematic. Researchers such as Cochran-Smith (2006), who referred to Nieto's (2003) work as a study on retention, have blurred the difference between perseverance and a teacher's decision to remain. Cochran-Smith (2006) pointed to Nieto's study as one that looked at attrition and retention through a unique lens. She argued that Nieto "turned the retention question on its head" (p. 11) by focusing on why teachers persevere in the urban district despite the challenges. Cochran-Smith reported that Nieto's main conclusion was that teachers stay in the urban district because "they love, believe in, and respect the students they work with and that they can dream of or imagine possibilities for them other than the dire circumstances in which many of them live" (p. 11). Cochran-Smith's analysis of Nieto's work suggested that Nieto's study explored factors influencing a teacher's decision to remain; Nieto's guiding question, however, was "What keeps teachers going?" Research has not linked clearly urban teachers' resilience and perseverance to their decisions to remain in the urban district. Thus, the two areas of study should be considered separate entities until empirical data substantiate this important intersectional relationship.

Several gaps in the literature justified the importance of this study. The identification of factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain promises to lead to a

more complete understanding of retention data and a more complete picture of teacher retention in general. When researchers define retention data as the act of a teacher's returning, then limiting retention studies to the assessment of specific retention strategies curtails the understanding of all factors, both internal and external, that influence the act of teachers returning to their positions. The researcher hypothesized that the exploration of these influential factors in an open-ended format, while focusing on additional influences of both resilience and effectiveness, could help define an intersectional relationship between teacher retention, teacher resilience, and teacher effectiveness. She further anticipated that such a linkage could help clarify the multiple factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain and explicate the manner in which the factors interact with one another.

<div align="center">Nature of the Study and Research Questions</div>

The nature of this case study, utilizing an embedded-case design, was to explore teacher retention in an urban school district in the southeastern United States. The study examined factors influencing effective teachers' decisions to remain in their urban school setting. At the conclusion of this inquiry, the researcher discusses findings concerning the following primary research questions and subquestions:

1. Given the well-documented challenges of urban schools, what factors influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in the inner-city high schools of a southeastern metropolitan area?

    a. What contextual factors do effective teachers in the inner-city high schools

perceive to be challenging?

b. What contextual factors do effective teachers in the inner-city high schools

perceive to be rewarding?

c. How do these identified rewards and challenges align with those presented in

the literature on urban education?

d. What strategies do teachers use to maximize rewards and manage these

identified challenges in the research setting?

2. What, if any, intersectional relationship exists between the concepts of teacher

resilience, teacher retention, and teacher effectiveness as the constructs relate to

teachers' decisions to remain?

According to Patton (2002), qualitative approaches best fit research proposals that

are concerned with "questions about people's experiences; inquiry into the meanings

people make of their experiences; […] and research where not enough is known about a

phenomenon for standardized instruments to have been developed" (p. 33). Because of

the interest in participants' constructions of their own realities and their perceptions about

the factors influencing their decisions to remain in an urban school setting, the researcher

anticipated that a qualitative research study would create an opportunity to gather rich

data based on the participants' understandings.

This research study utilized an embedded-case design case study for its

methodological approach and data analysis. A particular concern of this study was to

analyze effective teachers' decisions to remain in a particular urban setting; thus, the

context and participants' reactions to and interactions with the context were a primary concern. Yin (2003) argued that case study is the method of choice when the researcher is specifically concerned with the role of contextual issues regarding the case (p. 13).

The goal of a case study is to gain a deep understanding of a specific case and to create an analysis of that case with respect to the study's questions (Merriam, 1998, p.134; Stake, 1995, p.77). This goal is accomplished by a researcher's investigation into the complexities and multiple aspects of the case and the defined phenomenon (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). The current study had two identified goals with respect to the investigation of the defined phenomenon—teachers actively deciding to remain in a specific southeastern urban district—and the understanding of the defined case—reputedly effective, core-area, secondary teachers in the defined district. Because the purpose of this study was to discover the themes associated with effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban school setting despite the documented challenges, a case-study methodology aligned well with both the research questions and the goals of the study.

The researcher used criterion sampling to narrow the pool and ensure that all participants shared skills and experiences significant to this particular study. The sampling procedure initially narrowed the pool by examining the student and neighborhood demographics for each high school in the district to ensure that teachers selected came from schools that met specific contextual requirements. After identifying the schools, a teacher's years of service in the district served as the next selection tool. After identifying the teachers who met the criteria for the study, the researcher gathered

from a variety of sources reputational data geared toward identifying effective teachers. The researcher defined effectiveness based on criteria set forth in the literature and used these criteria to collect reputational data on a population of urban teachers. She then used the reputational data to select 14 participants for study participation and data collection methods including, interviews, focus groups, and document and archival data compilation. Section 3 details the selection criteria, including the collection of reputational data.

The researcher used several strategies, as suggested by Creswell (1998, 2003), to verify the findings of the study. The researcher utilized (a) member checking with transcript analysis, (b) member checking in the findings section, (c) in-depth description to communicate findings, (d) disclosure of researcher's own biases, and (e) outside readers to ask questions about researcher's findings. Section 3 describes these methods in detail.

<div align="center">Purpose Statement</div>

The primary purpose of this case study, utilizing an embedded-case design, was to investigate factors that may explain and identify common themes associated with effective urban teachers' decisions to remain in an urban school district. An additional purpose of this study was to examine a possible intersection of urban teacher resilience, urban teacher retention, and urban teacher effectiveness with respect to teachers' decisions to remain in an urban school setting. The goal of the study was to extend the current body of literature on teacher retention in the urban district, especially factors

involved in teachers' decisions to remain in urban settings, and to contribute to future investigations that focus on teachers' decision-making processes with respect to returning to a specific school site.

Researchers have linked attrition in the urban district to poor preservice preparation (Groulx, 2001; Haberman, 1994), urban district bureaucracy (Matus, 1999; Weiner, 2006), ineffective administration (Ingersoll, 2005, 2006), school violence (Smith & Smith, 2006), inadequate resources and facilities (Buckley et al., 2005), and negative societal views toward the profession (Margolis, 2008). However, some effective teachers experiencing the same contextual problems remain in the urban district despite its challenges. Thus, remaining teachers may turn to internal or external resources to help them maximize rewards while minimizing frustrations. The perseverance of effective teachers who remain raises the question of whether they have a different perception about their environment than those who leave and further leads to the question of what motivating factors keep them committed to the urban school setting. Thus, the primary purpose of this study was to identify the internal and external factors that influence effective teachers to remain despite the challenges identified by others as reasons for leaving.

Understanding the factors associated with teachers' decisions to remain in the urban district is an essential component to understanding urban teacher retention. Examining retention purely through the lens of initiatives and school-based leadership ignores additional factors that could influence teachers to return to the urban district.

Thus, the purpose of the first research question was to explore the intrinsic or extrinsic factors that contribute to effective teachers' choosing to remain in this challenging environment. Similarly, assuming that factors influencing teacher resilience are synonymous with factors contributing to retention may be premature without research data corroborating this linkage. Thus, the purpose of the second research question was to identify possible intersections between urban teacher retention and resilience.

Overview of Conceptual Framework

The purpose of a case study is to generate a deeper understanding about a phenomenon that is not completely understood. Although researchers have not clearly identified, explained, and categorized the factors that may influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in the urban district, several existing theories help to frame this particular case study. Attributional theory, choice theory, the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, and the theory of the racialization of poverty created a framework for this study.

Attributional theory and choice theory establish a psychological foundation for the decision-making process because each theory deals with psychological factors influencing adults' decisions and decision-making processes. Weiner's (1983, 1985) attributional theory provides a context for understanding teachers' perceptions and reactions to external forces. Weiner developed a taxonomy for classifying adults' decisions by examining the perceived stability of an outside external factor and its subsequent influence on internal reactions and decisions. Glasser's (1998) choice theory

helps to explain the ability that some teachers may have to separate internal satisfaction from external influences. In addition, Glasser (1998) examined decision-making from the perspective that adults want to fulfill one or more of the basic psychological needs: "love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun" (p. 28). The researcher hypothesized that the juxtaposition of the two theories may help to explain teachers' perceptions, reactions, and choices associated with the urban district.

Yin (2003) acknowledged that researchers would utilize the case-study methodology because they "deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions— believing that they might be highly pertinent to [their] phenomenon of study" (p. 13). Because the context is a significant aspect of the research question, the case-study methodology gave the researcher the ability to examine the data with respect to context. Thus, the utilization of theories connected to context was important to the overall framing of the study.

Ladson-Billings' (1995a) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy supports the criteria for teacher effectiveness in the urban district by introducing a framework of practice proven to be successful with African-American students. The use of such culturally specific effectiveness criteria is important because this study's has a sample high school population of 6,547 students, 97.7% of whom are African American. Ladson-Billings' work lends theoretical grounding to the characteristics used to collect reputational data during the criterion sampling stage of this qualitative research study.

Stake (1995) contended that case-study researchers should focus on analyzing

data while reflecting on the specific contexts of the study. Thus, the racialization of poverty and the interconnectedness of the urban area, race, and poverty (Berliner, 2006; Marable, 2000; Wilson, 1996), a relationship explained in detail in section 2, provided a theoretical framework for understanding the context of the study. Moreover, understanding the contextual nature of the study was foundational to the research questions. The first research question explicitly stated that the urban district has "well-documented challenges;" thus, understanding the historical nature of these challenges helped in defining the overall context for this study. Section 2 includes a close examination of each theory.

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

This study uses the following terms and definitions:

Attrition: The term is associated with district attrition, which is a teachers' decision to leave a particular school district or the teaching profession (Boe, Cook, Bobbitt, & Weber, 1996).

Core-area teacher: A teacher of mathematics, science, social studies, or English.

Effective teacher: A teacher having a reputation for being a quality urban teacher based on characteristics set forth by the literature. Effective urban teachers (a) possess a broad knowledge of content and pedagogy (Danielson, 1996; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [NBPTS], 1989; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 2002), (b) display a commitment to students and their learning (Danielson, 1996; NBPTS, 1989; Nieto, 2003, 2006a; Stanford, 1997), (c) are

talented in designing and implementing multiple strategies for instruction and assessment

(Danielson, 1996; NBPTS, 1989) (d) have an ability to assess and reflect on practice

(Danielson, 1996; NBPTS, 1989; Nieto, 2003), (e) exhibit a commitment to students in

the urban district and the community (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Nieto, 2003; Stanford,

1997), (f) dedicate themselves to creating opportunities for students to experience success

(Ladson-Billings, 1995b), (g) possess a service-oriented approach to teaching (Nieto,

2005), (h) set high expectations for student learning (Danielson, 1996; Stanford, 1997),

(i) create a community of learners within their classrooms (Danielson, 1996; Ladson-

Billings, 1995b; Stanford, 1997), and (j) value their students' cultural identities (Nieto,

2003).

Lower socioeconomic and poverty: This term refers to families who qualify for

free or reduced lunch. Families of one with a yearly income below $13, 273 qualify for

free lunch, and families of one with a yearly income below $18,889 qualify for reduced

lunch. The scale for free lunch increases by $4,524 per additional family member, and the

scale for reduced lunch increases by $6,438 per additional family member (California

Department of Education, 2007).

Mid-career teacher: A teacher having between 6 and 10 years of experience

(Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

Multicultural education: An education based on the fact that all students are

capable of learning and succeeding if given the proper resources, a curriculum that

respects various cultural identities, and teachers who believe in students' innate learning

abilities (Nieto, 2000).

New teacher: A teacher with fewer than 5 years of experience (Farkas et al., 2000; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

New-teacher induction programs: Programs designed to help teachers within their first 3 years of teaching transition into the profession. These programs include mentoring, specialized curriculum, support groups, study groups, or a combination of the aforementioned initiatives (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2007; New Teacher Center, 2006; Teachers College Innovations, 2005).

Reputational data: Data collected by the researcher to identify effective teachers in the high schools of a southeastern, urban school system. The researcher grounded the definition for effectiveness in educational literature and asked leaders in the district to identify teachers meeting these specific criteria.

Retention: The term is associated with district retention, which is a teachers' decision to remain within a teaching capacity within the same school district from one year to the next (Boe et al., 1996).

Secondary teacher: A teacher in the district who teaches grades 9-12

Teacher resilience: An ability to persevere toward excellence in spite of existing challenges (Brunetti, 2006; Patterson et al., 2004).

Urban: This term refers to areas in and surrounding a city with a population of over 50,000 people and "a population density over 1,000 people per square mile" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Urban school: This term is synonymous with Brunetti's (2006) definition of "inner-city school" and refers to a school that is located in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood and whose student body is composed primarily of students of color from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Veteran teacher: A teacher having over 10 years of experience (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

Assumptions

The researcher based this case study, utilizing an embedded-case design, on several assumptions:

1. The sources judging teacher effectiveness for the reputational data would have adequate knowledge of teachers' practices. Section 3 details the concepts of sources and reputational data.

2. The educators identified as meeting the criteria of effectiveness would truly possess these qualities.

3. Teachers deemed effective by outside sources would be successful with respect to student achievement.

4. The educators would be candid in their interviews, and their responses would reflect their true perceptions.

5. The experiences and motivations of those interviewed would align with those of other effective educators in the district.

Delimitations

The researcher conducted this study between fall 2009 and summer 2010 in an

urban district in the southeastern United States. She invited 20 core-area, secondary

teachers to participate in the study as the primary sources of data for developing theories

that may explain effective, urban teachers' decisions to remain in an urban school setting.

Each teacher in the study had over 5 years of experience and taught in a school that met

the established requirements. Ninety percent African-American student population, 50%

or more of students received free or reduced lunch, 95% of the students were in grades 9-

12, and 75% of the students lived in the community of the school. The classification of

teachers with respect to their effectiveness was a large component of the sampling

procedure for this study. Three of the five source categories classified teachers classified

in the study as effective. Section 3 includes explanations of the design and the sampling

procedures of the study.

Limitations

This case study, utilizing an embedded-case design, contained several limitations.

Because of its small sample size and the fact that the researcher included as participants

only teachers from one district, this study could be difficult to replicate and future

researchers could consider the study narrow in its scope (Eckardt, 2007). The limitations

of the study were as follows:

1. Limited validity exists with respect to the external application of the study's

   findings. Because the study was limited to 14 participants, its small scale limits

the generalizability of this study's findings (Creswell, 2003, p. 195; Patton, 2002, pp. 46, 546).

2. The use of reputational data is subjective. Though the researcher worked to limit subjectivity of the process by the establishment of specific criteria of effectiveness, the judgment as to whether a teacher possessed these particular qualities was, nevertheless, reliant on an outside source's perception. Thus, teachers identified as effective may not have met the definition established by the literature.

3. The researcher may have unwittingly inferred conclusions during the de-coding process based on personal interest in the urban district and its students (Patton, 2002, pp. 93, 433).

4. Finally, the teachers in the district who knew the researcher personally may not have answered some of the questions candidly.

<div align="center">Significance of the Study</div>

Authors of attrition and retention studies have estimated that 50% of urban teachers leave teaching within their first 5 years. (Harvard Graduate School of Education News, 2002a; Holt & Garcia, 2005; NCTAF, 2002; New Teacher Center, 2006; Smith & Smith, 2006; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). Moreover, researchers have found that many urban schools, especially those with low student achievement, lost one-fifth of their faculty each year, including veteran teachers who left long before they were eligible for retirement (Hanushek et al., 2001; Ingersoll, 2005). These percentages underscore the

importance of a full understanding by educational researchers, policy makers, and district officials of the factors associated with retention. Factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain in the urban district form a subset of the broader field of teacher retention, but the identification of these factors has constituted an empirical gap in the broader field of teacher retention.

This case study, utilizing an embedded-case design, on determinants influencing effective urban teachers' decisions to remain in their teaching environment is significant because the study fills a gap in the literature on urban teacher retention, provides an overview of challenges and rewards of the urban district, highlights effective teachers' strategies for maximizing rewards and managing challenges, and identifies an intersectional relationship between teacher retention, teacher resilience, and teacher effectiveness with respect to teachers' decisions to remain. The contributions to educational scholarship and retention studies include indentifying:

1. Internal factors associated with teachers' decisions to remain in the urban district, which could help scholars to

   a. better understand the relationship between factors influencing teachers' resilience and teachers' decisions to remain,

   b. better understand the relationship between altruistic motives and urban teachers' desire to remain in the urban district,

   c. develop long-term retention strategies based on teachers' perspectives of why they remain in the urban district,

     d.   develop urban recruitment strategies that include an assessment of

         candidates' emotional attributes, and

     e.   create professional development aimed at supporting teachers' internal

         commitment to the urban district;

2. External factors associated with teachers' decisions to remain, which could help

    district leaders to

     a.   categorize which external influences are most associated with teachers'

         decisions to remain,

     b.   prioritize in-school improvement strategies, and

     c.   create work environments that harness the findings;

3. Strategies teachers employ to overcome documented challenges and maximize

    rewards, which could reveal commonalities in practice to aid scholars in

    designing professional development that disseminates these pedagogical practices

    throughout the system.

Implications for Social Change

       Further significance of the study concerns its implications for social change. On a

broad scale, raising retention of effective teachers is one step toward ameliorating well-

documented systemic inequities (Delpit, 1995; Gorski, 2006; Greene, 2001; Kozol, 1991,

2007; Lee, 2007; Ng & Rury, 2006) and reducing the fiscal expenditures associated with

recruiting and training new teachers (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2007;

New Teacher Center, 2006). This study contributes to positive social change by offering

insight into factors influencing the decisions of effective teachers to remain in the urban district and by providing a foundation for further research on urban teacher retention.

The study also contributes to the scholarly body of urban education literature designed from a nondeficit perspective. According to Annenberg Institute for School Reform Senior Fellows (2000), research on the urban district has reflected a deficit perspective highlighting the negative aspect of the district and its inability to educate students. Nieto (2000) explained that researchers have often used pejorative words, such as "pitfalls," "danger," and "decline," (¶ 4) and have focused on the negative aspects of the educational enigma posed by the urban district. Moreover, researchers, such as Kozol (1991) and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform Senior Fellows (2000), have argued that certain urban education research has berated the urban district and its constant failure, comparing it to successful suburban schools while ignoring the great discrepancy in funding between the two districts. The literature developed from the negative deficit perspective has added to the stereotypes of the urban district, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy enacted by the generations of teachers--past, present, and future--who study this literature.

<div align="center">Organization of Remaining Sections</div>

In the first section, the researcher provided an overview of the study by addressing, for example, the problem statement, research questions, purpose, summary of theoretical framework, significance, and implications for social change.

Section 2 presents a review of the literature pertinent to understanding factors

associated with teachers' decisions to remain in the urban district. The researcher

addresses literature from four broad areas in educational research: (a) teacher resilience

and perseverance, (b) teacher retention, (c) teacher attrition, and (d) urban school

districts, with a focus on contextualized solutions utilizing a sociological analysis of race

and class. Additionally, section 2 concludes with an explication and design of the

theoretical framework for the study. Section 3 presents the methodology, reviews

literature pertinent to the case-study methodology, and explains the research design.

Section 4 presents the findings of the study. Section 5 presents conclusions and

recommendations for future studies.

SECTION 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview of the Section Organization

This literature review, organized in five parts, provides a framework for understanding the range of key concepts that emerged from this study, which explored factors that influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in the urban school district. The researcher hypothesized that teachers could base their decisions to remain on a combination of external factors, such as the district's efforts at retention, and internal factors, such as the teachers' own motivation. Therefore, the first part of this review focused on the research on urban teacher retention and attrition, and the second part focused on the sparse body of literature about urban teacher perseverance and resilience.

The third part of the review examined literature on effective teaching in the urban district. This component of the review was essential to justifying the collection of reputational data and the 10 criteria of urban effectiveness that the researcher chose to guide informants in the selection of highly effective urban teachers. The fourth part of the review examined the complexity of the urban district, the importance of contextualized solutions, and the role of contextual factors, specifically those associated with the culture of students. The literature examined in this portion of the review helped define the context of the research study and some of the well-documented challenges to which the first research question referred. The final part of the review examined the conceptual framework for this study and discussed four relevant theories: attributional theory, choice theory, the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, and the theory of the racialization of poverty. Throughout the review, the researcher offers evaluations of the current literature, identifies gaps in the research, and analyzes contrasting research.

The researcher used multiple methods for searching the literature to gain an understanding of the complete picture of factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting. The review began with a search of the literature associated with new-teacher retention in urban settings, utilizing keywords such as new-teacher and retention programs, new teacher and urban, urban and retention. The literature discussed high attrition rates in the urban settings, which led to a similar search using attrition as an additional guiding word. Each of these reviews included multiple databases, such as ERIC, Teachers College Record, SAGE, and ProQuest.

Through these preliminary reviews, the researcher gained an appreciation for the importance of context and believed that compiling information about the urban setting may help to solidify a topic and aid in understanding the challenges and complexities discussed by many researchers. This led to a search of books, dissertations, and journal articles focusing on urban communities, African-American youth, lower-socioeconomic communities, and urban schools. This review helped not only to narrow a focus but also to frame the study in context, which is an important criterion of qualitative studies.

Through this review, the works of Nieto (2000, 2003, 2005, 2006a, & 2006b) illuminated an additional topic of teacher resilience. This new keyword was used in a search method similar to that described with retention and attrition. After formulating the final research questions, the researcher ran a query to identify literature that examined effective pedagogy for urban teachers. Throughout all of the previously described searches, the researcher used the references within the books and articles to guide

additional literature searches.

Overview of Literature on Teacher Retention and Attrition

Teacher retention and attrition have become a focus for many urban districts. Researchers have reported attrition rates of 33% to 50% for teachers within their first 3 to 5 years; moreover, they have found the rates to be higher in the urban districts, which have more difficulty recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers (Education Development Center, 2005a; Harvard Graduate School of Education News, 2002a; NCTAF, 2002; New Teacher Center, 2006; Smith & Smith, 2006; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). Developing a better understanding about this discrepancy and solutions that help lower socioeconomic districts more effectively retain their teachers is important to the educational community.

The constant turnover of teachers creates a financial burden on urban districts (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2007; New Teacher Center, 2006) and forces their administrators to staff classrooms with unprepared teachers who are often teaching out of their content area (Education Development Center, 2005a; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003; Haycock, 1998; Quint, 2006). Although many retention and attrition studies have resulted from concern about this revolving door of quality teachers, varying definitions of attrition have blurred the meanings of their findings. In an urban attrition study, Cashwell (2008) defined teacher attrition as a teacher's leaving the profession. However, because teacher attrition is costly for the district, a teacher's departure from the district is significant even if the teacher remains in the profession because each action equally

hampers a district.

Teacher attrition has also become a critical problem contributing to the achievement gap among students. Indeed, the lack of quality teachers for the most disadvantaged students has become the "central paradox of American education" (Quint, 2006, p. 37). A "critical link [exists] between early development of our teachers and achievement of our most vulnerable students" (New Teacher Center, 2006, p. 1); this is clear when considering that new teachers often end up with the most difficult assignments (Kane, 1991; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). Moreover, if teachers continue to leave the profession and new teachers continue to enter the profession without support systems based on an understanding of factors contributing to long-term retention, the most disadvantaged students will continue to receive a second-rate education and the achievement gap will remain a reality. The discrepancy between teacher preparedness in urban and suburban areas is one of the persistent inequities in the American education system; until it changes, urban districts must work to retain their effective teachers. The attainment of this goal requires that urban districts analyze why teachers stay, as well as why they leave, and use this information to create frameworks that support teacher retention. Urban district leaders must discover a way to protect their most valuable resource–the teacher.

Literature on Urban Teacher Retention

Identifying a gap in the literature with respect to effective urban teachers' decisions to remain requires an analysis of scholarship about teacher retention. The

current literature on teacher retention has tended to focus on new-teacher induction

programs designed to raise retention and on initiatives to increase overall teacher

satisfaction. This literature review includes studies that have focused on new-teacher

retention as well as studies that have analyzed the retention of veteran teachers. The

analysis of literature includes a set of studies that focused on new-teacher induction

programs, a group of studies that analyzed administrative initiatives geared at teacher

retention, and a collection of studies than identified intrinsic and extrinsic motivators

influencing teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting.

Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) proposed that new-teacher support is

fundamental not only to raising retention but also to developing quality educators. They

argued that, while teachers are challenged to provide a quality education for all students,

many are not prepared for the rigor of meeting the needs of the growingly diverse student

population in today's educational arena. A quantitative study by Buttery et al. (1990),

which found that teacher educators believed that mentoring of first-year teachers was a

critical component of effective teaching and should be the responsibility of school

districts, supported this argument. In addition, a qualitative study by Moore (2008),

which examined the effectiveness of new-teacher mentoring in three middle schools in an

urban district near Atlanta, Georgia, found that a majority of teachers who participated in

the study believed that mentoring had a positive impact on their intent to remain in the

profession.

A study by Foster (1982) acknowledged that an inner-city teacher's first year of

teaching mimics a "normal developmental crisis, and that the resolution of that crisis shapes the teacher's professional self" (p. 4). According to Foster (1982),

> Because teachers often are lonely and isolated from each other, they rarely have the opportunity to discuss their teaching problems openly and frankly with each other. Consequently, many teachers have difficulty in distinguishing between problems related to difficult situations and those related to personal attitudes and to emotion. (p. 5)

Such findings suggest the need for districts to shape new teachers into effective educators rather than leaving their future professional attitudes to chance. Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) and NCTAF (2002) both argued that this challenge could be met by creating effective new-teacher induction programs, with a focus on mentoring. Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) analyzed teacher retention but, in the process, also acknowledged the difficulties faced by urban and rural schools in finding fully credentialed teachers. The authors discussed the challenges not only of keeping new teachers but also of helping them meet the rigorous standards of the industry. They analyzed different types of support systems that are important for new teachers: personal and emotional support, task- or problem-focused support, and critical reflection on teaching practice. They suggested strategies for developing these types of support and analyzed the built-in challenges for developing and maintaining these support programs.

This level of support is significant not only to teacher development but also to teacher retention. Hare et al. (2001) found that districts that reported the employment of

new-teacher support systems showed a decrease of 50% or more in teacher attrition. The retention strategies utilized by the superintendents of school systems located in the Midwest included creating smaller schools, implementing collaborative professional development, and establishing procedures that helped community stakeholders attain the proper certification for teaching.

Recently, as evidenced by Alabama's requirement that all new teachers receive a teacher mentor, politicians as well as educators have focused on new-teacher mentoring (Alabama Department of Education [ALSDE], 2004). In addition, The American Federation of Teachers [AFT] (2001) concluded that all new teachers should be required to participate in a year-long mentoring program with a mentor who has proven to be a practitioner of high quality. Recommendations such as these can be successfully grounded in the literature on new-teacher retention. For example, in a mixed-methods study by Gehrke and McCoy (2007), the researchers sought to understand the perceptions of first-year special educators about induction programs and mentoring supports in hard-to-staff schools. They focused on factors associated with collegial interactions and factors within the school's control, such as resources and professional development. The researchers found that the "stayers" were apt to utilize mentors and collegial support units, as well as access helpful resources; in contrast, the "movers" seemed to rely on their own ingenuity, the internet, and their own ability to locate outside resources. Yet, establishing a framework for effective mentoring becomes foundational to the suggestions made by ALSDE and AFT. Researchers have worked to create effective

new-teacher mentoring programs and have created a variety of initiatives to combat retention problems.

The Consortium on Chicago School Research (2007) evaluated the effectiveness of mentoring on new-teacher satisfaction and retention. The study revealed that "simply participating in an induction program, as currently organized in Chicago Public Schools, has little bearing on the quality of novices' teaching experience and future teaching intentions" (p. 22). However, after analyzing the various components of the mentoring programs, researchers found that novices who participated in high-quality mentoring with high levels of support were over 4.2 times as likely to remain in the same school and 3.7 times as likely to report a positive teaching experience than were those teachers who had not participated in induction (p. 36). The researchers concluded that the quality of mentoring programs varied and that some did not meet the challenges faced by teachers in Chicago public schools. They found that only programs including analysis of student work samples as well as addressing contextual issues produced a statistically significant finding among high school teachers.

The New Teacher Center (2006) designed a high-quality mentoring program for the New York City school district, which attributed the need for this program to the financial strains caused by high attrition rates. Program designers based the selection of mentors on intense background data and proven effectiveness in the district. They aligned the program with research-based strategies, district mandates, and district expectations. The city contractually required new teachers to participate in the mentoring

program, released mentors from their teaching duties, and ensured that mentors spend 1.25-2.5 hours per week with their new teachers.

In contrast, Anthony and Kritsonis (2006) proposed that EMentoring has the potential to provide new teachers with ongoing, efficient, and effective support that overrides the time constraints often associated with face-to-face mentoring. The finding that some mentors of new teachers are mentors in name only, with few taking the time to observe new teachers and aid them in the analysis and reflection of practice (Harvard Graduate School of Education News, 2002b), supports this type of initiative.

Researchers have also looked at the use of new-teacher cohorts to combat isolation, decrease burnout, and increase retention. Foster (1982) found that the venue of new-teacher cohorts, in which new urban teachers expressed concerns and created contextual solutions, lessened their stress and burnout. Teachers College Innovations (2005) reported the use of a similar format in which new teachers participated in an 18-session, 40-hour curriculum that focused on collegial interactions and content specific to the needs of new teachers. A group of 20 new teachers learned to analyze and reflect on practice by studying curriculum with two trained facilitators.

Other researchers have proposed the use of contextually significant curriculum to help districts increase retention. Holt and Garcia (2005) discussed the use of a new-teacher mentoring program that considered the contextual factors of the urban district. Their program focused on classroom management and the use of literature about students from the urban district. Their primary tools for new teachers included professional

development tied to the work of Payne (2005) and Everston and Harris (1997). This approach is consistent with the arguments of other researchers who believe that teachers need to increase their cultural awareness and identify their hidden biases (Howard, 2006; Lee, 2007; Nieto, 2003), but these researchers may not believe that Payne's (2005) work should be a foundation to the program, an educational debate discussed in detail later in this section. Lee (2007) studied mentoring programs that specifically discussed equity in practice. Mentors explored with new teachers their unacknowledged feelings associated with the culture or race of their students and taught teachers to integrate their students' backgrounds into their daily lessons. The findings of studies such as that conducted by Thompson (2007) and Epp (2007) support this type of new-teacher curriculum. Thompson found that teachers with over 3 years of experience acknowledged the importance of professional development geared toward the urban district and urban issues. Epp found that this type of professional development would be an important component of recruiting high-quality teachers to a hard-to-staff school. Teachers in the Thompson study identified this type of support system as influential in their decisions to remain.

Matus' (1999) research study focused on creating effective urban teachers by working with preservice teachers in a seminar format that created time for collegial interactions and literature studies. The researcher found that focusing on particular contextual issues increased the effectiveness of preservice teachers in the classroom, as evidenced by the responses of the preservice teachers and their cooperating teachers.

Matus suggested that creating effective teachers would simultaneously create teachers who would persevere in this environment. Unfortunately, for the purposes of this study, his data collection did not follow teachers into their subsequent years of teaching. However, the study is significant in that it supported the frameworks used by Foster (1982) and Holt and Garcia (2005) by employing a synthesis of their methods. In Matus' (1999) study, while teachers conducted literature reviews focusing on contextually significant matters and on classroom management, the use of the preservice cohort was a foundation to the work.

These programs added significantly to the understanding of new-teacher retention but, at this point, have offered no data on long-term retention. These programs have been successful in raising retention of new urban teachers; yet, the questions remain: Will these teachers remain once the programs remove supportive structures and attention? Will the skills and procedures that they have developed sustain them?

Other researchers have been concerned with teacher retention in general and have not limited themselves to understanding the patterns of new teachers. Several researchers have suggested that districts could lower attrition and raise teacher satisfaction by creating leadership opportunities for teachers while they maintain their primary role in the classroom (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Margolis, 2008; Quartz, et al., 2008). These researchers have suggested that districts look for systems to reward teacher leadership from the classroom, such as creating levels of monetary compensation and leadership opportunities that do not remove quality educators from direct working relationships with

students. Patterson et al. (2004) found that effective teachers in the urban district identified assuming leadership roles within their schools as one of the factors positively influencing their resilience. In a study of National Board Certified Teachers, Epp (2007) identified teacher empowerment as a factor influencing teachers' decisions to remain in their current settings and to transfer to schools that valued shared decision making. In this study, teacher empowerment encompassed both teacher leadership and teacher autonomy in instructional decisions. NBCTs in the study valued teacher empowerment and believed that this factor played a significant role in the overall decision-making process.

Research findings support the creation of such teacher leadership pathways. For instance, Tye and O'Brien (2002) concluded that "the lack of anything resembling a genuine career ladder contributes to the feeling of many teachers that they are trapped in a career that has become not only joyless but futureless" (p. 28). Moreover, this type of solution could lead to an increase in recruitment, a possibility suggested by a study finding that 69% of recent college graduates who did not choose teaching noted that teaching offers little opportunity for career advancement (Farkas et al., 2000). Researchers and leaders in the educational field widely support an increase in teacher leadership and predict that the rewards will far exceed those created by raising retention. Researchers have argued that teacher leadership will be the vehicle to inevitably transform schools and education as a whole (Anderson, 2004; Barth, 2001; Patterson & Patterson, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2005). Retention will be a bonus when educational systems create structures that offer teachers not only leadership roles but also career advancement.

An important aspect of teacher-based leadership can be the mentoring of new teachers. Epp (2007) found that some NBCTs became frustrated when principals did not employ their expertise by assigning them as mentors to new teachers. Margolis (2008) strove to determine if mentoring other teachers had an effect on teachers' decisions concerning their career paths. Teachers with 4 to 6 years of teaching experience worked with intern teachers and also participated in a support group designed to facilitate their work as teachers and mentors. The role of mentoring and the decreased isolation provided by group meetings rejuvenated teachers and created a forum for reflection on teaching, leadership, and personal satisfaction. One teacher in the group acknowledged that one of the factors for remaining in teaching, which emerged during her mentoring relationship, was her discovery that she could separate her anger about problems with the overall system and "her passion for teaching students" (p. 9). This participant's comment was further supported by the findings of Nieto's (2003) inquiry groups in which teachers expressed the same ability to separate their anger from their passion. Margolis (2008) found that by serving as mentors, teachers experienced a regeneration of their passion for teaching and a desire to "[widen] their spheres of influence" (p. 1) in the future. Inman and Marlow (2004), too, found that teachers with 4 to 9 years of experience noted that leadership opportunities strongly influenced their decisions to remain.

Ingersoll's (2006) analyses of the *Status* survey conducted by the National Education Association showed that the top two reasons given by teachers for remaining in the profession were the desire to work with students and the value they placed on

education. However, this questionnaire offered a limited number of categories for

teachers to rank. Moreover, the study did not disaggregate teachers' answers by the type

of district, nor did the survey account for teachers' moving from the urban to suburban

setting. The *Status* survey focused specifically on remaining in the profession rather than

at a specific school site. Moreover, the results of the survey seemed to contradict the

findings of a study by Miech and Elder (1996) that idealistic, service-oriented teachers

were more likely to leave the profession. This contrast becomes even more interesting

when considering that 86% of the new generation of teachers reported entering the

profession due to a "sense of calling" and 72% acknowledged that they considered

teaching a service-oriented profession (Farkas et al., 2000, p. 10). The synthesis of these

findings possibly could have implications on researchers' conclusions about retention.

Using the statistics of Farkas et al. (2000) and the conclusions drawn by Miech and Elder

(1996), one could posit that that long-term retention could be dependent on the strength

of moral dedication.

Easley (2006), however, linked a teacher's moral commitment to the support of

administration. In a retention study of 110 recent graduates of the alternative urban-

teacher certification program of Mercy College, Easley (2006) analyzed answers to open-

ended survey questions to determine teachers' reasons for entering the profession and

their intentions to stay or leave. The researcher found that a moral calling to teaching and

the fulfillment of the environment were factors that had a favorable impact on urban

teachers' future decisions about retention. Yet, they found that the moral commitment of

the teacher and the teacher's subsequent fulfillment were directly linked to the moral

leadership of the administration. All of the respondents were recent graduates of a two-

year program and, presumably, in their third year of teaching; thus, one of the questions

that this study brought to light is whether personal fulfillment will wane over time. Will

personal fulfillment continue to motivate teachers who have more than 3 years of

experience? Moreover, do factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain in an urban

setting vary with years of experience?

Thompson (2007) found that teachers who were in their first 3 years indicated that

they needed the following form of support to remain in the urban district: positive

collegial interactions, supportive administration, and personal boundaries that balanced

home and school demands. Similarly, Inman and Marlow (2004) found that school-based

structures, especially collegial interactions that led to a feeling of belongingness, directly

impacted the decisions of teachers within their first 3 years. Will these factors be

synonymous with those identified in this study by teachers with over 5 years of

experience? Interestingly, Inman and Marlow (2004) found that teachers with 4 to 9 years

of experience indicated greater concern with working conditions, such as class size,

paperwork, and administration, than teachers with less experience indicated. Because

many retention studies have focused on teachers who have fewer than 10 years of

experience, do researchers have a full picture of factors influencing long-term retention

of teachers? Moreover, this particular quantitative study by Inman and Marlow (2004)

examined only factors directly related to teaching, therefore eliminating intrinsic

motivators as contributory factors to teachers' decisions to remain. This design may not have created a complete picture of the complicated web of factors that could influence teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting.

Multiple studies have identified collegiality as an influential factor in teachers' decisions to remain (Epp, 2007; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Gerstan et al., 2001; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Thompson, 2007). Gehrke and McCoy (2007) found that "stayers" among first-year special educators reported the influence of both relevant professional development activities and collegial interactions on their decisions to remain. The need for positive collegial interactions at the school level is not limited to special educators. In Thompson's (2007) study 33% of teachers with over 3 years of experience attributed their decisions to remain to relationships with their colleagues (p. 99). Similarly, Epp (2007) found that NBCTs indicated that a "like-minded" staff (p. 130), characterized by high levels of collegiality and cohesiveness, was an important factor that would influence them to remain in or report to a school.

In a phenomenological study by Morris (2007), the researcher asked why teachers remain in challenging urban elementary schools. The elementary teachers identified the following reasons for remaining: (a) meaningful relationships with students, (b) intrinsic rewards from parental relationships and student successes, (c) exciting instructional initiatives, (d) collegial interactions at the school level, (e) a fulfillment of their internal need of being needed and appreciated, and (f) the satisfaction of overcoming challenges. Overall, the researcher concluded that teachers remained because they loved their

students and believed "that their work was crucial" (p. 84). This study identified quality

teachers by principal recommendation. The researcher gave the principals a list of criteria

to help guide them in the selection of the teachers. Morris (2007) asked the principals to

identify teachers (a) whose students gained a year of progress, as evidenced by testing

data (b) who were able to engage students in the learning process, (c) who set high

expectations for students, and (d) who had served in an urban elementary school for over

3 years. This particular study is extremely significant to the current study in that it

introduced internal and external factors that influence effective elementary teachers to

remain in an urban educational setting. Morris' (2007) use of reputational data is similar

to this current study; however, Morris' (2007) study did not consider the research on

urban education and qualities that high-quality urban educators possess. Thus, this

current study adds an additional component that addresses teachers' understanding of

urban culture. Morris' (2007) study limited the collection of data to elementary schools;

whereas, this current study limits the collection of data to urban high schools. Thus,

discovering whether these themes are comparable to those given by secondary teachers is

a primary concern of the current study.

Teacher retention is complicated because a disconnect exists between the

collection of retention data and the available retention research. If researchers calculate

retention data based on teachers' return to a district or a profession, then retention

research should extend past research focusing on reforms and initiatives. Many

researchers have focused on programs to increase retention of new teachers and reform

efforts to retain veteran teachers, but developing a complete understanding of long-term

teacher retention requires the identification and exploration of factors that influence

teachers' decisions to remain. The goal of this study is to help to fill in some of the gaps

in the literature with respect to teacher retention and the role of internal and external

factors in influencing teachers' decisions to remain.

Literature on Urban Teacher Attrition

Educational research has linked teacher attrition in the urban district to a variety

of factors such as violence, self-fulfilling prophecies, and student behavior. Thompson

(2007) found that those who left the urban district described the context as "challenging,"

"stress[ful]," and "chaotic" (p. 75). An additional problem contributing to high attrition

rates in the urban district is that many new teachers in the urban district become

disillusioned by the bureaucracy and the isolation they feel during their first few years

(Matus, 1999; Weiner, 2006). Moreover, researchers have becoming increasingly

concerned about attrition of mid-career and veteran teachers (Tye & O'Brien, 2002) and

about the limited career ladder offered by the profession (Farkas et al., 2000). Examining

a synthesis of findings from attrition studies conducted in an urban district, one could

argue that many teachers become disillusioned and frustrated and leave the district due to

a lack of understanding of the unique characteristics of the urban district and the students

and families that it serves. This section of the literature review focuses on school-level

factors influencing attrition, the general blueprint of the teaching profession as it relates

to attrition, and teachers' negative views of the urban district and the effect of these views

on attrition. Understanding attrition research helps to inform retention studies, but attrition findings should not be inverted to explain retention without empirical data to support the inversion.

Ingersoll (2006) explained that the teacher shortage is not a reflection of fewer people pursuing this career path but, rather, a reflection of the inability of schools to retain teachers. According to the Teacher Followup Survey utilized by Ingersoll, between the years of 1988 and 2001, teachers reporting intentions to leave their schools the following year fluctuated between 13.2% and 15.7%. Over the past few years, the number of teachers leaving the profession has exceeded the number of those entering the profession by up to 20%. In an overview of his years of research, Ingersoll (2005) identified job dissatisfaction and the pursuit of other job opportunities as the primary reasons that teachers leave the profession. Specifically, over half of the teachers leaving cited at least one of these factors as their reason (Ingersoll, 2006). Ingersoll (2005, 2006) reported that much of the job dissatisfaction experienced by teachers was due to poor administration, student discipline, workload, and limited leadership opportunities; and, the pursuit of other jobs was often attributed to financial considerations, such as salaries that are competitive in early years but quickly plateau relative to other careers.

A variety of studies have supported Ingersoll's (2005, 2006) conclusion. As researchers have worked to identify factors most influencing teacher attrition, recent studies have attributed the phenomenon to similar school-level factors: (a) ineffective administration or lack of administrative support (Education Commission of the States

[ECS], 2007; Epp, 2007; Groulx, 2001; Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2007; McKee, 2003; Thompson, 2007; Zwicky, 2008), (b) lack of collegiality among staff (Anyon, 1995; Groulx, 2001; Thompson, 2007), (c) poor workplace conditions, lack of resources (ECS, 2007; Epp, 2007; Margolis, 2008; Marvel et al., 2007; Thompson, 2007), (d) financial considerations (Cashwell, 2008; Epp, 2007; McKee, 2003), (e) poor student discipline (Epp, 2007; Farkas et al., 2000; McKee, 2003; Public Agenda, 2004), (f) personal considerations (McKee, 2003), and (g) lack of autonomy in instructional choices (Epp, 2007).

Researchers have begun to examine the overall design of the teaching profession and mandates on teachers as factors contributing to high attrition rates. Tye and O'Brien (2002) conducted a study inspired by the growing number of their graduate-level students with 5 to 10 years of teaching experience who expressed discontent with their choice of profession. In a survey completed by 114 people who had graduated from a teacher education program in California 5 to 10 years earlier, respondents attributed their leaving or their desire to leave to increases in standardized testing and in paperwork associated with accountability. The researchers found that many teachers were disillusioned by the decreased ability to make meaningful pedagogical decisions because of an increased pressure to teach skills assessed by state testing. Students' apparent apathy and disinterest in learning was another statistically significant reason for teachers' decisions to leave the career. The findings concerning state testing are especially significant to the urban district because the urban district has been differentially impacted by high-stakes testing; much

of the urban curriculum has been redesigned to focus on standards assessed by these tests (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). Epp (2007) found that of the NBCTs wanting to transfer to another school or position, 30.4% indicated that an overemphasis on testing was an influential factor in their decisions to leave. Thus, if a focus on standardized testing contributes to teacher attrition, in the long run, urban districts may find that they increasingly lose teachers due to these testing mandates.

Other researchers have identified additional aspects of the profession as contributing to attrition rates. Margolis (2008), who gathered data from interviews and discussion groups, reported that teachers acknowledged difficulty in overcoming the lack of recognition for success within the profession and negative societal views about the degree of professionalism associated with teaching; furthermore, they suggested that changes in these factors would increase a desire to remain in the profession. This finding is similar to one reached by Inman and Marlow (2004), who found that 40% of new teachers surveyed indicated that the recognition and prestige were less than they had originally expected. In addition, the teachers who participated in the Margolis (2008) study harbored resentments toward the poor work conditions, dismal treatment of teachers, and bureaucratic constructs. Though teachers enjoyed the increased leadership, recognition, and satisfaction created by the study, several participants were actively searching for leadership possibilities outside of the classroom, predominantly for reasons of prestige and monetary compensation.

Though job advancement and mobility is limited within the teaching profession, a

recent study acknowledged this movement from the classroom to other district roles as another factor in urban teacher attrition (Quartz et al., 2008). The researchers acknowledged that existing literature has practically ignored this aspect of teacher attrition. They concluded that, though inadequate resources and poor administration often pushed teachers out of education, district offices often "pulled" effective teachers out of the classroom to help make larger, systemic impacts on student learning (p. 4). Many of the educators who sought positions outside of the classroom identified themselves as "social justice educators" and looked for roles in which they could extend their influence on student learning (p. 13). The researchers argued that this movement is a contributing factor in attrition and that districts should not be blind to the consequences of moving effective teachers to the district office.

Other researchers have examined teachers' personality traits as they relate to a teacher's decision to leave. For example, Miech and Elder (1996) analyzed the attrition rates of idealistic, service-oriented teachers and concluded that these teachers were more likely to leave the profession. They argued that the values and goals attracting these people to teaching are not fulfilled by the profession. The researchers used qualitative studies from two eras, the 60s and 70s, and performed quantitative analyses of the data. They did not find gaps between the two different groups. Because the findings were from two distinctive eras, labeled by the researchers as the "service generation" and the "narcissistic generation," they concluded that the results were consistent and wrote, "Despite teaching's reputation as an occupation that helps society, we propose that it

actually discourages the idealists it attracts so effectively" (p. 239). One could argue that one of the problems with this research is that it utilized data that could be considered outdated and not reflective of the current times.

Yet, more significant to the study at hand are studies that have evaluated teachers' perceptions and beliefs about the urban district. Smith and Smith (2006) noted a gap in existing research in that many researchers reported a higher attrition rate in the urban district but failed to provide research-based explanations for these higher percentages. Smith and Smith (2006) utilized an interpretive, explorative qualitative research design to discover whether teacher attrition was linked to teachers' perceptions of violence. They found that in the interviews about their experiences, 10 of the 12 respondents described violent episodes that occurred during their tenure in the urban system. The researchers interpreted these descriptions as indications of fear and concluded that the violence of the neighborhoods, often reflected in daily interactions within the school, strongly contributed to the stress. When directly asked why they left the district, most of the teachers attributed their departure to stress. The researchers attributed this stress to violence, which they ultimately defined as a leading factor in attrition. Marzano (2003) supported the idea that violence contributes to higher stress and lower efficacy, stating, "If teachers do not feel safe, they will not have the necessary psychological energy for teaching and learning" (p. 53).

Despite Marzano's (2003) confirmatory remarks, Smith and Smith's (2006) research study raises at least two questions. First, though Smith and Smith's data revealed

both high levels of stress and violence, the data did not establish that violence was the predominant source of the stress that resulted in resignation. Teachers' repetitive descriptions of violence did not establish violence as the cause of their stress or their departure, but merely reflected that violence was part of their urban experience. The researchers could have unjustifiably used these stories as evidence of their initial hypotheses.

Second, did teachers find examples that matched their expectations of the urban district? A study by Groulx (2001) purported that preservice teachers did not feel comfortable with the idea of teaching in urban schools because they perceived them to be violent and unsafe and were not sure that they would be successful in such an environment. Similarly, a study by Haberman (1991a) concluded that preservice teachers' attitudes prior to their observation assignments in the urban district influenced the content of their reports and their perceptions about their experiences. Preconceived notions became justified by tunnel-vision observations; participants found that which they were looking for to justify either their beliefs that all students can learn or that the urban district was filled with students who were unruly with little desire to be successful. Thompson (2007) also found that expectations influenced teachers' beliefs prior to teaching in the urban district and were related to their decisions to remain or leave. Of the teachers who left, most had unrealistic views of the urban district and were unprepared for dealing with students whose cultures did not mimic their own.

Groulx's (2001) study focused on teachers' perceptions about the urban district

and its students prior to and after student teaching. A by-product of the initial study was that the researcher was able to follow two of the teachers who chose to begin their careers in the same urban school in which they conducted their student teaching. Both of the teachers left the school within the first 3 years. Groulx (2001) found that these two teachers did not leave because of their students, the community, or their students' families. These two teachers left because of the staff negativity, administrative problems, and bureaucratic constraints. This study showed the importance of a study group's focusing not only on the characteristics of the district's students but also on the culture of the district and the individual schools.

Through a series of statistical analyses, Ingersoll (2006) "found that school poverty, size and urbanicity were among the factors most correlated with teacher turnover" (pp 22-23). His analyses indicated that small, urban, high-poverty schools suffered more than double the turnover of large, not-poor, suburban schools. Returning to Ingersoll's monetary argument, one could argue that urban teachers should be financially rewarded for their added challenges and that this could be a solution to higher attrition rates. However, a survey of new teachers showed that 86% would prefer to work in a school with "better-behaved kids and more supportive parents than one that paid significantly more" (Farkas et. al, 2000, p. 21). The idea that student discipline is important was supported by a survey study of 725 middle-school and high-school teachers, which found that 34% of teachers have considered leaving due to student discipline problems (Public Agenda, 2004). In addition to the findings on student

discipline, Farkas et al. (2000) reported that 82% of new teachers would trade higher pay for administrative backing. These factors could be especially important to the urban district. The study revealed that only 8% of suburban and rural teachers would be "very likely" to consider moving to an urban district for significantly higher salaries (p. 21).

A study by Hanushek et al. (2001) supported the idea that few teachers would choose to move to the urban district, even for higher pay. The data indicated that "teacher transitions [were] much more strongly related to particular student characteristics than to salary differentials" (p. 328). The researchers found that, due to little difference between salaries and relative positions between schools and districts, it became evident that the teachers in the study "favor[ed] higher achieving, non-minority, non-low income students" (p. 337). The researchers concluded that teachers in schools with high percentages of students identified as low-achieving, minority students were more likely to leave a school. Though the analyses indicated that schools with particular characteristics had more difficulty retaining teachers, the researchers cautioned that evaluating the unique characteristics of the urban district and other problems associated with the context rather than automatically attributing teacher attrition to students' characteristics is extremely important.

Teachers' choosing to leave for reasons associated with job design and requirements is a factor that can be addressed at local, state, and national levels. The creation of career ladders and teacher leadership positions may increase the retention of teachers, who may otherwise leave for more lucrative positions. However, the findings

with respect to urbanicity and teachers' perceptions of the urban district reinforce the importance of developing a contextualized vision of teacher retention. Researchers must examine teacher attrition and retention through contextual lenses and should understand the context prior to presenting findings and creating recommendations for districts. Thus, this literature review includes a section dealing with contextual issues and rewards associated with the urban school setting.

Potentially Problematic Studies that Address Both Teacher Retention and Teacher

Attrition

One of the existing problems with retention and attrition studies is that some researchers have used the findings about one of these constructs to draw conclusions and make predictions about the other. To look at retention factors as the inverse of attrition factors could be misleading for the educational community. For instance, if 40% of urban teachers decide to leave tomorrow and attribute their decisions to school facilities, researchers would need to understand the factors that enable the remaining 60% to overlook the dilapidated buildings and remain in urban teaching.

Kukla-Acvedo (2009) underscored the importance of keeping retention and attrition as separate areas of study. The researcher conducted a quantitative study that analyzed the influence on teacher mobility of workplace conditions including classroom autonomy, the behavioral climate of the school, and administrative support on teachers' decisions. The researcher disaggregated the data to compare the effect of these conditions on new and veteran teachers as well as on teachers who remained and those

who departed. Data revealed that workplace conditions were more likely to have a negative effect on new teachers than on teachers with over 5 years of experience. The behavioral climate of the school emerged as the factor with the greatest influence on novice teachers' mobility. An additional finding of the study was that teachers who remained and those who departed based their decisions on different factors, underscoring the importance of analyzing attrition and retention as separate entities and of avoiding the assumption of an inverse relationship between these factors.

This inversion is evidenced in studies such as that conducted by Cashwell (2008), whose conclusions further muddled the distinction between teacher attrition and retention. The researcher identified factors associated with motivation theories and job satisfaction and examined how relative degrees of each factor influenced teacher attrition. The researcher demonstrated her failure to delineate between factors associated with retention and those associated with attrition when she stated, "In this study of teacher attrition, it is important to consider the factors that may lead teachers to be satisfied with their jobs and in turn, remain in the teaching profession" (p. 70). The researcher then concluded that the results from the attrition survey offered a model for retention. Moreover, the researcher surveyed teachers who were still teaching, rather than those who had actually left, and did not ask teachers if they were currently experiencing the selected factors. Therefore, the degree to which these factors would affect the teachers is only hypothetical. How could surveyed teachers judge the strength of a potential influence? This study measured teachers' perceptions about the potential strength of a

factors' influence on their decision-making processes rather than the actual power of the identified factor.

Other studies have also based results on hypothetical constructs. For example, in an open-ended survey question, McKee (2003) asked teachers who had left the classroom to identify factors that would influence them to return. Would positive changes in the factors identified by leavers--income, school administration, workplace conditions, and student behavior--actually have influenced them to return to the classroom? Would improvement in these factors have contributed to the retention or the long-term retention of these same teachers? Do the people who left truly know whether changes such as these would have helped in their retention, or did they blame their departure on these factors without a true ability to reflect on conditions that influenced their satisfaction?

A study by Epp (2007) also used hypothetical constructs to identify factors that would influence NBCTs to transfer to hard-to-staff schools. The overall findings of the study indicated that NBCTs would be willing to move to hard-to-staff schools given the right incentives, such as a safe environment and confidence that they would have an opportunity to be successful. Though each of these factors proved to be statistically significant, their overall effect size was small. Through an analysis of both the survey data and some of the interview data, Epp (2007) concluded that multiple factors influence teachers' decisions about moving to hard-to-staff schools. One participant suggested that such schools would be easier to staff if the overall teaching and learning environment were improved. Such an argument ignores the fact that principals of hard-to-staff schools

may use the recruitment of high-quality teachers as an instrument to change the school culture. If principals could change the school culture without recruiting a new type of teacher, they may not need a new type of teacher. These hypothetical factors, however, cannot be used to deduce whether a move to a hard-to-staff school will have long-term effects on teacher retention or student achievement. Considering that over 70% of those surveyed worked in middle-class-to-affluent communities, would the NBCTs be as successful in school settings with demographics that do not mimic the schools in which they achieved national certification? Would a transfer to a school meeting the conditions equate to long-term retention? Would the incentives prove to have long-lasting appeal, or would other contextual factors of the hard-to-staff schools influence their decisions to leave or remain? Moreover, when analyzing the data, Epp (2007) did not disaggregate responses by those who were already working in hard-to-staff schools. This disaggregation could have helped determine the satisfaction of NBCTs currently in the hard-to-staff schools as well as the factors influential in their decisions to remain.

A research study by Gerstan et al. (2001) analyzed the factors associated with special educators' intent to stay in an urban district. The researchers used a quantitative design that focused only on issues that could be changed at the school or district level. The researchers also designed the survey using information from attrition studies with an unspoken hypothesis that attrition and retention are direct inverses of each other. Moreover, they assumed from the outset that stress and job satisfaction were two factors directly influencing retention; thus, they limited their study to the examination of these

two factors from the perspective of job design. They asked what components of the job could be changed to increase satisfaction and decrease stress. When looking at job design, the researchers focused on the mismatch between teachers' expectations and job requirements. They found that a teacher's intent to stay was related to two factors: (a) school-level support systems, represented by both administrative and peer support and (b) ongoing professional learning opportunities, represented by formal professional development, professional learning communities, and informal collegial discussions.

      Buckley et al. (2005) conducted a retention study that shed more light on attrition than retention. The researchers used survey data collected from teachers in the Washington, D.C., public-school setting to investigate the importance of school facilities in teacher decisions. The researchers developed a survey that focused on teachers' satisfaction, their intentions to remain or leave, the state of school facilities, and other factors identified in attrition/retention literature. Although the relationship between school facilities and plans to leave was less significant than factors such as age, time, and community satisfaction, it was greater than the relationship between pay and attrition. The researchers found that as teachers' ratings of school facilities rose from an F to a C, their plans to remain increased by 3%. A similar study by Stallings (2008) utilized data from the 2006 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey and analyzed teacher job satisfaction with respect to facilities and resources. The researcher was interested in exploring the differences between teachers who wished to remain at their current sites and those who intended to leave. The findings revealed that job satisfaction was

significantly related to facility conditions and availability of resources. The researcher used this data to conclude that these factors may be associated with a teacher's decision to remain but offered no empirical data clearly linking job satisfaction and the intent to stay. In addition, the data in the Buckley et al. (2005) study are unclear as to whether improving the facilities would have an impact on the teachers' decisions to remain in the dilapidated schools or whether multiple factors were influencing their intentions. Moreover, the researchers ignored the equally important statistic of the percentage of teachers who did not allow the deterioration of the facilities to sway their career decisions.

A study by Zwicky (2008) sought to identify factors that promoted or hindered teachers' movement between schools. Zwicky (2008) described the study as a "detailed investigation into how experienced teachers think about staying at or leaving a school" (p. 6). Zwicky (2008) conducted a mixed-methods study in which she used a case-study methodology for the qualitative portion and examined two cases: an elementary school and a high school. Each school had undergone an administration change in which the new principal challenged an existing school culture—a culture in which teachers had become too accepting of student failure. She interviewed teachers who had left, teachers who had stayed, and the schools' administrators. The researcher was primarily concerned with leadership—that of both administration and teachers. The findings revealed that the same administration could affect teachers in very different ways.

When analyzing administration, Zwicky (2008) was concerned with the extent to

which the principals promoted collegial interactions and professional learning communities in the school. Another primary focus of the study was the examination of leadership opportunities for teachers at the two school sites. The primary goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of how these different levels of leadership impacted one's choice either to leave or to stay at a given school site. Zwicky's (2008) secondary research questions focused on two issues: (a) the impact of these different levels of leadership on school culture and collegial interactions and (b) the impact of these professional relationships on a teacher's decision to remain. For the purpose of this literature review, the author chose to discuss the findings from the high-school level of Zwicky's (2008) study. The urban high school that Zwicky (2008) examined served a student population of 1145 students, 77% of whom received free or reduced lunch and 86% of whom were students of color. In the examination of factors, the researcher differentiated between teachers' deciding to leave for personal or professional reasons as opposed to deciding to leave to escape from a site. In a focus group of teachers who had changed their teaching sites, 84% indicated that problems with the previous administration influenced their decisions to move. When analyzing the teachers who stayed, the researcher differentiated between satisfied and dissatisfied teachers. She found that the satisfied stayers at the high school were complimentary about the opportunities for teacher leadership; however, the dissatisfied teachers believed that the principal reserved teacher leadership and shared decision-making opportunities for a selected group of teachers. Overall, leavers and dissatisfied stayers attributed their desire to leave

to the principal's leadership style, but many of the satisfied stayers also attributed their decision to stay to the principal's leadership style. Both the satisfied and dissatisfied stayers valued their relationships with the students, but the discrepancy in their relationship with the principal helped to explain the varying perceptions of satisfaction. Neither stayers nor leavers identified relationships with other teachers as an influencing factor in their decision to stay or leave; yet, some of the dissatisfied stayers and leavers attributed their dissatisfaction to feelings of isolation and an overall disconnect with the school community.

The mixed findings about the effect of school administration on teachers' decisions to remain offer little direction about positively affecting teacher retention through effective administrative leadership. Some studies have identified school administration as influential in teachers' decisions to leave; others have found administration influential in teachers' decisions to remain; and Zwicky's (2008) study illustrated that teachers within the same school can simultaneously view the administration as effective and ineffective. Moreover, if Zwicky (2008) had analyzed teachers by their levels of effectiveness, might she have discovered that ineffective teachers who were resentful of change or demands to surpass the status quo comprised both leavers and dissatisfied stayers?

The above studies used hypothetical constructs to draw erroneous conclusions and haphazardously inverted retention and attrition findings to explain the other. Yet, while the designs of the studies were in some way flawed, the current study could use some of

the findings of the studies to support its own conclusions. Identifying overarching themes

associated with the long-term retention of effective urban teachers is important. The

researcher initially hypothesized that patterns that emerge from this research study could

be significant in defining the factors associated with the long-term retention of effective

urban teachers. The underlying premise of this study is that the teachers who remain in

the urban district stay in spite of the issues that others cite for leaving, such as poor pay,

rundown facilities, ineffective administration, and school violence. Researchers must

work to understand this phenomenon.

<div align="center">Literature on Retention Factors and Teacher Effectiveness</div>

A study by Rice (2006), which analyzed hard-to-staff urban and rural schools in

Australia, acknowledged the importance of examining factors influencing teachers'

decisions to remain while simultaneously indicating whether these factors are unique to

effective teachers. The primary purpose of the study was to examine "the decisions and

the motivating factors teachers identified concerning their school and career choices, but

through the prism of teacher effectiveness, contrasting the decisions of more and less

effective teachers" (p. 3). Rice (2006) surveyed 919 teachers in three distinct school

districts in Victoria: the wealthiest district in the area, the most impoverished

metropolitan district, and a rural district composed of both lower-socioeconomic and

middle-class students. The study incorporated a researcher-designed survey intended to

identify factors influencing a teacher's choice of school and those influencing a teacher's

desire to remain at a school. To rate individual teacher effectiveness, the researcher

utilized literature on teacher effectiveness to create an instrument measuring attitudes and perceptions related to teacher effectiveness. According to Rice (2006),

> An effective teacher was deemed in this study to be one who demonstrated confidence in their own capacity and the capacity of teaching in general to impact on students' learning, was committed to their own professional growth, showed great enthusiasm for teaching, and operated within a framework of care and concern for others. (p. 6)

Among secondary teachers, Rice (2006) found that the most effective and least effective teachers differed significantly in their opinions about factors important to their decisions to remain. The least effective teachers indicated that they would be interested in a higher caliber student and more time away from the students. The most effective teachers indicated that higher quality professional development and more effective curriculum would influence their decision to remain. For effective teachers, factors such as a desire to make a difference and a need to expand their influence emerged in the qualitative answers. The researcher found that least effective teachers tended to focus on nonprofessional reasons for remaining, such as locality and a need for a job; whereas, the most effective teachers focused on both professional and nonprofessional reasons. Rice, however, determined effectiveness by self-ascribed perceptions rather than by outside sources. Thus, if surveyed teachers were knowledgeable of current educational research, they may have marked responses associated with effectiveness but not true to their practices. The skewed data, therefore, would show high levels of effectiveness when in

actuality their practices may resemble high-quality teaching very little. Interestingly, although the researcher recruited teachers from three distinct types of school districts, she compared teachers solely on effectiveness rather than on both effectiveness and teaching context. Moreover, the study assumed that factors influencing teacher decisions would be the same across teaching settings. Ignoring the unique context of an urban district may have led to erroneous conclusions, because the study may not have adequately considered multiple contextual factors associated with an urban district.

Overview of Literature on Urban Teacher Perseverance and Resilience

The active choice of teachers to remain in the urban district plays a large role in the retention of effective teachers; thus the examination of factors that could possibly attribute to this choice becomes foundational for this study. Researchers in an emerging field on teacher resilience have begun to study the factors influencing teachers' abilities to remain effective in a challenging work environment. Researchers who study urban teacher resilience and perseverance, such as Nieto (2003), Brunetti (2006), and Patterson et al.(2004), have identified both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that help teachers to remain determined and to keep going despite the challenges that they face in the urban district.

An analysis of literature by Nieto

Nieto's work (2000, 2003, 2005, 2006a, & 2006b) has focused on the experiences of the urban teacher. She has conducted formal and informal studies that examine urban teachers' insights into their teaching careers and pedagogical decisions. Her work on

urban teacher perseverance has arisen primarily out of her work with teachers of impoverished students of color. The work of Nieto (2000, 2003, 2005) is fundamental to this research in that she has continuously sought to identify urban teachers' passions and the common threads in their experiences. Using inquiry groups and reflective writings of urban teachers, she has explored the passions, pedagogies, and reasons for persevering that they have described.

Though Cochran-Smith (2006) referred to Nieto's (2003) project as a study on retention, Nieto focused on the perseverance of teachers rather than the factors influencing their decisions to remain. Nieto (2000) stated that the goal of her project was to talk to teachers. She did not enter into the project with established interview questions or calibrated research tools, such as surveys or questionnaires. She had one guiding question--"What keeps teachers going?"--but created no hypotheses to accompany the question. Instead, her primary focus was to have informal conversations and possibly create relationships in which she could be of service. In the process, she and the eight teachers of poor students of color created a year-long inquiry group, which focused on current literature and discussions about the rewards and challenges of teaching.

Nieto (2003) wanted to identify the factors that helped teachers of poor students of color to persevere in spite of the challenges. She and the eight urban teachers used reflective writing and collegial conversations to explore this primary question. During this process, she identified several common themes. She found that these teachers possessed: (a) deep passion for students and their learning, characterized by meaningful

student-teacher relationships, (b) hope and belief in the purpose of education, (c) anger about the inequities experienced by their students, (d) commitment to their own learning and professional growth, and (e) dedication to social justice and equal education.

An additional conclusion by Nieto (2000, 2003) was that inquiry groups have the potential to de-isolate educators, create opportunities for ongoing professional development, and act as a catalyst for change. Several research studies have supported Nieto's conclusion (Dunn, Nave, & Lewis, 2000; Education Development Center, 2005d; Harmony Education Center, n.d.; Mclaughlin & Zarrow, 2001; Weinbaum et al., 2004) and have found inquiry groups and professional learning communities to be effective vehicles for change.

Nieto (2003) concluded that the motivation behind teachers' practices was autobiographical in nature in that teachers' stories helped to explain their passions, beliefs, and commitment. Thus, Nieto (2005) compiled essays from teachers in which they wrote about their initial interest in and ongoing passion about teaching, their interactions with students, and the rewards associated with the career. She found that many of the teachers began teaching with a sense of mission and chose to remain in the urban district for apparently altruistic reasons as well as for internal fulfillment. Nieto's findings align well with a retention and attrition study conducted by Thompson (2007), who found that teachers who remained utilized words such as "rewarding," "meaningful," and "enriching" to describe their experiences in urban schools (p. 87).

The work of Nieto (2000, 2003, 2005, 2006a, & 2006b) is important to

understanding the experiences of the urban teacher and factors that influence these

teachers to remain committed to the urban setting and dedicated to their students. Her

findings may prove to be foundational to providing a framework for understanding

internal factors that influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting.

Literature on Urban Teacher Resilience

In a qualitative study, Patterson et al. (2004) analyzed data from interviews with

teachers in urban schools whose students' standardized tests scores exceeded the state

average. The researchers sought to expand on previous studies about leader resilience by

examining the resilience of urban teachers and urban teacher leaders. They defined

resilient teachers as those teachers who "used energy productively to achieve school

goals in the face of adverse conditions" (p. 3). They found that respondents believed that

"strategies they used to maintain their resilience contributed to their continuing work in

urban schools" (p. 5). Some of their findings reflected those of Nieto (2003). They, too,

found that resilient teachers (a) attributed their perseverance to a sense of mission and

discussed issues of equity and social justice, (b) placed a high value on professional

development and professional learning opportunities, and (c) were committed to their

students' learning. Their findings also extended beyond those of Nieto in that they found

that resilient teachers (d) were both formal and informal leaders within their schools, (e)

had strong systems of support for their professional efforts, and (f) explored new

practices as an attempt to maximize effectiveness. Patterson et al. (2004) identified

themes that are helpful in framing the current study, yet their qualitative data cannot

stand as a theoretical framework because they limited their selection of participants to high-performing urban schools whose school cultures may not be representative of a typical urban school. They implied that their findings are unique to effective teachers but offered no data to substantiate this conclusion.

In a sequential, explanatory mixed-methods study drawn from the life-history tradition, Brunetti (2006) examined not only the resilience of inner-city teachers from one inner-city Californian school but also factors influencing the teachers' decisions to remain. He was careful to distinguish inner city from urban because he wanted to differentiate between urban areas populated by people of color from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and urban areas populated by members of diverse racial backgrounds from high socioeconomic backgrounds. Brunetti (2006) defined resilience as "a personal characteristic that enables individuals to 'stay the course' despite the difficulties that they encounter" (p. 813). In this study, he used the Experienced Teacher Survey (ETS) and interviews to identify (a) factors that influenced teachers with over 12 years of experience to remain in the urban district and (b) ways in which the teachers' resilience helped them to persevere in this challenging environment. Brunetti's (2006) data analysis and report of findings did not clearly differentiate between retention and resilience, blurring the line between the two fields of study.

Brunetti's (2006) data analysis revealed three overarching themes that contributed to these teachers' decisions to remain. Teachers acknowledged their (a) commitment to students, (b) internal fulfillment both professionally and emotionally, and (c) perception

of support from administration and the greater school community. In the article, Brunetti

(2006) referred to the teachers as "good teachers" (p. 821), yet he documented no

evidence of effectiveness beyond his personal conclusion based on conversations with the

teachers. Also, the identification of administration as an influencing factor could be a

site-specific finding. Because of the limitation to one inner-city site, effective

administration could have been an added bonus for these particular teachers rather than a

driving force in influencing their resilience or their decisions to remain; this could be a

factor that changes when examining multiple schools**.**

Maring (2006) conducted a qualitative study of urban, middle-school teachers'

roles in cultivating student resilience. The goals of the study were to examine the

challenges faced by teachers in violent schools, understand teachers' roles in students'

resilience development, and identify resources that could help teachers increase

effectiveness. However, in her data analysis "a sensitizing concept emerged which [she]

named 'It's worth it' to document the stories that teachers told about why they come back

year after year" (p. 153). Maring's (2006) "it's worth it" concept confirmed Nieto's

(2003) conclusion that teachers' stories reveal their passions, beliefs, and commitments,

thereby highlighting the importance of the use of interviews and focus groups in this

current study. Moreover, Maring's (2006) finding supported Neito's (2005) conclusion

that teachers' internal rewards contribute to their perseverance.

The resilience studies and those by Nieto (2000, 2003, 2005, 2006a, & 2006b)

may prove to be invaluable to this particular study with respect to internal factors that

influence teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting. Though the primary focus of the studies has been to understand the emotional drive of the teachers, this drive and dedication may prove to be a primary factor in influencing teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting in spite of the well-documented challenges. The concepts of resilience and perseverance have not yet been clearly linked to teacher retention through empirical data, yet some of the factors contributing to teacher resilience are similar to those found in retention studies. Nieto (2003) acknowledged the importance of relationships to teacher perseverance. Similarly, Thompson (2007) found that

> Teachers who remained in urban schools indicated that their reasons for staying in urban education can be traced to the motivation they received from the students they taught and the support of their colleagues. An urban K-8 teacher who will remain in urban education must know, learn and understand the extreme importance of building and sustaining both teacher-to-student and teacher-to-teacher relationships. (iii)

The resilience studies all concluded that teachers' commitment to students and their learning is an important factor in keeping teachers going (Brunetti, 2006; Nieto, 2003; and Patterson et al., 2004). Likewise, Thompson (2007) found that 67% of teachers with over 3 years of experience attributed their decision to remain to their students. Moreover, a retention study by McKee (2003) found that teachers remained because of both a dedication to the profession and a commitment to student learning. Overlaps such as these between retention studies and studies on resilience indicate that factors influencing

teachers' decisions to remain may prove to be a mixture of factors from both fields of

study. This potential relationship underlines the importance of the second research

question of this study that addresses the possible intersectional relationship between

retention, resilience, and effectiveness.

Additional studies underscore the examination of the overlap of these two areas of

study. Roselle (2006) conducted a qualitative study using ethnographic and

phenomenological tools to examine factors influencing the development of resiliency in

preservice teachers in the urban area. A component of the research identified resilience as

an attribute created by protective factors. The researcher sought to understand which

protective factor preservice teachers employed to develop resiliency. Several of the

factors included (a) flexibility, (b) resilient role-models, (c) civic awareness, (d) sense of

humor, and (e) an analysis of experiences (p. 95). After the urban experience, one of the

preservice teachers viewed herself as "tougher" and believed that this attribute was

necessary for survival in the urban district (p. 96). She jokingly discussed the lack of

warmth in her overall experience but attributed her daily return to the students. This study

is relevant to the current study because it creates a framework for questioning to

determine if similar protective factors increase resilience in veteran teachers and emerge

during the collection of qualitative data. Roselle (2006) hypothesized that resilience will

play a role in the long-term retention of an urban teacher. She proposed that a

commitment to civic service may nurture this resilience by increasing the sense of

belonging to the community of the school and its surrounding neighborhood and by

providing extra opportunities to assume roles that increase a sense of usefulness, both of which could keep levels of optimism present (p. 114).

The study by Hafiz-Wahid-Muid (2010) emphasized the importance of examining resilience and retention as separate constructs with potential overlaps. Hafiz-Wahid-Muid (2010) stated, "In this study there are distinct differences made between two possibly related indicators: retention and resilience" (p. 60), underscoring the importance of the second primary research question of the current study by indicating the need to examine the potential intersectional relationship of these two concepts. In the study, she defined retention as extrinsic acts executed by the district or the school to attract and keep teachers, and she labeled resilience as the intrinsic factors enabling a teacher to persevere despite the challenges. This distinction, however, does not recognize that a teacher's return might reflect solely intrinsic motivation while still contributing to district retention data, which reflect teacher return rate without regard for motivation. The underlying question of the current study is whether the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence teachers' resilience are the same factors that influence their yearly return. Hafiz-Wahid-Muid (2010) highlighted the importance of this question in her following acknowledgement: "The education system primarily seeks retention of teachers through a number of extrinsic initiatives but seems not to pay sufficient attention to the intrinsic motivations that lead teachers to the urban classroom or keep them there." (p. 62).

Literature on Effective Teaching

The primary focus of this research study is to identify the factors that contribute to

effective urban teachers' decisions to remain in the urban district. Thus, examining literature that establishes the qualities of effective teachers in general and in the urban district, specifically, is foundational in defining urban-teacher effectiveness.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards based its content-area standards on five core propositions about what all effective teachers should know and be able to do (NBPTS, 1989). The Board, composed of teachers, teacher educators, and experts on child development, reached consensus that teachers (a) should know their students and be committed to their learning, (b) have a broad knowledge of content and pedagogy, (c) have the ability to assess student learning in a variety of formats, (d) be able to analyze and reflect on practice, and (e) be committed to their own learning.

Though NBPTS worked to create a meaningful assessment of teachers that reached beyond standardized tests, some researchers question whether the standards appropriately value the additional set of skills required of urban teachers (Ladson-Billings, Darling-Hammond, & National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching [NPEAT], 2000). These researchers believed that relationships with students are at the foundation of successful teaching in the urban district and argued that the assessment process failed to require documentation of teacher-student relationships. In contrast, Quartz (2003) highlighted in her research the support of national certification as one of many initiatives supported by the center specifically designed to prepare quality teachers to enter and remain in a high-needs school.

An analysis of the overall assessment process of National Board certification

(NBPTS, 2006) aids in the examination of the criticism and support of the above researchers. Candidates complete 10 assessments: four entry-based assessments that account for 60% of the score and six content-based assessments that account for 40% of the score. Three of the entry-based assessments for certification require that teachers show knowledge of their students and use this knowledge to design meaningful lessons and assessments to impact student learning. Two of these assessments require teachers to analyze a video of one of their classroom sessions, which also demonstrates teacher-student interactions in the classroom. The fourth assessment is an analysis of actions that teachers take outside of the classroom to impact student learning. The design of the assessments may assume that these relationships exist based on teacher-student interactions, knowledge of students, and application of this knowledge. However, the assessments do not include any components that specifically require candidates to describe or provide specific evidence of deep, meaningful relationships.

Researchers who have questioned whether NBPTS is able to properly evaluate teachers within their specific context have conducted their own studies with respect to high-quality teaching, but they contextualized their studies and focused on the urban setting. Ladson-Billings (1995b) conducted a research study that examined the teaching practices of reputedly effective teachers of African-American students. She solicited recommendations of outstanding teachers from parents and principals. Parents chose teachers whom they felt engaged their children in lessons as evidenced by their child's enthusiasm. Principals chose teachers on the basis of number of discipline referrals,

student attendance rates, and student standardized test scores. Ladson-Billings (1995b) utilized ethnographic interviews, classroom visitations, and small-group meetings to identify overlapping trends in the pedagogy of eight participants identified by both groups. Four commonalities arose with respect to the belief patterns of the teachers. They (a) were proud of their career choice, (b) remained committed to their choices to teach in lower socioeconomic African-American districts, (c) looked at their practices as artistry, and (d) believed in their students' abilities and set high expectations for their learning. Three commonalities emerged in practice. The teachers (a) created opportunities for success, (b) integrated students' cultures into practice, and (c) encouraged students to develop a sociopolitical stance and challenge established cultural norms.

Nieto (2000, 2003, 2005, 2006a, & 2006b), too, has been concerned with the urban school district and analyzing the teachers' experiences in an urban setting. Nieto (2005, 2006a) analyzed 21 essays of high-quality urban teachers. When working to define characteristics of effective urban teachers, she affirmed generally accepted characteristics of effective teachers regardless of setting. However, Nieto (2006a) asserted that, while a teacher's content knowledge and pedagogy are vital to student success, knowledge bases are meaningless without a deep knowledge and commitment to students and their learning. She identified five overarching qualities, common to her study's interviewees, which describe the knowledge and commitment of effective urban teachers: (a) a sentiment of serving the society at large, (b) a deep commitment to students, (c) the valor to question established curriculum, (d) an ability to continually adapt to the unexpected,

and (e) a dedication to equity

Stanford (1997) also conducted a relevant contextualized study. In a case study of four African-American urban teachers who were exemplary, as evidenced by their selection as recipients of the Golden Apple Foundation Award, this researcher analyzed observation reports, interview data, recommendation letters, and teacher essays to identify themes in pedagogy and teachers' beliefs about student learning. The researcher found that the four exemplary teachers possessed: (a) a dedication to the community, (b) a belief in students' potential and strengths, (c) an ability to foster student-to-student and student-to-teacher relationships, (d) a commitment to students' cognitive, social, and emotional development, and (e) a moral obligation to overcome challenges presented by the context while simultaneously taking responsibility for student learning.

Though some qualities of effective teaching, such as content and pedagogical knowledge, are important regardless of context, some teaching qualities specifically help to define an effective teacher in an urban setting. Qualities that are unique to urban teachers magnify the importance of understanding context and its role in the teaching process. Consideration of these qualities of highly successful urban educators has been vital in the development of criteria for the collection of reputational data for this study.

Literature on Student-Teacher Relationships

Teacher-student relationships are a fundamental aspect of the learning process. The body of research on effective teaching has identified teacher-student relationships as a factor influencing both teacher resilience and teacher retention (Brunetti, 2006; McKee,

2003; Nieto, 2003; Patterson et al., 2004; Thompson, 2007). "Effective teachers know that they cannot get a student to learn unless that student knows that the teacher cares" (Wong & Wong, 1998, p. 75). The teacher-student relationship is particularly significant in educating youth from lower-socioeconomic areas. A key to success for urban teachers is developing trusting relationships with their students (Delpit, 1995; Education Development Center, 2005c; Mahiri, 1998a; Moses & Cobb, 2001; National High School Alliance, 2005; Nieto, 2000, 2003; Payne, 2005; Stanford, 1997). These relationships are especially fundamental to securing the respect and trust of African-American youth (Delpit, 1995). Appropriate relationships are contingent on cultural norms, and building mutual respect and rapport with students depends on the context (Danielson, 1996).

Students' performance and achievement levels rise when they develop real relationships with their teachers. Dantonio and Beisenhertz (2001) argued that "to connect teaching and learning, we must engender relationships with our students that are based in authentic communications" (p. 154), an opinion reiterated by Danielson (1996), who also asserted that the foundation of effective teaching is the meaningful relationship between teacher and student. Nieto (2003) proposed that the importance of the teacher-student relationship is magnified for poor students of color. She believed that the relationship between student and teacher is at the foundation of the success of urban students because these relationships give students a sense of belonging and belief in themselves.

Glasser (1998) argued that teachers and society believe that students in poverty

"refuse to make the effort to learn" and appear to be less motivated than students from affluent areas (p. 12). He believed that this perceived poor motivation was actually due to a failure of the teacher-student relationships in the schools. He stated that fewer than 10% of students in high-poverty, urban schools have supportive relationships with their teachers (p. 21), and fewer than 5% work to their full potential (p. 235). He attributed this relational disconnect and students' lack of effort to management styles based on control rather than on relationships. He argued that many reforms and initiatives are a waste of money unless accompanied by improvements in the existing, dysfunctional relationships within the school. He found that when teachers worked to create authentic relationships with their students, students felt supported and created quality work products.

Creating meaningful relationships with students coincides with creating a safe environment for students within the classroom. A sense of safety is significant because "high levels of anxiety can devastate a student's ability to perform, resulting in poor academic progress and high dropout rates" (Arem, 2003, p. xiii). According to Dwyer (2002), "learning can only take place when the learner is emotionally, physically, and socially comfortable in the learning environment" (p. 265). When teachers create environments free of ridicule, they create a classroom in which students are willing to explore the content area and learn through thoughtful questioning and the construction of knowledge (Danielson, 1996).

Moses and Cobb (2001) defined a real and meaningful relationship between teacher and student as "a relationship that can move young people, penetrate their cultural

barriers, and become a relationship that can help them grow." (p.132). Students in the urban district place a high value on relationships with teachers, and "students who feel cared about are more likely to want to come to school" (Quint, 2006, p. 26). Moreover, when teachers have meaningful relationships with their students, classroom management becomes less of an issue, leaving more time for instruction and student learning (Marzano, 2003). On the other hand, a lack of a relationship with a student can exacerbate a difficult situation and cause trivial issues to escalate beyond the scope of the initial problem (Quint, 2006).

In the inquiry groups facilitated by Nieto (2000, 2003) and in the case studies conducted by Stanford (1997), all of the teachers had a connection with their students and attributed these relationships to their ability to persevere in teaching despite the environmental challenges. These relationships opened teachers' eyes to their students' strengths and aided them in creating high expectations for learning. Teachers created atmospheres that challenged all students in the class to learn because of the teachers' convictions that all students could be successful. Because this deep connection between teachers and students fosters mutually beneficial relationships, such connections have the potential to contribute to student learning and teacher retention.

<div align="center">Literature on Contextualized Solutions</div>

A district serving students who are predominantly classified as poor and African American served as the setting for this case study on urban teacher retention. One of the strengths of qualitative research is that it thoroughly examines context in the development

of the study and in the analysis of data. Hatch (2002) stated,

> One of the strengths of qualitative work of any type is that it is contextualized—
> that the behaviors of participants can be understood only within an understanding
> of their particular circumstances. Giving readers a solid sense of the contextual
> world of the participants is part of any good qualitative report, and developing an
> understanding of contexts during the study will help frame the researcher's
> approach to what to look for and where. (p. 79)

In addition, many researchers have pointed out that teaching is contextual in nature,
arguing, for example, that districts should base strategies, professional development, and
reforms on the needs of their specific constituencies (Anyon, 1994; Dantonio, 2002;
Guskey, 1986; Valli & Hawley, 2002). Teachers construct professional knowledge based
on their specific teaching contexts; in fact, teaching context has been identified as the
most critical factor in creating teachers' beliefs and driving their pedagogical decisions
(Talbert, McLaughlin, & Rowan, 1993). Epp's (2007) findings supported the idea that
contexts are unique and require different knowledge bases. Some NBCTs in the study
indicated that they would be apprehensive about moving to a hard- to-staff school
because they questioned "their own preparation to meet the needs of students in these
schools" (p. 133). These teachers wondered if the school administration would offer
contextually significant professional development to help them fill gaps in their
professional knowledge. As Weiner (2006) has pointed out concerning the urban context,
"We can't understand or change the way students and teachers act in urban schools unless

we look at what is different about the urban school setting rather than examining decontextualized student and teacher characteristics" (p. 9).

Hatch (2002) explained that contexts "are complex, dynamic, and nestled within larger cultural, political, and historical frameworks that must be considered as studies are planned" (p. 44). The examination of context is essential to explaining the link between the characteristics of the urban district and teachers' decisions to remain. Thus, this study examined literature on the urban district and its unique characteristics to establish perspectives about prominent environmental themes that could emerge during the collection of data and to create an understanding of the context in which the interviewed teachers work.

Several themes emerged while examining the multiple factors inherent in the complex educational enigma posed by the urban district. Themes relevant to this study included systemic inequities, cultural characteristics of the student population, and teachers' abilities to integrate student backgrounds into existing curriculum. Nieto (2003) contended that the inequities of urban districts and the social ills attributed to the overlapping of race and poverty have a negative impact on the "staying power" of urban teachers (p. 5), underscoring the necessity to examine the literature on these factors.

Through an analysis of teachers' reflective writings, Niteo (2005) concluded that the urban teachers chose to remain for altruistic reasons as well as for internal fulfillment. Thus, analyzing literature specific to urban-student characteristics that could elicit teacher altruism provides a data-based foundation for this idea. Likewise, analyzing literature

about systemic inequities, race, and socioeconomics is fundamental to understanding the role of urban teachers' sense of moral obligation on their decisions about remaining in the urban district. Thus, the following piece of this section offers an analysis of some of the cultural affiliations of students, specifically race and socioeconomics, both previously identified as factors lending to the uniqueness of the district and associated with teacher attrition.

To understand internal and external factors associated with teachers' decisions to leave or remain in the urban context and to evaluate broader themes that could emerge during this study, evaluating and synthesizing the existing literature on the urban district and the social constructs that lend to its uniqueness is foundational. When studying the context of the urban district, three major themes emerged: systemic inequities, cultural characteristics of the student population, and teachers' abilities to integrate student backgrounds into existing curriculum.

Literature on the Urban District

Literature about teacher retention and attrition in the urban district has focused on factors inherent to the social context that creates a challenging environment for educators. Researchers focusing on the unique experience of the urban educator have contended that teaching in lower socioeconomic African-American urban districts requires a different set of skills than teaching in a higher socioeconomic suburban district (Haberman, 1965, 1991a, 1991b, 1994, 2000; Haberman & Post, 1998; Quartz, 2003; Weiner, 2006). According to Haberman (2000),

Teachers need to know their subject matter content; they also need to know about

teaching, learning, and learners. These are all necessary but not sufficient for

teachers to be effective in urban schools serving diverse children in poverty.

Urban teachers must have an additional set of attributes that enable them to

connect with children and youth in poverty and function in dysfunctional school

districts. (p. 3)

Reiterating Haberman's conclusion, Weiner (2006) stated, "Nothing about urban teaching

contradicts the tenets of good practice outside of city schools, but successful urban

teaching requires more and better teaching skills and knowledge" (p. 13).

Literature on the urban district has supported Haberman's argument that teachers'

success in the urban district requires a unique set of skills. Research has documented the

challenges of urban education and has attributed many of the problems to a relational

disconnection between teacher and students, specifically concerning issues arising from

misunderstandings based on students' culture. For example, in a study by Moore (2008)

participants

indicated that differences in socioeconomic status and issues of culture hampered

their ability to teach in a diverse student population. Their concerns ranged from

not being able to understand certain cultural and dialectal differences [which, in

turn,] created walls in the classroom. Participants indicated that these differences

hampered their professional development in becoming a good classroom manager

and being able to teach. (p. 59)

Some of the participants who were interviewed acknowledged that their mentors helped to guide them through adapting to the school culture and establishing procedures and pedagogies that maximized their effectiveness. Such studies highlight the importance of understanding contextual factors that influence teachers' practices and, possibly, their decisions to remain in or to leave an urban setting.

In addition, literature has linked teachers' success to their ability to embrace students' cultural backgrounds and strengths and integrate these into the curriculum (Lindsey, Roberts, & CampbellJones, 2005). The earlier analysis of literature that discussed the importance of student-teacher relationships in an urban setting (Delpit, 1995; Education Development Center, 2005c; Mahiri, 1998a; Moses & Cobb, 2001; National High School Alliance, 2005; Nieto, 2000, 2003; Payne, 2005) supported this link.

Teachers' abilities to value students' cultural experiences, specifically those linked to race and socioeconomic background, foster good student-teacher relationships (Nieto, 2003). Students grow as learners, in part, as they "construct their reality and make sense of their own world" (Walker, 2002, p. 24); if teachers do not understand their students' lives, they cannot help in this important step in the learning process. The leaders of today's educational system ask teachers to engage students in learning by integrating students' real-world experiences into the curriculum. "However, many teachers' own backgrounds with respect to ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic bare little resemblance to that of their students;" and when considering generational gaps among those whose

backgrounds are similar, very few teachers have first-hand knowledge of their students'

experiences (Mahiri, 1998b, p. 1). Moreover, the relational disconnection between prior

experiences can make an already difficult transition more difficult for teachers who enter

an unfamiliar context (Kane, 1991). Effective teachers in the urban district commit

themselves to both their students and their teaching context (Ladson-Billings, 1995b;

Nieto, 2003; Stanford, 1997); this commitment could possibly help teachers overcome

cultural differences that often lead to disconnect. The rewards of this commitment could

contribute to enhancing teachers' satisfaction and ability to persevere.

For over 40 years, Martin Haberman has studied the urban district and researched

strategies to increase the effectiveness of its teachers (Haberman, 1965, 1991a, 1991b,

1994, 2000; Haberman & Post, 1998). His research has focused primarily on modifying

the existing curriculum of teacher education programs to meet the needs of the urban

district. Throughout the years, he has proposed that to be effective in the urban district,

teachers must be prepared to address the unique factors of the context and must develop a

set of skills that is not necessary for suburban districts. He has found that teacher

education programs, as currently structured, prepare teachers for ideal situations, which

are contrary to those found in the urban schools (Haberman, 1994).

Yet, after 40 years of research, few teacher education programs have developed

differentiated curriculum to prepare preservice teachers to be effective in the urban

district, and over the years, many schools that created these programs have allowed them

to disappear (Matus, 1999; Nieto, 2006a). Moreover, a quantitative study by Buttery et al.

(1990) found that leaders in teacher education believed that preparing teachers for multicultural settings was an important goal not currently being met by existing teacher preparation programs. Interestingly, in a study by Thompson (2007) examining the extent to which teacher education programs prepared teachers to teach in the urban district, teachers expressed that teacher education programs should add a component of urban studies and noted a disconnect between curriculum and real-world experiences. While identifying student teaching as the most memorable and applicable experience of their teacher education programs, the teachers criticized the relevance of the curriculum.

Though some teacher preparation programs have acknowledged the unique context of the urban setting and worked to address this in their curriculum, many programs will require significant modification to properly prepare teachers to teach in the urban school setting. Thompson and Smith (2005) evaluated a teaching licensure program that integrated a strand of cultural diversity into coursework and field experiences by providing opportunities for prospective teachers to work with diverse student populations. Most of the field experiences occurred in Title I schools with a predominantly African-American student population. For the most part, the study analyzed students' perceptions of the program rather than long-term data on retention; however, the researchers theorized that the intervention would lead to greater retention. As a whole, the preservice teachers believed that the program added to their enthusiasm and created confidence about becoming teachers. Yet, one of the student teachers commented that she considered the program unsuccessful because she did not understand

how a school that was not experiencing success could help her to develop as an effective

teacher. Another teacher determined that she did not want to begin teaching in a

dysfunctional school where teachers were isolated and lacked a collaborative spirit. Thus,

one may question whether this program helped to develop quality teachers or, instead,

exposed teachers to the negative aspects of the urban district and deterred them from

entering this environment.

Aligning the findings of Thompson and Smith (2005) with prior studies, one

could argue that the study's findings reflected preconceived, negative notions about

urbanicity rather than students' exposure to the urban environment. Groulx (2001) found

that many preservice teachers had negative perceptions of the urban district and its

students prior to extensive coursework. The preservice teachers believed that the students

would be disruptive, parents would be unsupportive, and schools would be unsafe.

Preservice teachers in the study believed that they would be better suited to teach in a

school where the students' characteristics and backgrounds were similar to their own;

they reported that urban districts were outside of their comfort zone and that they would

prefer not to begin their teaching careers in this type of district. Haberman (1991a) found

that the attitudes of preservice teachers prior to beginning their 120-hour field study

became self-fulfilling prophecies of their experiences and satisfaction. Teachers who

entered teaching believing that all students deserved a quality education and high-level

curriculum found opportunities to enrich the curriculum and provide meaningful learning

opportunities for students. Teachers who entered with a deficit perspective, blaming the

community and the students for the problems in the urban district, found many examples

of drug use, gang violence, and unruly children. Some researchers believe that urban

teachers sometimes have difficulty assessing students' assets, thus perpetuating the gap

between poor minority students and students from the majority culture (Delpit, 1995;

Kinney & Others, 1994). Teachers' expectations of students have a more significant

relationship to student success and failure than do outside issues such as socioeconomic

status (Marzano, 2003). Teachers and teacher educators must give careful consideration

to this finding because student failure is too often blamed on outside factors.

　　　　Teachers' preconceived notions about the urban district could be attributed to the

abundance of literature about urban life that is written from a deficit perspective. This

deficit perspective is common in considerations of aspects of urbanicity beyond

education; for example, research on welfare and poverty has revealed that people tend to

blame the recipients of welfare and categorize them as lazy and worthless (Wilson,

1996). This perspective perpetuates the failure of the public to take personal

responsibility for the social injustices manifested in inner cities. "Beliefs that associate

joblessness and poverty with individual shortcomings do not generate strong support for

social programs intended to end inequality" (Wilson, 1996, p. 159). Conservatism that

focuses on the individual traits and perceived morality of people in poverty holds "truly

disadvantaged groups, such as inner-city blacks, largely responsible for their plight"

(Wilson, 1996, pp. 158-159) and, unfortunately, has the power to influence public

opinion (p. 161). The simplicity of blaming the victim and associating joblessness with

morality rather than with a plethora of unfair situations is attractive to many people (p. 193), who find this approach preferable to analyzing the privileges associated with being a member of the dominant race or class. Yet, these beliefs contribute to a reduction in governmental support of the people confined to the inner city, creating a higher turnover of business and concomitantly lowering the availability of social structures intended to aid the poor.

Delpit (1995) has pointed out the harmful effects of such exposure to negative stereotypes, arguing that educational training programs indoctrinate teachers into the profession with research that posits a deficit perspective of students in urban schools. Currently teacher preparation programs introduce preservice teachers to research that links student failure to factors such as their culture, socioeconomic status, and families (Delpit, 1995). Literature concerning the urban district, much of which is from a deficit perspective, inundates teachers and society with negative images concerning urban life. The strong negative societal stereotypes associated with the urban district mandate creating literature and support structures for teachers in this environment.

Urban teachers face the unique struggle of overcoming negative stereotypes associated with their teaching context; such stereotypes could potentially influence teachers' satisfaction and their subsequent decisions about remaining in the environment. The literature in this section reinforces the need to prepare teachers specifically for the urban district and focuses on three primary topics associated with urban school districts: educational inequities, students' cultural characteristics, and the student-teacher

relationship.

Literature on Systemic Inequities

Researchers have identified the inequities within the overall political and educational system as several factors that perpetuate teachers' problems in educating children of poverty, color, or nondominant cultures. All of these factors influence urban education because "neighborhoods are highly segregated by social class, and thus, also segregated by race and ethnicity" (Berliner, 2006, p. 950). According to The Smiley Group, Inc. (2006) reports that schools today are more segregated than those of 20 years ago and describes many of the predominantly low-income, Black schools as being of low quality and characterized by inequitable access to resources.

Many researchers have pointed to the systemic inequities that cause low student achievement. Berliner (2006) argued that researchers who blame the children, the communities, or the teachers fail to realize the root of the problem, the systemic inequity created by poverty. Nieto (2005) also looked to the systemic inequities and stated,

> Indeed, if we were to place all our hope--or all our blame--on teachers, it would be tempting to overlook the deeply entrenched structures, policies, and practices still prevalent today, not only in schools but in our nation as a whole, that caused the problems of inequality in the first place (p. 7).

Kozol (1991) argued that the inequities in funding have created problems beyond the obvious; he believed that urban students hear the message and "understand this theme--they are poor investments--and behave accordingly" (p. 99). Moreover, Anyon (1994)

believed that investing in education without investing in the community is irresponsible.

Anyon (1994) and Berliner (2006) both argued that even the efforts of the most dedicated

teachers and the best reforms often seem trivial with respect to the outside issues related

to a poverty-stricken environment. Berliner (2006) argued that the educational system did

not need No Child Left Behind to identify populations that were not succeeding in

school, reasoning that educators have known for years which Zip Codes contained failing

schools, though many did not want to explicitly admit it. Some researchers have asserted

that before true reform will ever take place, politicians must create equitable funding and

help the communities to revitalize themselves (Anyon, 1994; Berliner, 2006; Bomer,

Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008; Delpit, 1995; Gorski, 2006; Kozol, 1991, 2007;

Little, 2001; Ng & Rury, 2006; Staratt, 2001; Zhou, 2003). Educational equality is

significant because "the level and quality of educational attainment either open the doors

to opportunity or close them" (Gordon, 2006, p. 25). If education is to be society's great

equalizer, stakeholders must find a way to provide a quality education to all students.

Lindsey et al. (2005) agreed that both the structure of the school system and

society itself needed reform; however, teachers and administrators must change their

perspectives about teaching and student learning. They proposed that change within

schools can happen when leaders and teachers take a stance of reflection and

transformation and focus on their own actions and weaknesses rather than those of the

students. They "observed that schools begin to change when their leaders recognize the

disparities that exist in our schools and then intentionally raise issues of bias, preference,

legitimization, and equity" (xviii).

Systemic inequities within urban schools can also perpetuate societal inequities once students leave the district. Wilson (1996) found that employers were apprehensive about hiring students from the Chicago public schools and would overlook their applications when students from neighboring districts, parochial schools, or private schools applied for the same position. Employers attested that they did not consider this practice racist or classist because, in their judgment, the public schools of the city were not properly preparing students for the work force. Wilson argued that when graduating from a particular school hurts a person's chances at employment, a great problem exists in the education system. Wilson's (1996) finding shows that if inequities at the school level continue to exist, regardless of the underlying causes, the schools inevitably will add to the innate struggle of poor, African-American, urban youth.

This disheartening cycle described by Wilson (1996) could have an effect on teacher satisfaction and teacher efficacy. When teachers persevere and feel that their work is for nil, there could be serious implications for teacher retention. Moreover, understanding systemic inequities in the urban district helps to explain the finding by both Nieto (2003) and Patterson et al. (2004) that teachers' deep commitment to social justice contributed to their resilience. In addition, Nieto (2003) found that teachers' anger about the inequities experienced by their students also influenced their decisions to remain.

Literature on Students' Culture

Researchers have emphasized the importance of teachers' willingness to study and embrace the culture of students. "Culture is the mix of beliefs and behaviors of any group that distinguish them as a group and make them who they are. As individuals, we belong to many different cultural groups, depending on our relationships and interactions with others" (Lindsey et al., 2005, p.22). According to Moses and Cobb (2001), "culture is not visible; what we see are the ways culture manifests itself" (p. 13). Deal and Peterson (1999) stated, "Culture arises in response to persisting conditions, novel changes, challenging losses, and enduring ambiguous or paradoxical puzzles. People create culture; thereafter, it shapes them" (p. 85). Wilson (1996) defined culture as the way in which members of the community interact, adopting accepted behaviors and perceptions. He argued that members of a community pass its culture from generation to generation, inevitably defining a community norm. Singleton and Linton (2006) identified culture and ethnicity as synonymous and extended this argument by adding, "Our culture describes how we live on a daily basis in terms of our language, ancestry, religion, food, dress, musical tastes, traditions, values, political and social affiliation, recreation, and so on" (pp 169-170). Regardless of the definition, culture not only defines and shapes people but also creates an opportunity for biases against those who are different or not a member of a dominant cultural category. For the purpose of this study, the culture of students in the urban area is a broad umbrella that includes subsections of students' race and socioeconomic status.

In many urban districts, teachers' own cultural connections resemble those of their students very little; the students and teachers are culturally disconnected (Delpit, 1995; Groulx, 2001; Kane, 1991; Mahiri, 1998a, 1998b). Weiner (2006) stated, "Because we are immersed in our own culture, we take it for granted and often forget that we bring to all our social interactions a particular cultural frame of reference that has not been shared by all people at all times" (p. 62). Members from dominant cultures often forget that different perspectives and frames of reference exist. They are accustomed to society's constructs aligning with their own needs and thinking patterns. Educators from the dominant culture tend to tolerate members from diverse cultures while benefiting from a society constructed from a frame of reference similar to their own.

According to Lindsey et al. (2005), teachers' membership in the dominant culture creates a problem when they fail to search for equity and, rather, simply tolerate diversity. Lindsey et al. argued that to create an environment that values students' uniqueness and their association with multiple cultural groups teachers must shift from being culturally tolerant to being culturally transformative. When teachers emphasize cultural tolerance, they focus on the students' characteristics and often look at their cultural differences as challenges; whereas, when teachers emphasize equity, they view students' multiple cultural connections as strengths and opportunities for learning (Lindsey et al., 2005). However, teachers cannot transform their perspectives unless they can acknowledge their own privilege and entitlement, which comes from membership in certain dominant cultural groups. By ignoring and not understanding their own culture

and role in society, teachers often become blind to the culture of others and try to acculturate students into the thinking patterns of a dominant culture (Groulx, 2001; Lindsey et al., 2005). The acceptance of one's own entitlement is the first step in creating a culturally inclusive environment that promotes high levels of achievement for all students.

Delpit (1995) emphasized the importance of teachers' working to understand students' cultural backgrounds and strengths and integrating this understanding into curricular and pedagogical decisions. She focused on current teaching practices that have taken away traditional aspects of education important for minority children, subsequently increasing the racial achievement gap. Moreover, she focused on the failure of preservice programs to prepare teachers for dealing with multicultural environments. She posited that preservice programs must value multiculturalism and prepare preservice teachers to accept a variety of cultural perspectives. She argued that the deficit perspectives of traditional education programs contribute to teacher biases, often creating justifications for student failure by teaching that environmental issues prevent students from learning. Instead, she argued, programs must prepare teachers to set high expectations for all students and teach educators to work with students from cultures that do not mimic the cultural norm. Educators' hidden biases drastically impact student achievement and impede the educational process by fostering lower expectations for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds or minority cultural groups (Marzano, 2003).

Lindsey et al. (2005) analyzed the difference between culturally tolerant and

culturally proficient school cultures and practices. They argued that schools must embrace the cultures of their students and integrate culturally proficient practices into educational policies and procedures. Mahiri (1998a, 1998b) looked at the integration of urban culture into the classroom practices of teachers. He analyzed the impact on student achievement when teachers reached into the lives of their students and designed instructional experiences based on the interests of their students. He found that students were more successful when teachers allowed them to connect their cultural interests into the formal curriculum.

The notion that understanding students' culture will increase teacher effectiveness is not a new one. Haberman (1965) proposed that new teachers should study the school, its students, and their culture to create knowledge of the environment and find the "positive attributes in youngsters who are able to grow in spite of numerous adverse environmental influences" (p. 7). Mahiri (1998b) found that when teachers brought the curriculum alive by integrating students' own cultural experiences and influences, genuine learning began to take place. Mahiri's (1998a; 1998b) research found that teachers who integrate students' culture into the curriculum engage students in authentic learning experiences. Students are aware of the cultural gaps between the school and their community (Delpit, 1995; Maehr, 1998), but teachers' changing their perceptions and practices has the power to close the cultural gap. Teachers must work to change the culture of their classrooms and the school rather than the culture of their students (Maehr, 1998).

Some studies have linked attrition to the unwelcoming, bureaucratic culture of the urban district (Groulx, 2001). Several researchers have asserted that culture, created by shared understanding and historical influences (Chance & Chance, 2002b; Cooper, 2002), is the main factor defining an organization and its unspoken mission (Chance & Chance, 2002a; Lindsey et al., 2005). Though a school's culture is not automatically apparent, an observer can define the culture over time by watching the actions and listening to the words within the school. While observers have often defined the urban district by the cultural characteristics of its student population, the reactions of the district's adult educators to the culture of its students may suggest a more accurate definition. Based on observation of adult reactions within the school of one large urban district, Anyon (1995) concluded that the environment was "abusive" (p. 69) and "hostile" (p. 83). The school culture is extremely important to teachers and could possibly be a factor in retention that has a greater effect on teacher satisfaction than the behavior or cultural attributes of the students. The school structure creates invisible confines within which the teacher must learn to work. Groulx's (2001) finding that learning to work within the culture of the school influenced teacher satisfaction suggests that perhaps reputedly effective teachers have learned to work within the constructs of the school culture.

The cultures of schools and classrooms should work to support the cultures of their students. Developing such supportive cultures requires teachers to understand their students' cultural traits and cultural experiences. Race and socioeconomics are the primary aspects of urban-student culture addressed in the literature on urban education.

Research in other areas of urban studies has linked the cultural constructs of race and socioeconomics. For example, Wilson (1996) successfully linked the inner city and poverty, and Marable (2000) linked race and poverty. Thus, reviewing the impact of race and socioeconomics on the unique culture of the urban district is vital to understanding the relationship between urban culture and the staying power of urban teachers.

Literature on Race and Socioeconomics

The linkage of race and socioeconomics as predominant aspects of the culture of students in the urban district is a critical factor in understanding the basis for arguments made by educational researchers when discussing the urban district and in understanding teachers' decisions to remain. Nieto (2003) reiterated this linkage as a significant component to understanding teachers' decisions to persevere in spite of the challenges associated with the urban district and stated,

> Dilapidated, segregated, and increasingly staffed by inexperienced teachers who know little about their students--these are the schools of our nation's most vulnerable children, children who also know too well the meaning of disrupted families, homelessness, violence, poor health and nutrition, and other social ills brought on by poverty and hopelessness. The continuing racism faced by so many children is also implicated in these circumstances. Some of these conditions have worsened over the past decades, taking their toll not only on children and their families, but also on the staying power of those who teach them. (pp 4-5)

Nieto (2003) found that "the injustices that most provoke some teachers' wrath are

primarily of two kinds: poverty and its attendant ills; and racism as manifested in society and school" (p. 92). Thus, the link between race and socioeconomics is important in understanding the systemic inequities, the continued failure of the urban district, and the experience of urban teaching. Ignoring race and socioeconomics as significant defining characteristics of the urban district ignores "the social, political, and economic context in which schools are rooted" (Nieto, 2003, p. 19). Understanding teachers' decisions to remain in the urban district requires an understanding of the urban district and its defining characteristics.

A variety of research has acknowledged the link between race and class and alluded to the resultant inequities. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1991),

> one-third of blacks live in poverty, a rate three times that of the white population. Over half live in central cities, in areas often typified by poverty, poor schools, crowded housing, unemployment, exposure to a pervasive drug culture and periodic street violence, and generally high levels of stress. Life expectancy for blacks has lagged behind that for the total population for this century. (p. 32)

Morial (2006) analyzed the mean net worth of different racial groups over a period of time. He found that in times of economic hardships the discrepancies in wealth became exacerbated. He stated, "In hard economic times, as the saying goes, when White America gets a cold, Black America gets pneumonia" (p. 167). His research investigated this disparity in wealth and its long-term implications on society, a disparity that

inevitably is significant to understanding the communities that the urban school district serves.

Marable (2000) believed that the linking of race and socioeconomics was critical to understanding the struggle of African Americans to achieve opportunities for equality. He analyzed the racism embedded within capitalism and politics and argued that historically capitalism was created to divide wealth along race lines and had successfully underdeveloped Black America. One of the significant aspects of his analysis was his assertion that schools played a role in the underdevelopment of African-American youth. He believed that the existing educational pedagogy, which "rests on the assumption of [Black students'] cultural and intellectual inferiority" (Marable, 2000, pp. 8-9), has been a key factor in perpetuating inequities between classes. This unwritten pedagogy geared schools to prepare African-American students for menial roles in the capitalist system, while simultaneously creating a false pride in students about the benefits of the capitalist system (p. 134, 227). Nieto's (2000) writings supported this idea, and she argued that education has provided opportunities for some while simultaneously restricting access to others. She stated,

> Although education has generally been seen as a major gateway out of poverty--
> and it has served this function admirably for many--academic success has been
> elusive for large numbers of young people who are economically poor, or
> culturally and racially different from the majority. (¶ 5)

Marable (2000) elucidated that another inequity, ironically created by desegregation, was

the flight of talented Black educators to the Black Studies departments of White institutions, while simultaneously calling for the transformation of the racist and capitalist system.

Wilson (1996), while agreeing that those studying poverty in the inner city could not ignore the racialization of poverty, believed that this was not the only systemic construct perpetuating poverty. Wilson (1996) suggested that researchers should differentiate between poverty and joblessness because the increase of joblessness within the urban cores creates more problems and higher rates of poverty. He argued that with joblessness comes a decrease in the social structures that facilitate social mobility. The flight of industry and middle-class residents to the suburbs left a high number of people in the inner city without the hope of receiving a job. As years have gone by, inner cities have housed a larger percentage of the population of poverty, partly because of the inner cities' high rates of federally funded housing that historically have segregated communities by class and race.

Singleton and Linton (2006) agreed that poverty and other systemic inequities negatively impact student achievement but asserted that this argument overlooks the role of race in education. They noted that educators too often attribute the racial achievement gap to the influences of poverty, language, or factors connected to social, economic, or political structures. Singleton and Linton (2006) argued that though these things can influence student achievement, they alone cannot explain the racial achievement gap. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) supported this idea and stated,

While some might argue that poor children, regardless of race, do worse in

school, and that the high proportion of African-American poor contributes to their

dismal school performance, we argue that the cause of their poverty in

conjunction with the condition of their schools and schooling is institutional and

structural racism. (p. 55)

Statistics showing that White students from poverty and other social classes outperform

Black students from similar backgrounds point to the irresponsibility of the failure to

examine race as a factor (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Singleton & Linton, 2006).

Singleton and Linton (2006) argued that only by isolating race as a factor can educators

understand the role or race in education and society as a whole.

Many school mission statements discuss the importance of providing a quality

education for all students; however, the disaggregated testing data continue to prove that

the educational system is failing students of color (Lambert, 2002; Lindsey et al., 2005;

Singleton & Linton, 2006). Certain researchers have professed that education is the new

civil rights movement (Moses & Cobb, 2001). By denying a group of people a quality

education because of race or socioeconomic status, society ensures that the status quo

remains the same and that there will not be a shift in power over the next few generations.

According to Nieto (2003), effective urban teachers have a hope and belief in the

purpose of education. This belief contributes to their resilience and perseverance.

Reviewing the social constructs of race and socioeconomics is important to

understanding not only the urban district but also the passion and commitment of

effective urban teachers.

Literature on Race

Race, which is a powerful socially constructed label, has been a factor that has contributed to inequities in all arenas of American society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Marable, 2000; Singleton & Linton, 2006; The Smiley Group, Inc., 2006). "Since before this country's inception, black people have struggled against deeply ingrained race-based expressions of power, privilege, and exclusion" (Bell, 2006, p. 49). The racial achievement gap in students' performance gives evidence of the power of this social construct in the educational arena. Many researchers reference studies indicating that American students are losing ground in relationship to other countries, but few discuss that these revelations "mask the existence of two Americas" (Darling-Hammond, 2009, p. 12). In actuality, White and Asian students score above the collective average, while African-American and Hispanic students lag significantly behind.

Educational researchers focusing on race have contended that, historically, the educational system was created to serve White students and, thus, the system's racial biases are deeply ingrained (Delpit, 1995; Hilliard, 1995; Kozol, 1991, 2007). These systemic racial biases can create a relational disconnection between students' background experiences and the school environment, especially when teachers do not understand the discrepancy between school and cultural norms.

Traditionally, teacher education programs prepare future teachers for teaching in White, suburban schools. One of the problems arising from the lack of multicultural

preparation in teacher education programs is "colorblindness" (Groulx, 2001; Lee, 2007; Lindsey et al., 2005; Nieto, 2003), which can be as dangerous as overt racism. At some point, teachers began to think that comments such as, "I don't see color," demonstrated their devotion to all children and their equitable distribution of instruction and love. However, colorblindness can become generic blindness that fails to see and embrace children's unique characteristics as people, much less as learners (Nieto, 2003). This interpersonal posture also ignores the existence of societal pressures associated with race, systemic inequities exacerbated by racial differences, and historical structures and policies leading to and perpetuating these divisions. According to Delpit (1995), "Children made 'invisible' in this manner become hard-pressed to see themselves as worthy of notice" (p. 177). Colorblindness marginalizes students of color by failing to acknowledge race as a factor contributing to the world in which they live (Delpit, 1995; Howard, 2006; Nieto, 2003; Singleton & Linton, 2006).

This idea of invisibility is deeply embedded in the history of racism in the country. For years, historians claimed that African Americans had no history; and when they finally created them a history, they ignored the historical nature of their struggle for equality (Marable, 2000). Moreover, colorblindness prohibits teachers from grasping the importance of multicultural education and its implications on necessary pedagogical changes (Groulx, 2001; Lindsey et al., 2005; Lee, 2007). According to Walker (2002), race affects students' experiences both in and out of the classroom, making it vital that teachers integrate the reality of race into the learning experience by filling gaps in the

formal curriculum.

An analysis of Marable's (2000) work suggests a linkage between the racist history of the country and the failure to equitably educate students of color. "The knotty dilemma of racism was not simply a question of America's failure in race relations. Racism is at the core of every issue relating to power, economic production, culture and society" (Marable, 2000, p. 11). If education is a gateway to power, then denying students of color a quality education is one of the best ways to perpetuate imbalances in the power structure.

Singleton and Linton (2006) found that while most teachers believe that racism is morally wrong, they are unaware that hidden messages within their own practices and within the overall educational system contribute to racism. Hilliard (1995) found that these biases run deep and exist even in standardized tests, which often are racially and culturally biased. These tests are often used to label students and further perpetuate systemic disadvantages. Questions designed for the middle-class, White students weaken chances for success for African-American students who are economically disadvantaged.

Researchers found that teachers' learning to discuss racism openly and honestly was important to teacher development (Lee, 2007; Singleton & Linton, 2006). Teachers must understand the true nature of racism and their own hidden assumptions about race (Lee, 2007; Singleton & Linton, 2006). The personal identification of hidden biases is a necessary step in establishing equity. Until teachers understand their own racialized existence, they will continue to view the experiences of others through their "own

distorted lens[es]" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 74). "Not only does White define the dominant race, but also it represents the standard by which our racial awareness, experiences, and perspectives are judged" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 181). Thus, teachers must work to understand their own role in the perpetuation of hidden racist practices.

Researchers have acknowledged the dangers associated with teachers' viewing racism as an episodic issue rather than recognizing it as systemic and ingrained into the educational system, as evidenced by the curriculum and the distribution of resources (Lee, 2007). Howard (2006) described the history of racism in White America by using an analogy of a rich, crazy uncle locked in the attic. He argued that everyone in the family understood that the crazy uncle was hidden in the attic; nobody wanted to release him into public because of fear of embarrassment, but nobody wanted to completely deny him because the whole family had benefited from his money and power in society. Teachers of urban students need to understand the history of racism and their own role in the process. If teachers cannot analyze their own history and privilege, they will have difficulty understanding the history and the struggles of the youth that they teach. Nieto (2003) explained that this form of autobiographical reflection is important to increasing the staying power of teachers because it creates an understanding of personal purpose and motivation and creates a framework for teacher-student relationships.

Singleton and Linton (2006) argued that focusing on outside constructs, which are beyond the control of teachers, will inevitably create opportunities for the inequities to

persist. They concluded that educators must focus on factors within their own control, "such as the qualifications, expectation, and cultural proficiency of educators, the rigor of the curriculum, and the effectiveness of instruction" (p. 73). Howard (2006) agreed that race should be in the forefront of conversations in education and educational reform. He stated, "Because success is so highly correlated with success in life, this race-based disequilibrium in academic achievement has become of the core social justice issues of our time" (p. 2). Through open conversations exposing racist practices, teachers will begin to make the changes that are necessary to assure the equitable education of students of color. Singleton and Linton (2006) stated,

> Anti-racist schools move beyond the celebration of diversity and create communities in which it is possible for students to talk about how they experience unfairness and discrimination and to heal. In these healing communities adults' highest priority is caring about students and their learning. (p. 45)

To create these supportive environments, teachers must be open to conversations that expose race-related weaknesses within their practices. Though these conversations may be uncomfortable, their intention is neither to blame teachers nor to create guilt but, instead, to help teachers to transform their practices to better serve all students.

A study by Hafiz-Wahid-Muid (2010) highlights the importance of considering the role of race in an urban context. Using an autobiographical, grounded-theory approach, she analyzed the biographies of five White, veteran teachers in the urban district and examined how their histories, perspectives, and actions demonstrated their

care for urban students of color. In her analysis of the complexity of the teachers'

relationships with their students, the researcher focused on the emotional dynamics

involved in the teachers' caring and resilience. Specifically, she examined the

relationship of the "pedagogy of care" to teacher resilience and student-teacher

relationships. The framework for the study emerged from the author's examination of

literature focusing on the contextual factors of racial dynamics and cultural lenses. Hafiz-

Wahid-Muid (2010) stated, "This study is not about the achievement gap. However, the

achievement gap is not disconnected from teacher commitment and caring" (p. 8). After

analyzing race as a socially constructed label that historically has defined "who is worthy

of being cared for" (p. 57), she explained that many parents of color place greater

emphasis on the level of a teacher's care for their children than on the degrees,

qualifications, or recognitions sometimes used as measures of effectiveness.

Patterson et al. (2004) and Nieto (2003) found that effective teachers' dedication

to equal education and social justice influenced resilience. Overcoming the historical

inequities that are directly related to race may be a driving force for some reputedly

effective teachers. This motivational force may explain, in part, Nieto's (2005) finding

that teachers appear to remain for altruistic reasons.

Literature on Socioeconomics

According to Bomer et al. (2008), when the government created a category for

disadvantaged students with respect to adequate yearly progress, "they claimed that poor

children are members of a legitimate category and that those children share features that

are related to their experience in school" (p. 1). The creation of this category was significant because it mandated that the educational system learn to educate students with a different frame of reference from that of the system, students whom the system had failed for years. Evaluating the research on poverty is not an easy task because the correlation between poverty and education is neither clearly defined nor fully understood (Ng & Rury, 2006). As a result of the educational system's failure with students from poverty, many perspectives have emerged to explain the problem and to offer programmatic solutions for working with students from poverty. According to Hatch (2002), "Part of the power of qualitative work is that is provides careful description and analysis of social phenomena in particular contexts" (p. 43). This section analyzes a variety of perspectives on the phenomenon of urban poverty.

According to Berliner (2006), the impoverished environment of low-income communities creates disadvantages that often lead to misdiagnoses of learning problems and improper understandings of IQ scores. Berliner (2006) hypothesized that poverty traps students in neighborhoods that help to mold them and counteract some of the positive effects of home and school. Moreover, once people enter a state of poverty, social mobility is difficult to achieve. Berliner (2006) analyzed disaggregated score reports and found that as schools' percentages of students from poverty increased, their standardized scores decreased. He argued that if students from poverty had been given the same educational opportunities as White, middle-class students, the United States would have ranked among the top countries internationally with respect to education.

Berliner (2006) pointed out that though the United States has a median income higher than that of most countries, the country has one of the highest rates of poverty among rich nations. He believed that until this inequity is addressed, educational reform is similar to putting a small bandage on a gushing wound.

In the past few years, the work of Payne (2005), who has discussed strategies for educating students from poverty, has intrigued teachers and school administrators. Some districts have used her work as the foundation for contextualized mentoring programs with an ultimate goal of raising new-teacher retention (Holt & Garcia, 2005). Payne (2005) introduced the concept of generational poverty and posited that students reared in this environment develop different mindsets. According to Payne (2005), the characteristics of generational poverty conflict with the middle-class beliefs and values upon which schools have been formed. Schools have been created from a middle-class perspective and are not organized to address behavior and thinking patterns that do not mimic those of the middle class (Payne, 2005). According to Payne (2005), "the supports these students need are cognitive strategies, appropriate relationship, coping strategies, goal-setting opportunities, and appropriate instruction both in content and discipline" (p. 107); teachers need to teach students the "hidden rules" of the middle class to help students to be successful not only in school but also in the world. Payne (2005) purported that the biggest difference between people from the middle class and those characterized by generational poverty is not money but mindset, and she argued that "schools are virtually the only places where students can learn the choices and rules of the middle

class" (p. 62), which can determine social mobility later in life (p.44). Quint (2006) reiterated the concept of social mobility and argued that the lack of social networks makes it more difficult for students from lower socioeconomic classes to secure higher-paying jobs. Overall, Payne (2005) believed that students from lower-socioeconomic families need teachers to teach them rules for assimilation into the dominant class for whom society has created its regulations, institutes, and political structures.

Some of the ideas of Lindsey et al., (2005), Weiner (2006), Delpit (1995), and Singleton and Linton (2006) agreed with those of Payne (2005). While agreeing that schools are often run from a middle-class, majority ideology, these authors were more careful than Payne to recognize the importance of the students' mindsets and to address the inequities within the system itself. Lindsey et al. (2005) believed that schools are effective for the students for whom they were originally created. The antithesis of this is urban students, who are often "from economically and culturally disadvantaged neighborhoods, are isolated from mainstream values and behaviors" (Council of Great City Schools, 1990, p.51). Weiner (2006) stated,

> Poor, minority parents and students can make sense of the disparity between their cultures, their language and social customs, and the White, middle-class norms of schools in contradictory ways…, and teachers should respect the right of parents and students to hold beliefs about assimilation and acculturation that differ from the stance of the school and the teacher. (pp. 9-10)

Weiner (2006) believed that teachers should explain the norms and help students analyze

them from their own perspective and clarify "the differences and similarities, rather than assuming and insisting that the school's norms are always superior" (p. 82). Delpit (1995) argued that students understand that different codes exist for different environments, but they may not be able to interpret fully the different codes or their implications. In Delpit's (1995) view, the problem is that "the worldviews of those with privileged positions are taken as the only reality, while the worldviews of those less powerful are dismissed as inconsequential" (p. xv). Singleton & Linton (2006) supported Delpit's (1995) ideas by arguing that White, middle-class values are those most often imposed on others. They stated, "When Whiteness is the standard, individuals are invited to participate to the degree that they will bend and conform to the experience of the racially dominant population" (p. 244). Indeed, White, middle-class students, who are part of the mainstream culture, rarely understand that their position of privilege and entitlement has shaped their perspectives and worldviews, and the schools do not work to prepare these students to be a part of a multicultural society (Lindsey et. al, 2005). Although some of Payne's (2005) points are valid, a synthesis of the work of the aforementioned authors suggests that assimilation and acculturation are not the only answers. Considering their work, one could argue that Payne's (2005) solutions are narrow in scope and, rather than addressing the problem, perpetuate the idea that schools and culture should value and adhere to white, middle-class norms.

Some researchers have had difficulty accepting Payne's (2005) assertions, believing that existing research does not support them and that she has used her

experiences as an educator and administrator to self-publish. Bomer et al. (2008)

conducted a qualitative study using Payne's (2005) work as the qualitative data. The

researchers concluded that existing research on poverty did not substantiate many of the

claims made by Payne (2005) and concluded that her book and subsequent training

seminars are misleading the educational community to accept the idea of a nonexistent

culture of poverty. They feared that the popularity of Payne's (2005) work "may be

reinforcing ways of thinking and talking about children in poverty that are false,

prejudiced, or at the very least, limited" (p. 2). Gorski (2006) believed that Payne's

(2005) work was a conservative stereotypical look at poverty and was not transformative

in nature. He particularly objected to her placing the ultimate reform on the shoulders of

those deprived of the resources required to get them into an environment where they

could practice new-found "rules." Gorski (2006) argued that educators will never see a

change in the system until society addresses the "classist conditions that perpetuate

poverty" (p. 3). Gorski (2006) believed that Payne's (2005) work is dangerous in that

"numbers of pre- and in-service teachers are being trained to perpetuate classism, to

conserve the educational status quo through well-intentioned ignorance of systemic

classism" (p. 4). Ng and Rury (2006) concurred with Gorski (2006) and asserted that

Payne's (2005) work promoted misconceptions and expanded already existing

stereotypes. The authors referred to Payne (2005) as a self-proclaimed expert and pointed

to the fact that social science research has contradicted her claims about an existing

culture of poverty. The authors stated their opinion that the most disturbing part of

Payne's (2005) framework was the idea that poor people chose to remain poor. The authors attributed some of her success to a confident tone of expertise that is not based in research. They articulated that Payne's (2005) framework has grown in popularity because it "appeals to many people's common-sense notions of how poverty functions and how it can be eliminated" (p. 4); but, in reality, the research justified stereotypes and perpetuated institutional classism and racism.

  An analysis of Marable's (2000) work suggests that Payne's (2005) assertions that poor African-American students need to be taught the rules of the middle class is another example of the capitalist agenda. Considering Marable's (2000) work, one could argue that this form of assimilation and acculturation promotes the destruction of a culture and does not prepare students for disappointment when the language and rules of the White, middle class do not change the color of their skin. Within Marable's (2000) framework of thinking, Payne's (2005) work could be seen as another product utilized in the perpetuation of the fraudulent claim that everyone who works hard to attain success can become successful.

  An analysis of Wilson's (1996) work reveals that he avoided the concept of a culture of poverty as asserted by Payne (2005) but, instead, examined other underlying causes behind one's behavior. Wilson (1996) found that many behaviors associated with poverty were not necessarily specific to lower-socioeconomic areas but could be attributed to society at large. Unlike Payne (2005), he attributed the behavior of people in poverty, deemed unacceptable by the ruling class, to their need for survival more than to

their value system. Wilson (1996) argued that when the survival mechanisms utilized by people from poverty conflict with their moral beliefs, they often justify their behaviors as a reaction to the inequity within their environment. "They may strongly endorse the mainstream judgments of such behavior and yet at the same time feel forced by circumstances to violate the normative expectations of the larger society" (p. 84). Wilson (1996) referred to these behaviors as "cultural adaptations to the systematic blockage of opportunities in the environment of the inner city and the society as a whole" (p. 72) rather than labeling them as a culture of poverty.

However, most significant to this research is that the authors who studied Payne's (2005) work concluded that educators have bought into her suppositions because Payne (2005) has filled a need (Bomer et al., 2008; Gorski, 2006; Ng & Rury, 2006). Existing preservice and in-service programs do not properly address the effects of culture and socioeconomics on the classroom, a conclusion supported by Haberman's (1965, 1991a, 1991b, 1994, 2000) extensive research. Teachers are looking for direction on how to work with students from diverse backgrounds and lack the appropriate training to assess research from an analytical point of view. Yet, teachers' understanding the research and finding solutions for students from poverty is becoming increasingly important. Moses and Cobb (2001) concluded that the fact that students from poverty come to school displays that they have a desire for a better life. These students fight against outside obstacles, family difficulties, and community pressures; they look to teachers to give them a way out and a bit of hope (Moses & Cobb, 2001). Yet, educators have failed to

create opportunities for success for many of the students who have come to school looking for a solution.

Patterson et al. (2004) and Nieto (2003, 2005) described the sense of mission expressed by effective teachers in their studies. Working against the inequities created by poverty may be a driving force for some reputedly effective teachers. The rewards of contributing to the end of the generational cycle of poverty for some of their students may explain, in part, Nieto's (2005) finding that teachers appear to remain for reasons of internal fulfillment.

<div align="center">Literature Supporting the Conceptual Framework</div>

Attributional theory, choice theory, the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, and the theory of the racialization of poverty work together to frame this study by offering insights into different links in the chain between the characteristics of the urban district and teachers' decisions to remain. Attributional theory and choice theory examine the decision-making process from a psychological framework. The theory of culturally relevant pedagogy aids in supporting the qualitative sampling criteria with respect to teacher effectiveness. The theory of the racialization of poverty and the linkage of poverty to the urban district create an historical foundation for understanding the social phenomena associated with the urban district.

Understanding the characteristics of teachers' decision making is fundamental to solving the retention puzzle. In a study on student retention, which found that teachers' beliefs about students and about the effectiveness of grade retention related significantly

to a child's success or failure, the researcher concluded that "teachers make rational decisions within the context of what they believe" (Bonvin, 2003, p. 290). Thus, leading this researcher to hypothesize that examining the relationship between a teacher's decision-making process and the teacher's belief about context may prove to be important to this particular study.

Weiner's (1983, 1985) attributional theory contributes to the study by providing a framework for the factors associated with teachers' choices to remain in the urban district. Weiner (1983) proposed "a temporal theory of motivation … in which causes, causal dimensions, psychological consequences (expectancy and affect), and behavioral outcomes play a role in the dynamics of action" (Weiner, 1983, p. 531). Simply, "the theory therefore relates the structure of thinking to the dynamics of feeling and action" (Weiner, 1985, p. 548). The purpose of this study is not to rank locus, stability, and controllability, identified as the three dimensions of causality (Weiner, 1983, 1985); nor is it to link teachers' decisions to these attributional factors. Yet, because Weiner founded attributional theory on the role of causal relationships, the researcher hypothesized that the theory would aid in analyzing data associated with teachers' decisions to remain in the urban district.

The relevance of Weiner's (1983, 1985) theory lies in the fact that teachers who remain may attribute their decisions to a variety of internal or external factors. Weiner (1983, 1985) established a taxonomy that classified the factors associated with perceptions about external influences and the contribution of these factors to internal

attributes and subsequent decisions. One's perception of the stability or instability of external factors often influences internal factors, such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and pride. This attributional theory has three corollaries:

Corollary 1. If the outcome of an event is ascribed to a stable cause, then that outcome will be anticipated with increased certainty, or with an increased expectancy, in the future.

Corollary 2. If the outcome of an event is ascribed to an unstable cause, then the certainty or expectancy of that outcome may be unchanged or the future may be anticipated to be different from the past.

Corollary 3. Outcomes ascribed to stable causes will be anticipated to be repeated in the future with a greater degree of certainty than are outcomes ascribed to unstable causes. (Weiner, 1985, p. 559)

Weiner (1983) stated, "Causal stability also influences affective reactions: feelings of hopelessness arise when the future is anticipated to be as bleak as the present" (p. 531). Weiner (1985) posited that people often attribute their success or failure to external factors and that perception of the stability of these factors influences expectations about future feelings and actions. Thus, if teachers believe that they can help change some of the factors to which others attribute their decisions to leave, they may have a stronger belief that their work is making a difference in their given school. Likewise, if reputedly effective teachers believe that the existing challenges in the urban district do not negate their ability to be successful, the reasons that departing teachers

acknowledged as contributing to their decision may not affect these teachers to the same degree.

Educational research has substantiated the role of external factors on teachers' decisions to leave. Teachers who have left often attributed their decision to outside factors that contributed to their frustration and dissatisfaction (Buckley et al., 2005; Ingersoll, 2006; Smith & Smith, 2006). Yet those who stay despite challenging external factors may be able to monitor the impact of these factors on their emotional satisfaction. Glasser's (1998) choice theory, which posited that dissatisfaction is a choice, offered an explanation for this ability to separate internal satisfaction from outside influences. "Choice theory is an internal control psychology; it explains why and how we make the choices that determine the course of our lives" (p. 7). The theory posited that people are not victims of their circumstances but choose how to process the information around them. Dissatisfaction and misery are cognitive and emotional options based on how one chooses to respond to outside influences in reaction to internal motivations. The behaviors, actions, and manners that people choose sometimes lead to their own distress.

Glasser (1998) argued that people are "genetically programmed to try to satisfy four psychological needs: love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun" (p. 28). The decisions that people make are based on a motivation to fulfill one or more of these basic needs. People have their own frameworks from which they see the world and strive to fulfill their basic needs. Choice theory uses the concept of "one's quality world" to explain why people perceive events differently (p.44). Each person has created and

continually recreates his or her own quality world, which determines the way in which the person fulfills psychological needs. Sometimes feelings of dissatisfaction or depression are subconscious choices based on past experiences and chosen to fit into the existing framework of one's quality world.

In addition to providing a theoretical foundation to explain factors influencing the decision-making process, Glasser's (1998) explanation of quality worlds helps explain some of the disagreements found in the literature on the urban district. Researchers such as Payne (2005) focused on the schools' White, middle-class norms and society's expectation that poor, African-American students should learn to assimilate and acculturate into what is considered mainstream society. In contrast, researchers such as Mahiri (1998a), Lindsey et al. (2005), and Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b), who support culturally proficient education, argued a school's mission should be to embrace students from various cultures. Glasser's (1998) choice theory works to explain the psychological background of this education argument. Glasser (1998) stated,

> It is especially hard for powerful people to be tolerant of the quality worlds of people who are less powerful. If everyone could learn that what is right for me does not make it right for anyone else, the world would be a much happier place. Choice theory teaches that my quality world is the core of my life; it is not the core of anyone else's life. This is a difficult lesson for external control people to learn. (p. 53)

People choose to behave in ways that make sense to their quality worlds, and some

people want to impose their quality world on others. Thus, when examining the achievement gap or inequities between urban and suburban schools, educational researchers most likely pursue paths that align with their prior knowledge and experiences. For instance, according to Glasser (1998), people who define their worlds by outside factors rely on external control of others. This argument could explain educational arguments of acculturation.

Both Weiner's (1983, 1985) and Glasser's (1998) work help to reiterate the importance of understanding the context within which teachers are working. Without a deep understanding of the urban high school, a researcher may not be able to evaluate fairly a teacher's response to his or her environment. Merriam (1998) acknowledged that qualitative research embraces the idea that "reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 6). Thus, two of the theories employed for this particular study focus on the context in which the study took place.

Culturally relevant pedagogy provides a framework for respecting the quality worlds of all students in the educational arena. Ladson-Billings (1995a), who coined the term "culturally relevant pedagogy", developed a theoretical model that supported this pedagogical practice. She began this process by suggesting that the creation of a new pedagogical practice would require a "theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while

developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 469). She continued with an analysis of research studies focusing on teachers who successfully integrated students' cultures into reading instruction by using familiar language patterns and into classroom management strategies by incorporating culturally familiar expectations. She developed her final theoretical framework after studying the success of African-American students with respect to specific teacher practices. She then examined three emergent themes among the successful teachers: their belief in themselves and their students, the purposeful establishment of social relations, and their beliefs about knowledge acquisition.

In the first emergent theme, Ladson-Billings (1995a) found that teachers successful in culturally relevant pedagogy believed strongly in themselves and the potential of their students. The teachers did not blame students' race, socioeconomics, or familial structures for their students' lack of success. Instead, they focused on their own practices and looked for their weaknesses. They worked to harness students' strengths and did not allow failure as an option. They saw themselves as members of the community and looked at teaching as a service to the community as a whole.

In the second emergent theme, Ladson-Billings (1995a) found that "culturally relevant teachers consciously create[d] social interactions" (p. 480) to craft environments conducive to students' academic success. They developed a community of learners based on trust and reciprocal teacher-student relationships. They focused on collaborative

learning rather than on individual success and encouraged students to challenge each other to new levels of learning.

In the third emergent theme, Ladson-Billings (1995a) found that culturally relevant teachers believed that knowledge was fluid and always developing. They designed lessons to help students build on prior knowledge while concomitantly discovering new concepts. The teachers used a variety of assessment methods, which focused on challenging students beyond typical knowledge by requiring them to analyze their thoughts and thinking processes. Research on multicultural education has continued to develop this theory. Banks (2006) explained that the goal of multicultural education is to help students develop the skills to successfully function in a multicultural society by improving race relations. Acknowledging the role of race in education is foundational to creating an environment that supports multicultural education.

Howard (2006) outlined the key components of multicultural education and the training associated with the framework. He focused on the stages of the internal transformation that White educators, who compose a majority of the teaching force and tend to have the most difficulty making the transition to a multicultural curriculum, must undergo to become competent multicultural teachers. This transition has proven difficult for White educators because, historically, White people have not viewed their whiteness as an ethnicity; Whiteness has been the accepted norm within this society, which has not challenged people to examine their own cultural connections (Howard, 2006; Nieto, 2006b). Whites have "collectively destroyed other cultures, buried our own, and denied

the histories of both" (Howard, 2006, p. 25), yet individually many are unable to acknowledge their role in the "collective group history" (p. 33). Thus, Howard proposed that White educators must enter into a journey characterized by stages of emotional growth in order to create an environment conducive to all learners. This movement gives White educators an opportunity to help to "shift the tide of racial dominance" as they work to fix a system from which they have freely benefited (p. 139). Howard (2006) stated,

> We know that the work of social transformation cannot be achieved by Whites
> alone, yet it cannot be achieved without us either. Both our percentage
> representation in the profession and our position in history require that a
> committed core of White educators become actively engaged in the creation of a
> new and healing multicultural reality, a new country of the heart, mind, and spirit
> where all people are welcomed with their differences intact. Together with our
> colleagues from other racial and cultural groups, we are now attempting to
> fashion a new and healthier way of being White. (p. 144)

Nieto (2006b), reiterating Howard's assertions, acknowledged the need for White educators to enter the conversation on multicultural education. Creating educational settings conducive to all learners will require that educators unite in recognizing the necessity and acknowledging the benefits of multicultural learning environments.

Neito (2003) elucidated that multicultural education surpasses the constructs of race and ethnicity by also addressing differences brought about by social class.

Multicultural education is characterized "by a deep commitment to social justice and

equal access to resources" that should not be limited to occasional celebrations but should

"permeate all areas of schooling" (p. 17). Nieto's (2003) work supports earlier work by

Ladson-Billings (1995b), who stated, "Culturally relevant teachers utilize students'

culture as a vehicle for learning" (p. 161). Ladson-Billings (1995b) argued that culturally

relevant pedagogy meets three criteria: (a) students have the opportunity to experience

success within the classroom, (b) students have the opportunity to develop cultural

competence within the classroom, and (c) students develop skills which help them to

challenge the existing systems that promote inequities between cultures.

The urban district, its challenges, and its characteristics do not align well with the

past experiences, prior knowledge, and quality worlds of White, middle-class educators,

who make up 90% of the current teaching force (National Education Association, 2003).

This dichotomy helps to explain why much of the literature on the urban district defines

this educational environment by its unique characteristics, specifically those linked to

students' cultural characteristics. Theories linking the urban area to the race and

socioeconomics of its residents support this study by offering an historic framework for

emerging themes in the literature on the urban district, especially the identification of

systemic inequities resulting from students' cultural characteristics.

The racialization of poverty and the interconnectedness of the urban area, race,

and poverty (Berliner, 2006; Marable, 2000; Wilson, 1996) provide a theoretical

framework for understanding the context of the study. According to Yin (2003) and Stake

1995), placing data within specific contexts strengthens the overall findings of a case study. Thus, the following theories created a conceptual framework for the social context in which this study took place.

Wilson (1996) linked the inner city and poverty by analyzing the flight of industry to the suburbs and the resultant high levels of joblessness in the core of the city. Through an analysis of historical sources, Marable (2000) linked race and poverty by identifying poverty as a racialized construct perpetuated by capitalism. The synthesis of these perspectives underscores the importance of understanding the impact of race and poverty on considerations involving the urban district.

Studies documenting that a disproportionate number of African Americans bear the problems associated with the inner core of a city, such as poverty, teen pregnancy, inadequate resources, dilapidated buildings, and crime (Berliner, 2006; Council of the Great City Schools, 1990; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1991; Wilson, 1996), support Marable's (2000) viewpoint. Marable (2000) argued that the United States has historically relied on the labor of African Americans, yet has not provided avenues for success of the community as a whole. In Marable's (2000) view, White capitalists have showcased the few African Americans for whom the system has worked, using the example of this small minority to perpetuate in the community the naïve assurance that the structure of capitalism works for all dedicated, hard workers. Marable (2000) argued that from the time of slavery until the present, many of the successful African Americans have been people who assimilated, acculturated, and

accommodated dominant, White, middle-class mindsets. They are the ones who praised the existing capitalistic structures and, concomitantly, ignored the oppression of their own sisters and brothers. "This inner class conflict between the Black majority versus the Black elite was the driving force that explained much of the political and ideological conflicts that had long divided the Black community" (xxviii). The class stratification within the African-American community created a greater struggle for poor, urban African Americans, used by the White man and the elite Black man searching for the fulfillment of the capitalists' dream without concern for those potentially impacted by their choices.

With respect to this educational study, Marable's (2000) linking of race and class as "interlocking factors in the underdevelopment of Black America" (xxxv) and Wilson's (1996) linking of poverty and the inner city provided precedent for this researcher's linking of race and class as interlocking factors associated with the unique culture of the urban district. As Parker, Kelly, and Sanford (1998) have pointed out, understanding the unique culture of the urban district is fundamental to understanding urban schools.

This linking of the urban district, race, and class is foundational in understanding the themes that have emerged in studies of the urban district. Educational researchers have focused on the unique factors of the urban district and the systemic inequities inherent to this environment because of students' backgrounds, specifically those associated with race and class. Literature on the urban district includes discussions of race and class in a variety of topics, such as student-teacher relationships, classroom

management strategies, characteristics of effective teachers, and successful pedagogical strategies. The continual references to race and class in the literature necessitate creating a foundation for classifying these factors as critical to the unique environment of the urban district.

<div align="center">Synthesis of Literature Framing the Study</div>

Teacher attrition and retention have become the concern of many researchers. Ingersoll (2005, 2006) explained that retention efforts are meaningless if districts continuously lose more teachers than they are able to recruit. Though retention and attrition are opposites, the factors associated with each cannot be assumed to be inversely related.

A teacher's choice to remain in a specific district can be attributed to multiple factors: intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting a teachers' decision, district or school-based initiatives aimed at retaining teachers, or state-level incentives such as tenure and retirement. Because schools collect retention data based purely on the physical return of a teacher, retention is a multilayered complicated issue. Developing a clearer picture of urban-teacher retention will require the discovery of factors associated with urban teachers' decisions to remain in the urban district. Researchers have attributed attrition to factors such as violence, unmanageable students, ineffective administration, front-loaded salaries, and dilapidated buildings; yet, some effective teachers persevere despite all of these challenges. Despite consistently dealing with the same challenges to which researchers attribute teacher attrition, they remain in the urban setting.

Literature and media reports concerning the urban district often focus on characteristics of the students and communities from a deficit perspective. According to Delpit (1995), this perspective influences teachers and their expectations for students.

The literature review raised a plethora of questions about effective teachers and the urban school setting: How do effective teachers deal with the negativity associated with the urban district? Are effective teachers able to work against the negative stereotypes while others allow them to affect their sense of self-worth as teachers? Are these teachers able to find the beauty in their students while acknowledging the historical and present struggles of the urban youth? Are effective teachers able to connect to the students and their lives in a way that others are not? What are the intrinsic or extrinsic factors that contribute to the decision to remain? Can administrators use these factors to develop programs that unleash the hidden passions or talents of other urban educators? Will themes emerge in the research that can guide urban districts in preparing new teachers for the challenges of the urban district? Can administrators use the aggregated experiences of these urban teachers to enhance the orientation of teachers new to the urban district? Though these were not necessarily the guiding questions associated with the research, they are questions that emerged during the literature review. Creating the questions was an important part of the synthesis of the literature. While the researcher was unsure of whether or not these questions would be answered by themes emerging in the data, their creation helped frame the data collection phase.

The specific research questions associated with this study pointed to the use of

case study as the proper methodology for gathering data. The introduction of section 3 includes relevant literature on the design of case studies. The literature review of case-study methodology addresses both the appropriate use of a case-study methodological design and the strategies associated with such a design. In addition, the following section justifies the appropriateness of a case-study methodological design for this particular study and outlines the overall design of the current study.

SECTION 3: REVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this case study, utilizing an embedded-case design, was to investigate internal and external factors that may explain and identify common themes associated with effective urban teachers' decisions to remain in a southeastern urban school district. An additional purpose of this study was to examine a possible intersection of urban teacher resilience, urban teacher retention, and urban teacher effectiveness with respect to teachers' decisions to remain in an urban school setting. This section aims to justify the use of case-study as a proper methodological choice for this particular study, ground this choice in the relevant literature associated with the methodology, and clearly outline the design of this study.

The goal of the first research question— Given the well-documented challenges of urban schools, what factors influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in the inner-city high schools of a southeastern metropolitan area? — was to identify the internal and external factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain in this particular urban setting. To identify these factors, the researcher worked to understand teachers' experiences in the urban setting and to help teachers examine the influencing factors that support their decisions to remain. The goal of the second research question— What, if any, intersectional relationship exists between the concepts of teacher resilience, teacher retention, and teacher effectiveness as the constructs relate to teachers' decisions to remain?— was to develop a preliminary understanding of the manner in which these specific constructs support each other in influencing effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting.

Patton (2002) argued that qualitative approaches support research questions that

are concerned with understanding people's experiences and their interpretations of those experiences. Thus, a qualitative study allowed the researcher to gather rich, in-depth data based on the participants' understandings. Patton also explained that qualitative studies are the most appropriate research methodology when too little information is available for the development of standardized instruments. Few studies have explored how qualities associated with how teachers exhibiting high levels of effectiveness, specifically with respect to their decisions to remain in an urban, secondary school experience or demonstrate urban teacher resilience or urban teacher retention (Brunetti, 2006; Morris, 2007; Thompson, 2007). Thus, the two guiding questions associated with this study supported the use of a qualitative design.

<div align="center">Literature on Case Study Methodology</div>

Merriam (1998) described the case study as a methodology offering "a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon" (p. 41). The case study methodology is characterized by three key components: first, the study is clearly a system bounded by either place, time, or qualifying cases; second, the data collection phase includes multiple sources; and third, the role of context is highly valued (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998, 2002; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Unlike grounded theory research studies that are characterized by their systematic approach to data analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 1998), the analysis phase of case studies relies "on an investigator's own style of rigorous thinking, along with the sufficient presentation of evidence and careful

consideration of alternative interpretations" (Yin, 2003, p.110). Case-study methodology

lends itself to the examination of certain phenomena within a specific real-world context

(Yin, 2003, p. 2) and focuses on "discovery rather than confirmation" (Merriam, 1998, p.

19). Stake (1995) differentiated between an intrinsic case study and an instrumental case-

study: the intrinsic case-study values the specific case; whereas, the instrumental case-

study utilizes the case to understand a phenomenon other than the defined case (p. 3).

Contextual Significance

Patton (2002) expressed that an understanding of context is foundational to

qualitative inquiry, especially in case analysis (pp. 63, 447). In a case study the unit of

study must be described "in depth and detail, holistically, and in context" (Patton, 2002,

p. 55). Creswell (1998) acknowledged that the role of context in case-study is specifically

important in the data analysis phase (p. 63); a researcher must consider the case with

respect to how the context influences different aspects of the case and how the case

interacts with context. Moreover, Stake (1995) argued that the role of context deserves

great attention in intrinsic case-studies (p. 64). Such attention is important in light of

Merriam's (1998) point that the experiences of people are "rooted in context, as is

knowledge in case studies" (p. 31).

Identification of Case

The identification of the case is the foundation of a case-study design (Patton,

2002, p. 447). A researcher must determine not only how to identify the case but also

which case-method design best highlights the case and explores the phenomenon under

study. A researcher may choose a single-case study design that studies a single case or a

multicase design that explores two or more cases and draws conclusions based not only

on single-case analysis but also on a cross-case analysis. When discussing a case,

researchers may be referring to an individual, an organization, a group of people, a

particular event, a program, or an abstract idea (Creswell, 1998, p. 61; Merriam, 1998,

pp. 19, 27; Patton, 2002, p. 447; Yin, 2003, p. 23). When considering the identification of

the case, the researcher must assess aspects of boundaries and the finite aspect of the case

(Merriam, 1998, p. 27). The existence of a clear boundary with respect to the case is a

defining characteristic of case-study research (Merriam, 1998, pp. 27-28).

When the case, or unit of analysis, is determined to be something other than an

individual, the researcher may employ an embedded design which uses subunits to

explore the case (Creswell, 1998, p. 187; Yin, 2003, pp. 40, 43). Creswell (1998) pointed

out that each additional case added by the researcher threatens the overall purpose of the

case study by diminishing the depth of the data (p. 63).

Criterion Sampling and Theoretical Sampling

Purposeful sampling is extremely important to identifying the case to be studied

and justifying the researcher's methodology for case selection (Creswell, 1998, p. 64;

Patton, 2002, p. 447). This particular study utilized criterion sampling for the selection of

14 study participants. Criterion sampling is a procedure in which the researcher narrows

the field of potential participants, using a specific list of criteria essential to the overall

purpose of the study (Creswell, 1998).

Charmaz (2006) suggested that theoretical sampling is different from sampling

strategies employed in the beginning of a study, such as criterion sampling used for

participant selection. Theoretical sampling is a procedure that helps make sense of data

and create data-based theory (Charmaz, 2006). The emergent nature of the process allows

researchers to evaluate continuously the categories that they have created.

The purpose of theoretical sampling is to focus the researcher's subsequent data

collection. Because grounded theory researchers continuously return to the field to collect

additional data, theoretical sampling enables the researcher to fill in gaps in the data and

explore emergent themes (Merriam, 2002, p. 143). "Theoretical sampling involves

starting with the data, constructing tentative ideas about the data, and then examining

these ideas through further empirical inquiry" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 102). This strategy can

be used throughout data analysis as a systematic process for evaluating and refining

categories and, inevitably, narrowing the themes for theory development (Charmaz, 2006,

pp. 107, 110).

Data Collection

A defining characteristic of case-study methodology is the use of multiple

sources. Remaining flexible to the exploration of different avenues that emerge during

data collection is extremely important to qualitative research (Patton, 2002, p. 255). This

level of flexibility is specifically important in case-study research in which a researcher

needs to remain cognizant of new sources of data that could add to the overall inquiry

(Patton, 2002, p. 302). Typical methods for collecting data within a case study include

interviews, documents, archival records, observations, and artifacts (Yin, 2003, p. 83).

The use of multiple sources is a triangulation process built into the case-study

methodology and helps to build "converging lines of inquiry" (Yin, 2003, p. 98).

According to Merriam (2002), one of the defining characteristics and strengths of

qualitative research is the involvement of the researcher in data collection and analysis.

Merriam stated, "Since understanding is the goal of this research, the human instrument,

which is able to be immediately responsive and adaptive, would seem to be the ideal

means of collecting and analyzing data" (p. 5). Interviews and focus groups create

opportunities for researchers to explore participants' perceptions about and experiences

with the phenomenon under study.

Because intensive interviewing and focus groups are the primary strategies for

data collection, understanding the nuances associated with each strategy is fundamental

to this study. According to Hatch (2002), qualitative researchers who utilize interviews as

a part of data collection need to ensure that their interviews are well-developed and meet

certain criteria. Hatch (2002) argued that questions should be open-ended, utilize clear

language, and be nonthreatening.

This study utilized semistructured interviews, in which the researcher addressed

some predetermined issues and utilized some predesigned questions but was not overly

concerned with the order of the questions or the exact wording (Merriam, 2002, p. 13).

This approach allowed the interview to be conversational and gave the researcher an

opportunity to investigate new avenues that emerge during the interviews. Researchers

have noted the importance to the case study of such investigative follow-up (Yin, 2003, p. 89). Yin (2003) argued that questioning is a foundational skill for a case-study researcher (p. 59). Charmaz (2006) reiterated the importance of questioning in interviewing, arguing that poorly designed questions can result in "forcing data" or can fail to investigate key ideas that are fundamental to the core ideas of the phenomenon (p. 32). Moreover, Merriam (1998) recognized that adherence to an unyielding script would eliminate the use of probes necessary to developing a clear idea of participants' experiences and beliefs (pp. 74, 80).

While case-study methodology does not typically include the use of a focus group, this used an embedded-case design in which the identified teachers were the subunits. Yin (2003) stressed that the researcher must stay focused on the original case to assure that the subunits do not distract from development of the case (pp. 45-46). Yin (2003) stated, "A major [pitfall] occurs when the case study focuses only on the subunit level and fails to return to the larger unit of analysis" (p. 45). Thus, this study used the focus group as a data collection strategy to help connect the subunits to the case.

The focus group was more structured than the individual interviews because maintaining pace in a focus group is extremely important, not only for focus but also for time management (Janesick, 2004, p. 84). As with interviews, the creation of neutral, nonguiding questions was significant to acquiring nonbiased data (Hatch, 2002, p. 106). During the focus groups, the researcher avoided comments or gestures that showed approval or disapproval so that her opinions would not guide data collection (Janesick,

2004, p. 84).

Questioning is foundational to the collection of meaningful, qualitative data from interviews and focus groups (Charmaz, 2006; Hatch, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Hatch (2002) warned that questions should help the researcher discover information pertinent to the study. Hatch (2002) argued that questions should be open-ended to gather an understanding of participants' experiences and to help participants reflect on relationships and experiences (pp. 102, 104). Thus, the researcher worked to use high-quality probing and follow-up questions to gain data with both depth and detail (Hatch, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The focus group provided good direction and probing questions for each individual interview. Morse (2003) stated, "Focus group data are intelligible and interpretable (publishable) only as they are linked to the interview data from the main …project" (p. 193). The focus group was a good strategy for supplementing the interview data that were collected as the primary source of this case-study.

Data Analysis

One of the complicated aspects of a case-study design is that, like many other qualitative designs, it does not offer a formula for converting collected data into a conclusion (Patton, 2002, p. 432; Yin, 2003, p. 109). Though suggestive frameworks for analysis exist, none of these have become the mandatory blueprint for case-study data analysis (Patton, 2002, p. 433). Consensus exists, however, that in qualitative research the analysis phase is intertwined with the collection phase, leading to an emergent design

(Merriam, 1998, pp. 155, 162; Patton, 2002, p. 436; Stake, 1995, p. 71), and that a researcher's restraint about making premature conclusions during the data collection phase is foundational to this type of analysis (Patton, 2002, p. 436).

This particular study used an embedded case-design. In a multiple-case design, the researcher writes up and analyzes each case before undertaking a cross-case analysis (Patton, 2002, p. 57). Similarly, the researcher using an embedded case design must understand each unit as an individual entity while also understanding that the units' contribution to the case as a whole is vital (Yin, 2003, p. 45-46). Analyzing patterns and themes within the data is critical to the overall data analysis (Patton, 2002, p. 432, 453). During this stage of the study, the researcher uses the multiple relationships within the overall data set to make sense of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002, p. 432, 453). Though the relationships, patterns, and themes play a significant role in the data analysis, Stake (1995) reminded the reader that the overall goal of an intrinsic case study is to develop an overall understanding of the case (p. 77), which Merriam (1998) acknowledged requires both "breadth and depth of data collection" (p. 134).

Coding is a method that can be extremely useful in the overall organization of data and data analysis. Unlike grounded theory research, in which the researcher depends on the field data to create categories and subcategories (Charmaz, 2006; Merriam, 1998, p. 160), in case-study research the researcher may use preestablished codes to begin data analysis and then create additional codes based on themes within the data (Stake, 1995, p. 79). Merriam (1998) stated, "Designing categories is largely an intuitive process, but it is

also systematic and informed by the study's purpose, the investigator's orientation and knowledge, and the meanings made explicit by the participants themselves" (p. 179). During the coding process, the researcher relies on the data to discover themes and patterns that describe the overall phenomenon under study. Some researchers have suggested the creation of tables or arrays to help display the relationship between categories and themes (Creswell, 1998, p. 154). Moreover, the data can be used to develop a framework for the case and explain causal links; this level of description during the analysis phase can help the researcher clarify ideas (Yin, 2003, p. 114-115).

In the analysis phase, case-study researchers must check for their own internal biases. Acknowledging that the researcher explored alternate and contradictory interpretations strengthens the study and lessens both biases and the chance that the researcher manipulated the data to fit preexisting hypotheses (Patton, 2002, p. 553; Yin, 2003, p. 62). In addition, checking for alternative explanations is an analytic strategy that can help in the overall case evaluation (Yin, 2003, p. 112).

Written Analysis

Because no formula for analyzing data exists for the case-study methodology, providing significant detail within the final analysis is crucial. The researcher needs to give the reader enough evidence for the reader to conclude that the chain of evidence presented by the researcher supports the findings. Moreover, the written presentation and the level of description are specifically important to the case-study because "it is the reader, not the researcher, who determines what can apply to his or her context"

(Merriam, 2002, p. 179). The written analysis is the stage in which the researcher unveils the interlocking complexities of the study and synthesizes the multiple findings in a manner that not only paints a picture for the reader but also fills in the gaps that originally framed the study. Qualitative researchers discuss the depth of this writing by noting that its descriptions are thick, detailed, concrete, and rich; and they describe the value of including meaningful quotations to add both internal and external validity to the final product (Merriam, 1998, pp. 38, 211; Patton, 2002, pp. 438, 503; Yin, 2003, p. 34). According to Patton (2002), "description and quotation provide the foundation of qualitative reporting" (p. 503). The description of the case within the written report provides foundation for the synthesis of data and interpretation that the researcher offers in the end (Patton, 2002, p. 503). In this interpretive phase of the written analysis, the researcher linked ideas, themes, and concepts for the reader to make sense of and to simplify the presentation of the overall relationships that the data revealed during the analysis phase (Patton, 2002, p. 478).

Creation of Theory

According to some researchers, the creation of theory can be a component of a case study but is not required for the successful consummation of the study (Creswell,1998, p. 186; Merriam, 2002, p. 179). In contrast, a grounded theory methodology requires the creation of theory (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Meriam, 2002; Patton, 2002); thus, the freedom to develop a theory only if warranted adds strength to the overall design. The researcher hypothesized that this study

could lend itself to the development of a theoretical component because of the second research question, which had the potential to lend itself to the establishment of theory. Thus, examination of literature on theory development was important to the overall preparation of the study. Much of the literature on theory development is associated with but not limited to a grounded-theory methodology.

The primary purpose of theory development is to create theory about a phenomenon that has not been defined clearly (Patton, 2002). Within a grounded theory methodology, researchers present different frameworks for theory development. Charmaz (2006) explained that the operational definition of theory is dependent on the tradition in which the study is grounded but acknowledged that many theories combine aspects from both the positivist and interpretive traditions. On the other hand, Hatch (2002) believed that grounded theory studies are "clearly a postpositivist method" (p. 26). In addition, Waszak and Sines (2003) argued that grounded theory studies are rooted in a constructivist approach and are influenced by the perceptions of both the participants and the researchers. Thus, depending primarily on the themes that emerge in data collection, a researcher could justify the choice of a variety of traditions to ground the development of theory within a case study.

The theory developed during a grounded theory study is a substantive theory that emerges from the data and is "localized, dealing with particular real-world situations" (Merriam, 2002, p. 7). Moreover, Hatch (2002) acknowledged that "theory is derived from the careful study of a contextualized phenomenon" (p. 162). These ideas about

"localized," "contextualized" experiences reiterate the importance of understanding the study's context, thus, supporting the examination in section 2 of relevant contextual factors.

<p align="center">Research Design</p>

This research study was an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995) utilizing an embedded-case design (Yin, 2003) for its methodological approach and data analysis. Yin (2003) argued that case study is the method of choice when the researcher is specifically concerned with the role of contextual issues regarding the case (p. 13). Because the purpose of this study was to discover the themes associated with effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban school setting despite the documented challenges, the context was a primary concern, thus, supporting the choice of a case-study methodology.

The purpose of case study is to develop a deep understanding of a specific case (Merriam, 1998, p.134; Stake, 1995, p.77) and to investigate the complexities and multiple aspects of the case and the defined phenomenon (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). This particular study had two identified goals with respect to the investigation of the defined phenomenon—teachers actively deciding to remain in a specific southeastern urban district—and the understanding of the defined case—reputedly effective, core-area, secondary teachers within the defined district. First, scant empirical data exist that specifically identify factors influencing effective, secondary teachers' decisions to remain in the urban district (Brunetti, 2006; Morris, 2007; Nieto, 2003; Rice, 2006; Thompson,

2007); thus, exploring the issue was the first step in studying and understanding this phenomenon. Second, of those researchers who have examined factors influencing teachers' resilience or retention, practically none has isolated factors that are unique to effective teachers. Thus, the identification of themes or patterns unique to effective teachers was significant to developing a complete picture of the phenomenon.

Creswell (1998) and Merriam (2002) both articulated that theory development may be a final result associated with a case study. The researcher initially hypothesized that the second research question could possibly lend itself to theory development, but understood that the creation of theory would depend on whether or not substantial data would exist; a preliminary theory would depend on themes and patterns that emerged during data analysis. Thus, the researcher proposed that the study could possibly identify an intersection in three distinct areas of research: teacher resilience, teacher retention, and teacher effectiveness; thus, one potential outcome of this study could be a theory explaining the potential intersection of urban teacher resilience and urban teacher retention with respect to teachers' effectiveness and their decisions to remain in an urban school setting.

Charmaz (2006) argued that researchers allow their research questions to guide them in their methodological choices. The researcher determined that the first research question, "Given the well-documented challenges of urban schools, what factors influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in the inner-city high schools of a southeastern metropolitan area?" could be answered best using interviews and focus

groups. Charmaz (2006) stated,

> Intensive interviewing has long been a useful data-gathering method in various types of qualitative research … intensive interviewing permits an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience and, thus, is a useful method for interpretive inquiry…The in-depth nature of an intensive interview fosters eliciting each participant's interpretation of his or her experience. The interviewer seeks to understand the topic and the interview participant has the relevant experiences to shed light on it. (p. 25)

Yin (2003) acknowledged that intensive interviewing is "one of the most important sources of case study information" (p. 89).

The researcher answered the second research question— "What, if any, intersectional relationship exists between the concepts of teacher resilience, teacher retention, and teacher effectiveness as the constructs relate to teachers' decisions to remain?"— by utilizing the data from the focus group, interviews, and other documents that proved to be important to the study. The researcher hypothesized that reputational data would be important not only in sampling but also in establishing teacher effectiveness for the purposes of potential theory development.

After considering a variety of methodologies, designs, and traditions, the researcher selected an intrinsic case-study methodology with an embedded-case design as the most effective approach to answering the study's research questions. According to Hatch (2002),

> Solid research designs and compelling research proposals are founded on internal
>
> logical consistency. When there is a bad fit between methodological and
>
> substantive theory, between substantive theory and methods, or between
>
> methodological theory and methods, the logic of the design falls apart. (p. 41)

The researcher deemed a quantitative design inappropriate because limited empirical data exist concerning factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain in the urban setting (Brunetti, 2006; Morris, 2007; Nieto, 2003; Rice, 2006; Thompson, 2007). Although several studies have examined internal and external factors that influence urban teachers' perseverance and resilience, these studies have not clearly linked the identified factors to retention and teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting (Brunetti, 2006; Nieto, 2003; Patterson et. al, 2004). While other studies have examined factors that influence teachers' decisions to leave the urban setting (Groulx, 2001; Hanushek et al. 2001; Marvel et al., 2007; Smith & Smith, 2006; Tye & O'Brien, 2002), the researcher concluded that the pattern of inverting these findings to explain retention without empirical data proving that factors associated with teacher attrition and those associated with retention are inversely related constitutes poor research design. Researchers have examined the retention of teachers from a multitude of perspectives. Some studies have examined the effectiveness of new-teacher support systems with the retention of new teachers (Buttery, et al., 1990; Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2007; Foster, 1982; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Hare et al., 2001; Holt & Garcia, 2005; Moore, 2008). Other studies have examined increasing teacher retention by creating leadership roles for

teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Margolis, 2008; Quartz et al., 2008), identified collegiality as an influential factor in teachers' decisions to remain (Epp, 2007; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007; Gerstan et al., 2001; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Thompson, 2007), and found that teachers' commitment to students and student learning strongly influences teachers' decisions to remain (McKee, 2003; Thompson, 2007). Although these studies focused on factors influencing retention, they did not examine which factors are most influential in a teacher's decision to remain. Moreover, the studies did not appear to consider the multiple, interlocking factors that characterize the complexity of a teacher's decision to remain in an urban setting as a primary concern. Thus, creating a standardized tool to identify factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain seemed premature.

The purpose of this study was to enhance understanding of factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain, identify a potential intersectional relationship between three constructs, and examine how these factors may interact to influence teachers' decisions to remain in an urban secondary school. The purpose was not to measure the significance of certain factors with respect to a teacher's perceived effectiveness, to establish the significance of the intersectional relationship, or to test a hypothesis or theory. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) argued that mixed-methods designs should be used when neither a quantitative nor a qualitative approach could sufficiently answer the research questions (p. 15). Because the primary concern of the study was exploratory in nature, rather than an attempt to verify existing theory, a qualitative design satisfactorily

answered the research questions. While future research may apply quantitative measures to determine the significance of identified factors, the researcher rejected such measures for this study because a quantifiable relationship was not a primary concern with respect to the research questions. While a quantitative approach may provide the framework for an excellent follow-up study, a quantitative component would have distracted from the goals of this study. Thus, the researcher deemed a mixed-method design inappropriate because quantitative component would not have provided better data for the research questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003 p. 16).

A qualitative study allows new ideas to emerge (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 1998); whereas, the data collected in a quantitative study is confined to preexisting categories determined by the researcher and the literature. Thus, for the purposes of this study, a qualitative design permitted a more in-depth exploration of factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain and respected the complexity of the retention issue, considering both district initiatives and personal motivations. Qualitative studies are also sensitive to the contextual nature of particular phenomena and problems (Hatch, 2002). Given the complexity of the issues that characterize the urban district (Haberman, 2000; Parker et al., 1998; Weiner, 2006), considering the context is essential to properly answering the research questions; thus, the use of a qualitative study respected the influence of context on teachers' decisions.

Once the researcher narrowed the design to a qualitative study, choosing the tradition became an essential component to designing the research. Initially, the

phenomenon of teachers' choosing to remain in a setting documented as problematic

seemed to point to a phenomenological approach of examining participants with an

identical experience. However, phenomenology is better suited when participants have

experienced a particular event about which the researcher seeks to extract a common

feeling or reaction (Creswell, 1998, p. 38; Merriam, 1998, pp. 16-17). In this study,

though participants' experiences were important and though the phenomenon under study

was that teachers remain despite the challenges, the researcher was not asking

participants how they reacted to the idea of remaining, a characterizing aspect of

phenomenology (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998). Thus, understanding factors

influencing teachers' decisions to remain did not constitute a phenomenological query.

The researcher also considered utilizing grounded theory for its methodological

approach and data analysis because Creswell (1998) argued that grounded theory is the

methodology of choice when attempting to find commonalities among multiple

perceptions of the same phenomenon. Because the purpose of this study was to discover

the themes associated with effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban school

setting despite the documented challenges, the researcher initially concluded grounded

theory aligned well with both the research questions and the goals of the study.

Additionally, because the purpose of grounded theory studies is to generate theory from

data collected in the field to establish a framework for understanding a specific

phenomenon or contextual anomaly (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002), the

researcher initially focused on the potential theory that could develop with respect to the

second research question. However, upon further investigation, the researcher concluded that grounded theory did not respect the fact that the data collection was bounded with respect to both place and time, a defining characteristic of case-study methodology (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998, 2002; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

In the final decision, the bounded nature of the study played a large role in the choice of a case-study methodology. Once identifying case-study methodology as the preferred methodological approach, the identification of the case became a primary concern. At first, the researcher considered using a multicase study with two distinct cases: two teachers identified as highly effective from different high schools in the district. Though such a study would yield in-depth, exploratory data, limiting the exploration of factors to those influencing two sources' decisions to remain would have created only a narrow picture of the phenomenon of urban teachers' decisions to remain. Increasing the cases within the multicase design was not an attractive alternative because of Creswell's (1998) warning that such an increase can dilute data.

Thus, the most effective design proved to be a single-case study with an embedded design (Creswell, 1998, p. 187; Yin, 2003, pp. 40, 43). To maximize understanding while staying true to the characteristic that case-studies data collection contain both breadth and depth (Merriam, 1998, p. 134), the researcher decided to define the case as reputedly effective, core-area, secondary teachers within the defined district. Thus, the researcher bound the case by both location and teachers identified as meeting the established criterion, thus fulfilling a defining characteristic of a case study (Merriam,

1998, p. 27). The identified individuals who agreed to participate and the documents associated with each constituted the subunits within the case. The establishment of the case is at the core of any case-study and, inevitably, determines the success of the study (Merriam, 2002, p. 179; Yin, 2003, p. 24). This particular design aligned with Yin's (2003) suggestion that the "tentative definition of the unit of analysis (and therefore of the case) is related to the way you have defined your initial research questions" (p. 23) and Stake's (1995) proposal that the "case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing" (p. 2). Because the researcher was interested in the case and not using the case as a means to explore a separate phenomenon, the researcher defined the case study as intrinsic rather than instrumental (Stake, 1995, p. 3).

<div align="center">Sampling Strategy</div>

The identified urban district has 59 schools with seven high schools. The seven high schools have a total of approximately 440 teachers, including teachers from the following areas: core-content areas, fine arts, physical education, and career and technical. The researcher identified the potential participants for the study using a criterion sampling procedure. The sampling procedure for this study discriminated based on (a) school demographics, (b) teachers' years of service, (c) teachers' content area, and (d) teachers' reputations for effectiveness.

This study utilized a focus group and interviews as the primary sources of qualitative data. Creswell (1998) held that "the purposeful selection of participants represents a key decision point in a qualitative study" (p. 118). Thus, the first component

of the selection process was to narrow the pool of potential participants through criterion sampling. Criterion sampling guaranteed that all participants shared the characteristics and experiences important to this particular study and, thus, had the "ability to contribute to an evolving theory" (Creswell, 1998, p. 118).

Acknowledging that the typical urban school has well-documented challenges, this study sought to identify factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain despite the challenges. The teachers selected for the study came from schools whose student demographics reflected those discussed in the literature on lower-socioeconomic African-American urban school districts. Thus, researcher determined that, to meet the specific criteria of the study, teachers included must teach at a school with the following characteristics:

- o within 10 miles of a metropolitan area

- o minimum of 50% of students on free or reduced lunch,

- o minimum of 90% students identified as African American,

- o minimum of 75% of student population live in the community of the school, and

- o minimum of 95% of the students are identified as grades 9-12.

Because the study sought to understand what factors influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting, choosing teachers who have stayed in the urban setting beyond the time that researchers have found that many leave was significant to answering the question. Because this particular criterion was that of teachers' remaining,

the study included only teachers who had surpassed 5 years of service. Other researchers interested in teacher retention and teacher resilience have identified years of service as a criterion for study participation (Brunetti, 2006; Margolis, 2008; Morris, 2007; Thompson, 2007; Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

The researcher in the current study based the criterion of teachers' length-of-service on the literature regarding teacher attrition. The literature on new-teacher attrition, which tends to document teachers' decisions for their first 5 years, guided the selection of this marker. The literature has found that approximately 50% of urban teachers leave within their first 5 years (Education Development Center, 2005a; Harvard Graduate School of Education News, 2002a; NCTAF, 2002; New Teacher Center, 2006; Smith & Smith, 2006; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). Thus, urban teachers with over 5 years of service represent teachers who have chosen to remain despite the challenges.

Determining a teacher's effectiveness was a critical component of the study. The study's first research question concerned factors influencing effective teachers' decisions to remain, and its second research question concerned the potential intersectional relationship between teachers' perceived effectiveness, teacher retention, and teacher resilience. Thus, after identifying teachers who met the years-of-service criteria and whose schools met the demographic criteria, the researcher collected reputational data on teachers to identify those deemed effective. Though researchers' strategies have varied, the use of reputational data is a strategy that has been used in other research studies (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Morris, 2007; Southerland, 2007).

The researcher gathered the data from 42 sources divided into five groups: (a) two executive directors, (b) four area superintendents, (c) eight content area directors and their staff members, (d) 28 site-based administrators, including both principals and assistant principals, and (e) archival data on core-area, secondary teachers having attained National Board Certification.

The researcher used literature on effective teaching, in general, and effective teaching in the urban district, in particular, to create a definition for teacher effectiveness (Danielson, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Ladson-Billings, Darling-Hammond, & NPEAT, 2000; Nieto 2005, 2006a; NBPTS, 1989, 2006; NCTAF, 2002; Stanford, 1997). Each of the 36 respondents received a list of the characteristics of an effective urban teacher as defined by the literature and a list of teachers who met the specific criteria of the study. The respondents circled the teachers whom they judged to possess the personal characteristics and display the pedagogical strategies established by the definition of effectiveness. The researcher used the reputational data for both participant selection and participant categorization.

The researcher sent teachers judged effective by one or more respondents from a minimum of three of the five source categories a consent letter asking for their participation in the study. The researcher included 14 teachers in different facets of the study; this final selection was based both on the results of the reputational data and selected teachers' willingness to participate in the study.

In the proposal phase, the researcher had to create alternative plans in the design

in the case that more than 20 or less than 10 teachers agreed to participate. In the plan, if more than 20 teachers identified as highly effective by informants agreed to participate in the study, the researcher would have narrowed the participants to 20 by reanalyzing the reputational data. The researcher would have created a sample of 20 by prioritizing participants as follows: (a) those identified by informants in more than three of the source categories, (b) those chosen by multiple informants within exactly three source categories, and (c) those chosen by one informant within exactly three source categories.

If fewer than 10 teachers had agreed to participate in the study, the researcher would have visited all teachers identified by informants from three or more of the source categories. She would have explained the purpose of the study, emphasizing its potential to help the school district better understand factors influencing effective teachers' decisions to remain in the classroom. She would have also expressed her personal appreciation for participation and highlighted the potential intrinsic benefits to the participant.

The researcher asked the teachers to choose all of the aspects of the study in which they were interested in participating—focus group, individual interview, or document provider. The researcher suggested that teachers provide artifacts including, but not limited to, resume, previously recorded video footage of instruction, applications for grants, applications for teacher recommendation programs, copies of administrative evaluations, and any analyses of their teaching in the form of journals or written entries for National Board Certification. The researcher encouraged but did not require teachers

to participate in more than one aspect of the study.

Feasibility and Appropriateness

The researcher's role in the district was advantageous with respect to the negotiation of entry. Because of her work at the school and district level and her relationship with various administrators, little to no negotiation was necessary to gain entry and receive administrative support.

The researcher hired an outside source for help with the transcription of the focus group and interviews. The transcriptionist was not associated with the district and had no stake in the outcome of the study. She or the researcher transcribed the focus group and each interview. The researcher coded all tapes and sessions according to a participant pseudonym to protect the anonymity of participants.

All participants were volunteers who understood the purpose of the research study, potential dangers associated with their participation, and that they could exit the study at any time. Neither the researcher nor the district promised the volunteers anything for their participation. Because of the time associated with the focus group and interviews, the researcher provided snacks and drinks at each session. Upon the completion of each interview session, the researcher also provided a small token of appreciation, considered a "legitimate field expense" and appropriate practice (Stake, 1995, p 59).

Informed Consent and Ethical Considerations

Because reputational data is sensitive, the informants' selections remained both

confidential and anonymous. To assure confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher

placed all received forms in an envelope and utilized the consent forms to manage which

administrators had not responded. A week after the response data sheets were due in the

researcher's office, the researcher prepared a list of late responders, to whom the

researcher sent reminders. This strategy ensured proper protection of the administrators'

responses.

Prior to the interviews, the researcher secured participants' consent to participate

in the study, including the audiotaped segments (Hatch, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The consent forms included a description of the study, risks and benefits associated with

the study, and clear expectations with respect to time commitments. To preserve

anonymity, the following components of the study received pseudonyms: participants, the

district, administrators, and specific school sites. The researcher assured participants that

she would make every reasonable attempt to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

<div align="center">Researcher's Role</div>

The researcher has been a teacher in the selected district for over 10 years. As an

active leader at the school and district level, she is actively involved in professional

development as both a facilitator and participant. She is committed to the urban district

and to her students. In 1999 when she completed her master's degree, she was excited

about starting her career in the inner city. She was offended when a professor questioned

her choice to enter a high school with a reputation for violence and low student

achievement; he believed that she could better use her talents in a high-achieving

suburban school. This conversation was the beginning of her interest in the urban district and the systemic inequities associated with the context.

In the spring of 2008, a conversation with a colleague helped the researcher narrow her focus and solidify her research questions. One morning as the researcher sat in her room with a student, a teacher with over 20 years of service entered and began her usual rant about the politics of the district and her unhappiness with her job. This time, however, she alluded to an event that occurred when she was first hired. Observing that the teacher had remained for many years in a district that she hated, the researcher asked her the pertinent question, "So why have you stayed all of these years?" The teacher stated,

> I really like all of the vacation time with teaching and as far as staying here- Well, there is a freedom here. I have a four-day trip to [xxxx] in September. What other school would allow you to say "See ya – be back in four days." Could you imagine trying that at Happy pine (referred to a school that serves predominantly white, upper-class students) or Sunnyville (referred to a school that serves predominantly white middle-class students). You would never get away with that at another school system.

This conversation reminded the researcher, who had purposely chosen the inner city for her career, basing her choice on reasons closely aligned to Nieto's research and ideas of equity and social justice, that teachers remain for various reasons. She realized that multiple and perhaps contradictory factors influenced teachers' decisions both to begin

and to continue their careers in an urban setting. She began to wonder if the reasons given by teachers identified as effective and those given by teachers not identified as effective may be different, a hypothesis she later found during her review of the literature, especially in a study by Rice (2006). Thus, the researcher noted the importance of effectiveness as a specific construct in the study and refined her research question to focus only on teachers with a reputation for effectiveness. This conversation highlighted the importance of the development of specific guidelines to define teacher effectiveness and the value of collecting reputational data.

One potential limitation of this study is that the researcher — a National Board Certified Teacher, support provider for National Board candidates, and a member of district committees — had preexisting relationships with some of the teachers identified as highly effective, and her own reputation for effectiveness and leadership may have influenced the answers of some participants. The researcher addressed this limitation by working to create a trusting interview environment that promoted openness and honesty.

A potential source of bias in this study was the researcher's assumptions about the possible results based on her own years of experience in the urban district, conversations with colleagues, and a thorough review of literature. Thus, to decrease bias, introducing these initial predictions is extremely important to the study. The researcher assumed that effective urban teachers would feel a moral obligation to teach students in the urban district and remain because of a sense of commitment reinforced by meaningful student-teacher relationships and relationships with the community. The researcher hypothesized

that teachers not identified as effective may remain for some of the same reasons but would also identify tenure, retirement system, and benefits as primary reasons for remaining. Thus, in the initial design of the study, identifying effectiveness as a specific criterion for selection became foundational to overall design. To avoid skewed data analysis, the researcher explored alternate and contradictory interpretations of the data to ensure that she did not improperly analyze data to align with her preexisting assumptions, a strategy promoted by researchers such as Patton (2002) and Yin (2003).

<center>Data Collection Procedures</center>

The study included multiple types of data collection with interviews being the predominate source of data collection, as supported by Merriam (1998), who acknowledged that rarely do all forms of data collection hold the same level of importance within a study (p. 137). A focus group and interviews explored factors associated with teachers' decisions to remain in the urban district. The interviews were one of the techniques utilized to understand the subunits, and the synthesis of the interview data contributed to understanding the case as a whole. The focus group constituted a data collection strategy that respected the case as an individual unit worthy of inquiry and study. The researcher used criterion sampling to identify 14 participants for the study and reputational data for both sampling and the categorization of data. After the collection of the reputational data, the researcher sent recruitment letters and consent forms to teachers identified by three or more source categories as highly effective. She invited the teachers to volunteer for participation in the study at any of the three levels, as

described previously.

The researcher convened the focus group of teachers identified as effective to collect data and refine interview questions. After this initial stage, the researcher conducted individual interviews with teachers from the focus group and others who did not participate in the focus group. Each analysis throughout the process helped the researcher to determine additional avenues for inquiry and to refine questions for participants (Merriam, 1998, p. 151). Data from the focus group and interviews coupled with data from archival documents provided sufficient data for the establishment of patterns and themes.

Hatch (2002) and Rubin and Rubin (2005) acknowledged the importance of questioning in qualitative data collection. The researcher used open-ended questions that sought to understand the participants' experiences by encouraging the participants to analyze and reflect on their experiences and decisions. The researcher posed probing and follow-up questions to gather data in depth and detail (Patton, 2002, p. 372).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) discussed the importance of taking notes during the interviews while maintaining active listening (p. 111). The researcher documented reactions and expressions by journaling during each interview, relying primarily on audiotapes to collect the data. She audiotaped the focus group and all interviews, downloaded the audiotaped interviews from the recording device to her computer, and saved both the interviews and transcriptions on her password-protected computer.

Yin (2003) mentioned that one of the strengths of case-study research is the use of

multiple forms of evidence as a method of triangulation. The use of various data

collection strategies allows for the "development of converging lines of inquiry" (Yin,

2003, p. 98). Thus, this study sought to gain a deeper understanding of the case by

collecting data beyond that provided by the focus group and interviews. The

predesignated modes for data collection included resume, previously recorded video

footage of classroom, applications for grants, applications for teacher recognition

programs, copies of administrative evaluations, and analyses of teaching in the form of

journals or written entries for National Board Certification. Merriam (1998) reminded the

researcher of the importance of remaining open to including various forms of documents

that may emerge in the data collection (p. 121). As other suggestions for documents or

data-collection procedures emerged during the study, the list grew to include a portfolio

from a participant's master's program to ensure a deeper understanding of the case.

<div align="center">Data Analysis and Interpretation</div>

The researcher and her assistant, who had no association with the district or the

participants, transcribed the focus group and interviews verbatim directly into word

processing documents. Both Rubin and Rubin (2005) and Hatch (2002) suggested that

transcription be done shortly after the interview. The transcriptions and the analysis of

transcriptions occurred within a week of each interview. After each transcription was

complete, the researcher simultaneously listened to the interview and read the

transcription to ensure that the data was correctly represented (Merriam, 1998, p. 88). She

conducted an analysis of each interview upon the completion of the transcription because

one of the defining characteristics of qualitative research is that the data collection phase and the data analysis phase are intermingled (Merriam, 1998, p. 162; Patton, 2002, p. 436; and Stake, 1995, p. 71).

Coding of interviews, logs from focus groups, and outside documents served as one of the strategies for data analysis. Coding is a process in which the researcher affixes labels to different portions of data to describe the overall theme, event, or purpose of the section (Charmaz, 2006, p. 3). "Qualitative codes take segments of data apart, name them in concise terms, and propose an analytic handle to develop abstract ideas for interpreting each segment of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 45). The creation of categories can be preexisting in a case-study design (Stake, 1995, p. 79), but additional categories emerge from the data and begin with the analysis of the first interview (Merriam, 1998, p. 181).

The researcher analyzed each transcript and document with the specific goal of identifying emergent categories that help classify factors influential in teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting in spite of the well-documented challenges. During this phase, the researcher continuously examined the transcripts in search of information that provided additional insight into each category and the overall phenomenon (Creswell, 1998, p. 151). During the coding phase, the researcher used line-by-line coding to ensure that she remained immersed in the actual data rather than distracted by a participant's overall views. In a secondary analysis, the researcher examined the frequency of initial codes and began to identify the most significant categories. The researcher examined how subcategories within each category connect to each other and identified intersections

within the data, the overall themes, and the subcategories (Creswell, 1998, p. 151). She

worked to make the data manageable so that others could easily understand the

phenomenon (Stake, 1995, p. 97).

The researcher relied on the data and emergent themes to develop a complete

picture of the phenomenon. The researcher used the data from the interviews to create

narratives to add validity to the findings. Sections 4 and 5 detail this phase.

Validity and Reliability

The combined utilization of a focus group, interviews, and documents added

credibility to the findings by creating a triangulated design (Meriam, 1998, p. 204;

Patton, 2002, p. 556). In addition, the researcher used several strategies, as suggested by

Creswell (1998, 2003), to verify the findings of the study. First, member checking

entailed sending a copy of individual interview transcriptions to each participant to

ensure accuracy of the transcriptions and allow participants to expand upon ideas that

they believed the researchers or others could misinterpret (Creswell, 2003, p. 196;

Merriam, 1998, p. 204; Stake, 1995, p. 115). In addition, the researcher asked three

participants to analyze the findings section and approve the researcher's interpretations of

their comments (Creswell, 2003, p. 196; Patton, 2002, p. 560; Stake, 1995, p. 115).

Second, the researcher used "rich, thick description to convey the findings" (Creswell,

2003, p. 196). The researcher believes that describing participants' perspectives in depth

is important to help the reader become part of the story and to lend credibility to the

findings (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). Third, the researcher explained in detail her potential

biases based on her relationship with participants and the district in order to "create an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). Though her relationship with the district and participants could have prevented some participants from openly expressing their views, her role in the district also may have been advantageous. Her active involvement in the district and with teachers has served as a form of prolonged engagement. Participants knew that she was familiar with the context, has experienced similar struggles, and was not entering the environment with an attitude of superiority. Finally, an outside reader from the research site, the researcher's dissertation advisor, and her dissertation committee reviewed the study and asked "the hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations" (Creswell, 1998, p. 202).

According to Yin (2003), the establishment of a specific protocol prior to the data collection phase increases the reliability of the study (p. 57). Because the researcher completed the first three sections prior to the collection of data, a specific strategy for data collection framed the study. In this particular phase, the researcher exposed her potential biases and existing relationships, which added credibility to the overall study (Patton, 2002, p. 553).

SECTION 4: FINDINGS

Data Collection

Data collection for this study occurred in multiple stages upon receiving consent from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (approval #10-07-09-0332623) and the selected school district. The first stage required the collection of reputational data on core-area teachers with over 5 years of experience. The researcher identified six of the district's seven high schools as qualifying for the study. According to the district's Title I Office, in the 2009-2010 school year, 65.17% to 87.29% of the students in these neighborhood schools qualified for free or reduced lunch; and, according to the attendance department, African-American youth comprised 94.41% to 99.89 % of the student population of the schools. Because the district's human resources department was undergoing administrative changes, the researcher turned to the system's four curriculum content specialists for timely and accurate lists from the six qualifying schools of all currently employed teachers who were in the district during the 2004-2005 school year.

The next stage of data collection required administrators at various levels to identify teachers deemed to possess certain characteristics associated with effectiveness. Because of the sensitive nature of this process, the researcher met with administrators to explain the purpose of the research and to request their assistance in identifying teachers who would be helpful in answering the primary research question. The researcher clarified that she would not consider teachers not identified by administrators as effective to be ineffective, but would consider that their not marking a teacher could indicate lack of knowledge about the teacher's specific practices or that the teacher met most but not eight or more of the identified criteria. The administrators indicated that these

conversations helped them feel more comfortable about supplying the requested information. Most asked for a minimum of a week to consider both their participation and their answers.

Of the 42 administrators invited, 25 returned the survey within 3 weeks. Two additional school-based administrators returned their data sheets after initial data collection had begun. Their input did not change the qualification status for anybody at their own location. One, however, identified two teachers from another location, changing their status. The researcher made a judgment not to include these two teachers in the sample because all school-based administrators from that particular school had returned their forms and none had identified these two teachers. Thus, the researcher questioned whether the administrator identified them based on past observations, and their recent practices may not be at the same level.

Central office administrators represented three of the source categories; in total, the researcher requested participation from 14 administrators and 11 returned the reputational data. School-based administrators created one of the source categories; in total, the researcher requested participation from 28 administrators and 16 returned the reputational data. Administrators' stated reasons for not participating included lack of comfort about releasing this information to a teacher in the district, lack of deep knowledge of teachers' practices because of their location at central office, and time restraints.

After the researcher secured the reputational data, she tallied the results on a data

collection sheet divided into five source categories: (a) executive directors, (b) area superintendents, (c) content-area specialists and content-area support teachers, (d) school-based administrators, and (e) national-board certified teachers. The researcher gave members of each source category a different color form, which assisted in compiling the data for each source category. Of the 141 teachers listed on the form, informants in one or more source categories identified 120 teachers as effective. Of the listed teachers, informants in three or more source categories identified 22 teachers as effective, creating the initial sample space. The study design assured that each teacher interviewed had a reputation for effectiveness beyond a school-based administrator's positive opinion.

The researcher initially contacted 20 teachers via email, sending a brief letter of explanation and an attached consent form. One week later, the researcher mailed each teacher the same letter and consent form via the district mail system. A few days after confirmation of delivery, the researcher followed up with personal phone calls inviting the teachers to participate in the study. Nine teachers were willing to participate in all three components: (a) focus group, (b) interview, and (c) archival documents. Four teachers had prior commitments conflicting with the focus group but agreed to participate in individual interviews and to provide archival data, and one teacher committed to participate in the focus group and provide archival documents. Some teachers did not respond to any of the contact methods, some were overwhelmed with too many school responsibilities, and another was offended by the formal tone of the consent form. The 14 participants satisfied the researcher's proposed intention of having 10-20 participants for

each phase of the data collection.

The researcher audio-taped interviews with a digital recorder and a tape recorder, and she or an assistant transcribed a verbatim account of the focus group conversation and each individual interview. The researcher took notes during the focus group and the interviews to track key ideas, emerging themes, and points for discussion. In addition, she provided pens and paper in each setting and invited participants to note points to address later in the discussion.

Data Analysis

Focus Group and Individual Interviews

During the focus group, the researcher listened and took notes as each person spoke, which allowed her to ask probing and guiding questions to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' thoughts. This strategy provided her an opportunity to group emerging themes and conduct initial member checking during the focus group. Within 24 hours of the focus group and each individual interview, the researcher listened to the taped session and reflected on themes. After the focus group, this listening and reflecting session allowed additional time to process the participants' views, creating additional questions for each individual participant; some of the questions were related directly to the subunit and some were directed to everyone and related to the case. After each individual interview, the review of the audiotape gave the researcher an opportunity to examine the questions, identify potential emerging themes, and design follow-up questions for other participants. The researcher later listened to each interview while

reading the typed transcript to ensure accuracy of data and gain a deeper understanding of the data. She maintained a research journal with notes taken during the focus group and interviews, as well as during her periods of reflection.

Each individual interview of teachers who had participated in the focus group began with member checking. The researcher recounted each theme that had emerged during the focus group and invited the participant to expand on, clarify, or refute the theme. The researcher then asked the questions specifically designed for the interview to gather additional data for research questions that were not fully answered during the focus group and as a means for triangulation of data.

Individual interviews of teachers who had not participated in the focus group served as a means of corroborating data. During the sampling process and the request for participation, four teachers expressed their desire to participate but regretted their inability to attend the focus group. Because of their interest, the researcher deemed that their participation in interviews was necessary in order to adhere to the initial research design. However, because of the rich data that the focus group provided, the researcher deemed that the organization of these interviews must be different in order to maintain trustworthiness of data. Thus, the researcher organized these interviews differently to avoid influencing answers or encouraging certain responses. She began with the questions specifically designed for the interview and ended with the questions from the focus group. At the end of each interview, the researcher discussed the motivational and experiential themes that had materialized during the focus group and invited the

interviewees who had not attended the group to respond to them.

The researcher conducted, transcribed, and analyzed the interviews of participants who had not attended the focus group only after completing this entire process with those who had attended. This sequence allowed the researcher to accurately compare and contrast the interviews of the first and second groups by identifying new themes, supportive data for existing themes, and contradictory or nonconfirming data.

In the proposal phase, the researcher proposed that all transcripts would be analyzed using line-by-line coding. During the data analysis, the researcher examined the data from an additional lens by grouping the data thematically to ensure that she had a deep understanding of both the subunits and the case. The researcher examined the transcripts by two methods to understand the data from both the focus group and the individual interviews. First, the researcher examined each transcript holistically to look at the data from the perspective of the research questions. If a participant specifically addressed a research question, the researcher highlighted the data on the transcript and copied and pasted the group of sentences that addressed the question into a Microsoft Word file for the question.

Next, the researcher used a line-by-line coding system to analyze the transcripts. At the end of each sentence, the researcher documented all major themes addressed in the sentence. For the focus group, the researcher used words such as "anger," "passion," "reflection," "frustration," "content," "inequities," "SES" (socioeconomic status), and "community." After giving each sentence one to five words, the researcher typed each

word label into the ―Find― function of the Word tools and organized the occurrences of these words into separate Word documents to reveal themes for which she created a shorthand coding system. This system included codes such as, "PD" (professional development), "PS" (passion for students), "PC" (passion for content), "RP" (reflection on practice), and "RL" (reflection on student learning). The researcher utilized the shorthand coding system as she analyzed the individual interview transcripts. If the sentence represented an idea that did not have a code, the researcher documented the idea in longhand, giving a code to the idea if it began to emerge in other interviews. For instance, after the idea of a spiritual calling appeared in a few interviews, the researcher created the code "GF" (God/ Faith).

Next, the researcher compared and contrasted the two methods. She examined the data as separate pieces and as a whole, using the data grouped by codes and the data grouped by researcher questions. Then, the researcher went back to the data grouped within question sets and worked to pinpoint the main point of each comment, using the coded data as a guide. The researcher constantly grouped and separated the two forms of analyses until the story emerged. The creation of section 4 and the story of the participants as a whole represent the outcome of this process of data analysis.

Archival Documents

The researcher collected participants' archival documents throughout the process and analyzed them for supporting or nonconfirming data. She first grouped and analyzed these documents as a whole and then compared their contents to the data extracted from

transcriptions as a form of triangulation. The researcher first looked at all of the videos

and noted commonalities in teaching approaches, which she later compared to the

transcription data and, eventually, used them as a means of data corroboration.

Additionally, administrative evaluations underscored the theme that teachers successfully

engaged students in instruction. The researcher examined participants' résumés

separately and holistically as a separate form of data. The résumés revealed a theme not

discussed in the interviews or the focus group, offering additional insight into the study

yet not necessarily providing corroborating or nonconfirming data. The entries from the

National Board Certification Process served as corroborating data for a theme that

emerged from the transcripts and one that emerged from the resumes. These six writing

pieces served as a form of corroborating data but did not reveal additional themes that

could be supported overall. Recommendation letters from administration for graduate

studies highlighted many of the themes that the both the interviews and the resumes

revealed.

    This collective form of analysis was fundamental to the overall design. This

method helped maintain a focus on the specified case-- reputedly effective, core-area,

secondary teachers within the defined district-- rather than allowing distraction by the

subunits of individual participants. The constant grouping and separating of the data

allowed for the collective voice to speak. Had the design focused on creating an

individual story for each participant, the focus would have been on the subunit and not

the identified case, which would have failed to meet the purpose of a study utilizing an

embedded-case design.

Introduction to Findings

This study addressed in all areas of data collection, including the collection of reputational data, the primary question: Given the well-documented challenges of urban schools, what factors influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in the inner-city high schools of a southeastern metropolitan area?

The question of effective teachers' personal motivation to remain in the urban district was sufficiently compelling to some administrator- informants, who spontaneously reflected upon and reported to the researcher their own reasons for remaining. For instance, one informant described remaining in the classroom for several years after completing her doctorate, not only because of her commitment to urban students but also her inability to handle major life changes well. For her, remaining in a teaching position was comfortable as well as rewarding. Now a central office administrator, she channels her continuing passion for the districts' students into engaging teachers in methods of instruction that support the learning of urban students.

Four major themes emerged during the 2 hour focus group. The researcher identified three of the themes during the discussion and discovered the fourth theme during the dissection of data. She listed the first three themes on the board prior to the end of the focus group, and the participants verbalized consensus that the three themes represented the conversation well. The teachers in the focus group remained because of (a) a deep passion and love for their students, (b) a dedication to social justice, and (c) a

professional community of effective teachers. A fourth theme became evident during data analysis. This group of reflective practitioners returned each year to correct mistakes from the previous year. They returned to perfect their crafts.

Intersectional relationships between retention and resilience emerged in both the focus group and the individual interviews, shedding light on whether factors influencing resilience are synonymous with factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain or whether factors influencing these phenomena share some common themes while maintaining their separate entities. Some of the factors associated with remaining were synonymous with those affecting resilience or were by-products of strategies associated with teacher effectiveness. Other factors related to resilience and effectiveness but did not have a great impact on teachers' decisions to remain. In the focus group, the discussion about remaining related directly to resilience and effectiveness, and in the individual interviews participants confirmed that most of the themes of the focus group best supported why they returned each year, questioning only the importance of teacher community. These converging themes answered the second research question, What, if any, intersectional relationship exists between the concepts of teacher resilience, teacher retention, and teacher effectiveness as the constructs relate to teachers' decisions to remain?

Additional themes arose in individual interviews. These teachers, as a whole, expressed a spiritual calling to teach in the urban district. Many described themselves as instruments of God's will in their work. They believed that God and their spiritual

connection added to their resilience and encouraged their yearly return. In addition, the

data identified the district's support of professional development as the primary external

factor producing any influence on these highly effective teachers. Most attested to the

influence of professional development opportunities on their resilience, rejuvenation, and

overall effectiveness. These teachers, however, were adamant that professional

development opportunities alone did not influence their decision to remain. The archival

documents, though not discussed in detail in the interviews, revealed an overriding

characteristic among all of these teachers -- leadership and involvement outside of the

classroom.

Above all, these highly effective teachers remained for the students. As many

made clear, everything came back to the students. Shane said it eloquently in his

individual interview: "They are the nucleus." These teachers experienced great pride in

watching their students grow as learners and blossom into productive citizens. Many

discussed the joy of having students return to visit or of seeing them in public. The smiles

and appreciation they receive from graduates for the impact they made drives them to

come back year after year.

<center>Study's Participants</center>

The researcher presents the following demographic information holistically and

describes individual teachers utilizing pseudonyms and avoiding demographic identifiers

to preserve participant anonymity. Of the 14 participants, two had fewer than 10 years of

service, eight had between 10 and 20 years, and four had over 20 years. The group

consisted of three English teachers, two science teachers, five social studies teachers, and four mathematics teachers. The group was diverse in its racial and gender make-up, with five African-American men, two Caucasian men, five African-American women, and two Caucasian women. Two of the participants were identified by informants in all five source categories, five by informants in four source categories, and seven by informants in three source categories.

Margot is a teacher whose enthusiasm and energy were evident in both the focus group and the interview. She has a deep passion for both her content and her students. When she talks about her students, her eyes gleam and her words reveal her zeal for her profession. Margot has a passion for student learning. She is a leader, a learner, and a teacher.

Tyrik is soft-spoken, considerate, and generally smiling. He has a passion for students. He views himself as someone who offers guidance and support beyond content. He is not easily rattled and has an uncanny ability to go with the flow. He laughs frequently and takes pleasure in his job. He respects his students and has a deep-seated belief in his purpose as a teacher.

Shane is very talkative and has a strong personality. He has probably never left a thought unspoken. He relates his firm opinions through long, detailed stories that leave no question about where he stands on any given topic or person. He often discusses his upbringing, and his identification with his deep southern roots definitely colors his overall temperament. He believes that 90% of teaching is personality and 10% is content.

Daniel began his career in education with a passion for his content and developed a passion for students and social justice. He strongly believes that urban teachers must teach with a sense of urgency because they are fighting for lives. Rather than being angry about the inequities of the world in which his students live, he focuses on his hope for their futures.

Isabella is a teacher who believes that her role is to show her students hope. Despite a childhood background marked by poverty and foster care, she gained an education and became a teacher. She applied only to this urban district for her first position, following an early certainty about her calling to teach urban youth.

Alexandra cherishes her two families—one family that includes her husband and her daughter and the other that includes all the students she has taught throughout the years. Her students are her light, and she is there for them as both teacher and surrogate mother. Many of them know that she is available to them for extra help via telephone, email, blogging, or personal tutoring sessions at the public library. Her students are part of her life.

Caroline is a vibrant, loud, and energetic teacher who yearns to spread her knowledge of content to students and her knowledge of pedagogy to other teachers. She is a teacher and a teacher leader. Her words show her passion for education and her belief that all students deserve a great teacher. She believes that students have an innate desire to learn, and she continually works to find new methods to engage students in learning.

Cornelius was the youngest of all of the teachers interviewed. He felt drawn to the

urban district because he believed that the suburbs have no difficulty finding good teachers. He continually challenges himself to improve his craft by seeking better ways to teach his content. He strives for all students to gain understanding and constantly adapts his lesson plans and pedagogical methods to reach this goal.

Bruce wants to give his students the opportunities and experiences that are regularly offered to more affluent students. He fights for his students' rights. When he looks at his students, he sees himself as a teenager. He grew up in the housing projects and felt that he was never one of "those" exceptional students or at one of "those" privileged schools. He strives to even the playing field for his students by equipping them with both hope and knowledge.

Gerard feels a responsibility to his profession. He realizes that his students face many obstacles and need someone to mentor them. He wants to be a "positive agent" who prepares students to be competitive in a global market. He wants them to understand that their competition is not sitting beside them in the classroom but, instead, comes from the other side of town or another part of the country. He wants to help his students to experience success.

Samuel believes that his students need him; he is motivated by his own experiences. He believes that if he is not in class his students will miss learning something. He knows that he has the power to change lives and mold the minds of students. He sees his role not only as that of a teacher but also a counselor.

Ashley has recently made a shift to teaching Advanced Placement courses. This

new challenge, along with her dedication to students and their learning, has her feeling as if her schedule is too full for any extra commitments. She is working to balance her professional learning, her student tutoring, and her personal life. She wants to be a "good" teacher because she believes that truly "good" teachers are a scarce commodity.

Lanie loves her students. She previously taught in a school system whose demographics were markedly different from those of the urban district. She loves working in her current setting because it fulfills her need to feel needed. She discussed how grateful the students are when they receive good instruction. She looks at the relationship dynamic between her students and herself as a mutually beneficial arrangement; they need each other.

Caryn dresses in professional attire with every piece of clothing and every strand of hair perfectly in place. Caryn considers herself to be a role model to students. She wants her students to see themselves in her and to envision their futures as successful professionals. She knows her students are the community's future, and she believes that she has a civic duty to prepare them and to give them hope.

Participants' Interactions and Experiences

The researcher convened the focus group to discuss internal and external factors influencing each teacher's decision to remain. Her goal was to capture any emerging themes for detailed discussion during later individual interviews and to note any consensus that the group might reach.

The criterion sampling proved to be a powerful tool. Teachers from five district

high schools gathered around a table to discuss their experiences. The conversation began at a slow, typical pace. Yet, within 30 minutes, the teachers had formed a community, evidenced by their excitement about feeding off each other's passions and feeling the strength that surrounded them. They could sense that the other teachers at the table were highly effective. They spontaneously noted the commonality of their purpose and the similarity of their struggles, solutions, and passions. They believed in their children, and they believed in their own power to be change agents and positive role models. Despite different personalities, distinct teaching styles, and diverse backgrounds, the group quickly bonded over zeal for their students.

The individual interviews with participants who attended the focus group were much more intense than the interviews with those who had not attended. The focus group ignited a collective energy and intensity that remained with participants upon departure and carried over into many of the individual interviews. The focus group discussion unveiled common beliefs and purposes, and the process served as a gateway to powerful conversations in both the group and the individual interviews. Those who had attended the focus group retained an intense connection to the conversation and looked forward to its continuance on a one-on-one basis, evidenced by comments made during the individual interviews. The interviews of those who had attended the focus group ranged in length from one to two hours, averaging about 80 minutes. The interviews with those who had not attended the focus group ranged in length from 30 to 45 minutes.

After his individual interview, Bruce reflected on his initial apprehension about

participating in the study, mainly because of extensive extra-curricular commitments, specifically those concerning student academic teams. In the end, however, he expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate.

> You're right; it's not venting, but it helps to just get it out every now and then. It builds up. Nobody ever asked me the things we've talked about today and in the focus group. The questions have never come up. When they look at what we do, there are so many givens involved. Just because they are given, it still helps every now and then to take it out and set it down on the floor, like my dryer, and just look at it; and you don't get the chance to do that. So, if nothing else, I appreciate the opportunity to do that, because I really didn't want to do this. "I've got so much to do already, why do they ask me to do this kind of stuff?" Now that I did it, I feel good.

Bruce found the experience rewarding and enjoyed contributing his voice. Gerard reiterated this idea when asked if he had any final thoughts or comments by stating "I've gotten it all out. It's been a great experience." The researcher questions, however, whether either teacher would have voiced this opinion as confidently had each not found his initial strength from the focus group experience.

<div align="center">First Primary Research Question: Reasons for Remaining</div>

Data from both the focus group and the individual interviews answered the primary research question for the study: Given the well-documented challenges of urban schools, what factors influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in the inner-city

high schools of southeastern metropolitan area?

Based on focus group and individual interviews and corroborated by archival documentation, data pointed to the fact that teachers return each year because of (a) their passion for students, (b) their commitment to social justice, and (c) their desire to become masters of their craft. Their passion for students was evident in individual interviews, group interviewing, and the archival documents. Everything this group of teachers does within the field is an attempt to foster students' learning. They are committed to these particular students out of a sense of social justice grounded in their faith, their upbringing, an awareness of injustices based on race or socioeconomic status, or a combination of the above. Their high level of reflection demonstrates continual assessment of their own practices and an internal drive to improve their professional performance. This drive derives from a belief that they need to be the best because the students need them to be the best.

Theme One: Passion for Students

The teachers' passions were represented in each of their stories, and the common bond was that they employed parental tones when speaking of their school children. Shane recited for the focus group what he tells his students: "You belong to me while you are here at school. While you are in this room, I am your surrogate—your daddy, your uncle, your granddaddy, your great granddaddy." These teachers claim the children as their own. They feel their pain, and they celebrate their successes. Tyrik explained, "And, I tell them I love them, because they may not hear it." During the focus group, the

teachers laughed about how they are often able to say something to a student that no other teacher could say, reflecting that this is true, in part, because their students claim them, too.

The teachers talked at length about how their students truly want their teachers to teach. They discussed the pain that they feel when other teachers do not teach or when they describe their students as incapable of learning. The group agreed that good instruction is the best way to convey to students that their teacher cares about them. Margot stated,

But, you know what communicates that you like them? When you teach them, the way that you are teaching them. Children know good instruction, and they'll pretend – "aw, there's all that" – but they know when you are structured; they know when you care; they know when you've planned assignments.

Gerard agreed with Margot's idea and shared,

That shows about care, or concern, or love; I'm here to instruct you, to give you something that you need. And the kids, like you said, do see that; because when they move on to someone else who may not be showing those things, then they really appreciate it. Once they think about it and they reflect on it, they say, "Yeah, that person … yeah, I didn't do everything I was supposed to do, but that person really cared for me, that person really was trying to give me something I really needed."

This passion for good instruction as a vehicle for showing they care is evident in the

lesson designs of these teachers. They find ways to connect with their students through their instruction. Margot stated,

> We've talked about the passion of what keeps us going back. I think one thing that I have developed an affection for is hearing their voices and allowing them to speak about their lives and what's going on in their lives in the classroom… Some children are bold enough to speak about them. They may get a little teary-eyed, but if they don't speak about it in class, they will do it in their journaling. We'll write notes back and forth to one another in their journaling, so that lets them have some type of ownership in the class and feel that it's OK for me to be transparent here. It's OK for me. This is a safe environment.

Some of the participants view lesson design and teaching as a means of saving students lives as well as an avenue to affect student achievement. Cornelius explained that teachers have to fight for students to be educated.

> You have to be stubborn. You have to be if you're gonna be in education. You just gonna have to be. Because you're combating more than just academics …So, you've got to have tough skin to be able to kinda pound through that. It's almost like war. It's mental, though. You're fighting all sorts of stuff; but you are doing it in the classroom with your subject. …You're trying to arm these kids with knowledge so they can go out and make whatever difference they can make or become successful in their rights or whatever.

That fight, in itself, is a necessary component of effectiveness and is evidence of the

passion that the teachers have for their students and their futures.

Several of the participants described perceiving themselves as fighting to save their students' lives and expressed the urgency of fighting against students' inner-city surroundings. Caryn expressed this when she stated, "I'm here because I want to make a difference, to say that … Even if it's one child I keep off the street, that's the reason why I stay here." Daniel explained the importance of teaching urban students and how it differs from other contexts.

The sense of urgency isn't there. So, yeah, I'd say the contextual struggle is different, because we feel the time ticking. When we have our issues … At the end of the year, I don't know what's gonna happen to my kids. So, I feel the kind of pressure … I think it adds to, compounds the pressure … You feel under pressure to do the best you can right now, this moment, not next time… That's the sense of urgency that I didn't pick up at the other school. So, yes, there is a big difference.

He explained that teaching in the urban school is unlike any other job.

In this job, I know I can't slide. If I slide, I'm doing too big of a disservice… I could slide in another job; I'd be OK with it, because at heart I'm a slacker, so I'd be OK with the bare minimum. But knowing that it has repercussions keeps me motivated…. I think the repercussion of sliding in this one is that we lose kids. Kids slide off the grid, and they don't ever come back….We lose everything about them. I'll see them out on the streets with the crack lords sooner or later. Or

I'll read about them in the paper, or someone will tell me about them being in jail.

We actually have real serious repercussions, and we have to be aware of that. The teachers believe that if they are not there to fight against the elements, then the students may lose their own struggle with their environment. Lanie shared this same sense of needing to always be prepared to greet her students with her best

I would always want to do my best at anything that I went into; but, at the same time, when you are touching the lives and when you are molding young people, I think it adds a little more degree to "Yes, I want to always do my best and be my best around them and give them everything that I'm supposed to be giving them."

She continued, "You give more when the needs are greater. I feel like I need to give more because the need is greater here." While they understand that the Board of Education could easily replace them with a warm body to deliver instruction, they believe that the Board cannot easily replicate their level of passion and dedication. Samuel stated,

I feel that if I'm not there, they are going to miss something. I take what I do to heart, not just that I wake up every morning and go to a job. There is more to it than just going to a job. I put myself in it…. Knowing that I'm helping to change their lives, I'm able to motivate them, I'm able to sit down and talk with them.

The teachers understand that they are fighting against multiple factors that influence their students.

These teachers' passion reveals itself in multiple ways. Many of these teachers believe in their ability to transform the lives of their students. They want to be sources of

inspiration and to help their students reach their maximum potential. Gerard explained,

> They need somebody, and I just want to be that somebody—a positive agent for
>
> them. So, that's been a passion for me—to be somebody positive, to show
>
> something positive, to be something positive for them, that they can see. … A lot
>
> of kids, when they come to school, we're the most positive influence that they
>
> see; and I want that to be something good that they can carry over back home.

Later in the interview, Gerard explained the root of his motivation by reflecting on an experience with a teacher during his youth. He remarked that, while she knew content, he doubted her passion for teaching. He did not do well in that class because the teacher's comments conveyed to him that he was not as smart as the other students were. He emotionally shut down to the teacher and the class; and, for years, the lasting effect of her words haunted his experiences with the content she taught. That experience drives him in what he does. He wants to lift students up and encourage them that they can do better. He said, "Above all things, I want to be a person that kids can come to and see, they can tell that I love them and I love what I am doing." He wanted to make sure that he did not negatively impact students as that teacher had done with him.

The passion for students was also evident as teachers discussed their internal responses to students' needs. They described seeing the importance of their own roles in the lives of their children and viewing themselves as more than teachers of content. Samuel stated,

> Factors that I would consider that would continue to allow me to stay there …

Again I would say the need of the students that really need guidance and support,

that really need a structured setting, someone to really give them that foundation.

A lot of them don't … A lot of them are raising themselves, so to speak.

Isabella and Margot also summarized by attributing their remaining in the district to their

passion for students. Isabella explained,

I think a passion for students is a very important reason why we stay; because the

students, at time can be … They can be very good, and then they can be very bad;

but you have to understand that they are kids, and I guess they are coming into

their own, so to speak. But if you don't have a passion for the students, then

(chuckles) you are going to quit.

Margot also attributed remaining to passion for students.

My passion more so encourages me to stay, and the belief that I have within me

that what you see is only the beginning; because, when I look at a child, I look at

them as potential products. They are not all that they can be, and I know that they

have potential far beyond that that they even realize. But, as a teacher, you have to

see beyond the nasty attitudes; you have to see beyond, sometimes, their

slouching in their seats and seeming that they may be angry with you, but

something else is going on. You have to see beyond all that roughness and help

them see beyond it and help them understand, "I can do more; I can be better than

mediocre." As long as I can do that and as long as I can see children blossom

under me… As long as I can get them on some track of realizing that "this is not

it," that helps me to stay.

These teachers understand their role as one of service. Their role is to understand that they are dealing with teenagers who have many struggles outside of the classroom. These teachers want to find ways to break through barriers and prepare their students for their futures.

Some participants pointed to values instilled in their childhoods as the origin of the drive to be of service and provide high-quality instruction to students in need. Samuel traced his drive to his own upbringing as he related that his father demonstrated through his actions the importance of helping people less fortunate than himself.

> It was just the way my parents were, and I saw how they were with people when it came to people in need. There was a family in want … There was a parent that lost their job, and my father went over and invited the mother and father and their two kids over to eat with us during the Thanksgiving holiday. That was a need. So, when I look at needs, I look at what the individual needs in order for them to survive, in order for them to be successful.

Other teachers reported that their passion for students developed over time. Daniel explained that he did not start his career with a passion for students or a commitment to student learning but, rather, developed these attitudes over time. He reflected that if these internal drives had not developed within him, he could not imagine surviving in the urban district. He stated,

> What I would say is that I don't think you have to start out that way; but that's

what retains you, if that makes sense. I don't think you necessarily start out with a

desire for social justice, or maybe loving the kids; but that's what's going to keep

you coming back the next year.

He used this line of reasoning to explain the departure of some good teachers from the

district.

We had some really good ones who left, who were really good. And, a lot of

times, I think part of it was they never quite developed that passion for the kids. I

mean, they were good at their jobs, but they didn't feel the emotional attachment.

They didn't feel the need to stay late or come early or anything like that.

Shane offered confirming reflection.

You've got to have that burning desire, to love the kids for what they are. You've

got to. You've got to. You love them for what they are. You take them for what

they are. You try to better them from where they are, and you've got to

understand them. You've got to. You've got to understand them.

This burning desire, the view of students' needs, and the dedication it inspires in

these teachers has the power to affect the teachers' lives beyond the classroom. During

the focus group, Tyrik related that once his wife was upset that he was leaving his own

children to address a problem with one of his students.

My wife said, "You love those kids more than you love" this, that, and the other.

And, I looked down at her and said, "You know what? I do love them." And she

said, "You know what? Go on." From that point -- I said, "I do love them" --

from that point on, she's never given me a problem since then.

The laughter from the group during this story indicated that Tyrik was not alone. The passion of these teachers extends far beyond the classroom. Most of those interviewed alluded to tutoring before and after school, several discussed tutoring or meeting with student clubs on Saturday, and two discussed buying students' school clothes or helping families pay bills. Many of the teachers shared that their own families sometimes feel neglected because of their commitment to their students. All participants discussed how their children drive their decision to return.

Theme Two: Dedication to Social Justice

The teachers have a deep understanding of their students' lives. They understand their students' struggles and recognize that many students' home situations stand in the way of learning. Each had numerous stories that would shatter the hearts of many adults unfamiliar with the problems that plague some of today's urban students. The stories do not define the students in the eyes of their teachers yet, instead, reveal their understanding of inequities and frame their commitment to social justice. The conversations about passion for students consistently led to the next dominant theme that influences highly-effective urban teachers' decisions to remain—a dedication to social justice. Caryn's comment during her individual interview reflects the response of these teachers to a concern for social justice. She stated, "I remain because I think I have a responsibility to stay here."

Participants' concern for social justice appeared in numerous ways throughout the

data. The shared concern first emerged in the focus group, when the teachers repetitively referred to the needs of "these children" and the needs of "our children." To explore this concept further, the researcher delved into the parameters of their definition of their students. Most of the participants expressed an understanding of the role that the intersection of race and socioeconomics plays in the life of their students.

These teachers want to be positive agents of change. They do not, however, view themselves as better than the children; instead, they view themselves as role models, and they see their position in education as one of service. They want to give students the skills necessary to be successful. They want their students to understand that education can help them overcome their current situations. They want to provide every opportunity possible to assure that their students have the necessary skills to become productive members of society.

During the focus group, two teachers revealed some of their own history and how their experiences as children motivate them in their work with their own students. Isabella broached this topic when she revealed that she had a deep connection to her students' situations. "For me it is, I was these kids. I was. I was poor, no lights, no water, in foster care – I was these kids. That's what it means to me." The level of conversation within the focus group began to deepen after Isabella divulged such personal information. Bruce continued this line of discussion and stated,

> When I was hired at Pendale, I had a one-question interview. My principal asked
> me, "What is it you want to do here at Pendale High School?" And I said, "What

was done for me."… The housing projects right across from the school – I lived in those projects. And, to me, it's a sense of – if it had not been for those people who were there for me, where would I be? It's a sense of giving back; it's also a sense of understanding… But the idea of giving back is very, very important.

Bruce related that his experiences as an African-American boy who grew up in poverty created an inner drive for him to help students who were experiencing similar struggles in life. He wanted to make sure that his students were given the same opportunities as students from more privileged backgrounds. As he shared with the focus group, the members of the group were hanging on his every word and agreement came from all directions.

One of the reasons that I do what I do is because I have a chip on my shoulder. When I was in elementary school and high school, there were "those students" and I was never one of "those students." But, in terms of understanding the material and being able to do it, I could do it, but I was never one of "those students." And so, I started out, where I always wanted to be able to reach that kid in the classroom that was like me (several "um-hmm's") and to be a teacher to that kid who is not one of "those students." As I began to grow and get involved in economics and communities and things like that, my chip grew larger, because I started looking at the idea that there were "those systems" (several "um-hmm's") and "those schools" (several "um-hmm's"); and I'd be damned if the kids that I was around wasn't going to get the same things that "those systems"

and "those students" were getting. And, you know, I've – I can't say how many times I've been asked to go to Peakville and to go to Danielson County (several "um-hmm's"), but – and I'm not knocking either one, I think they are wonderful places – but it was something about the idea that my kids on Eighth Avenue North and my kids in Bryantville and Lorainne, they deserved (loud cross-talking of agreement).

Several participants continued this conversation by explaining that, while they did not grow up in a situation like that of their students, they wanted their students to have opportunities like their own. Some attributed the desire to help their students to their own frustrations about inequities experienced in Black America. Alexandra explained why she had never taken a job in a more affluent area of town,

But, like Bruce says, when I do that, I'm losing "my children, my people." How can I leave them when what I want them to have is as much as I've given my child in my environment and my family? If I go over there, I'd have all the luxuries, anything I could possibly dream of, so that's why, when I ask a person for something, I want it. It's not for me; it's for my children. Whatever technology there is, my kids – even if I have to buy it myself, which I do – it's in that classroom, for them to be exposed to as much.

The teachers wanted to ensure that their students receive the same level of high-quality teaching that students from other sides of town receive.

Many of these conversations continued in the individual interviews as teachers

expressed the importance of providing students with both positive role models and quality teaching. Cornelius explained that, in response to the high level of need in the city, he applied only to this urban district for a teaching position.

> OK, so I guess … The main thing is, I feel like all the other schools—your
> Elyrian Universities and your Morrison Universities [describing mega-high
> schools in the suburbs] (laughs)—I mean, those are huge schools. I figured they
> didn't need me… They'll get some bright teachers, and they have bright students.
> Normally, like they say, you never really worry about those good scenarios,
> because it seems like those always work out. So, I figured it I go to the City, there
> would probably be a need for me there. I could probably expose a few people that
> may not have been exposed, to a couple of things … that type of thing.

Cornelius was not the only person who applied only to this particular school district. Isabella related that this was the only district that she applied to work in after she graduated from college. She explained, "These kids need to see products of their very environment doing OK.." Isabella further explained that she thinks that her being there symbolizes to students that their current situation is only temporary. She believed that her past has the power to help students believe that they, too, can be successful.

> The kids need somebody they can see who has kinda been-there-done-that; and,
> OK, I can get up out of this situation. Even though it looks bad right now, I can do
> a little bit better. I don't have to be stuck here. This doesn't have to define who I
> am. I can't let this hold me back and hold me down. It just happened. And, it was

me; these kids were me. I think sometimes they need to see hope. They need to

see that it is possible for them to be better than they are now. Their future can be

whatever they want it to be.

Isabella wants her students to know that education is the key. She wants them to see

living evidence that education has the power to transform their lives. This was similar for

Ashley, who applied to this school district because she wanted to "give back" and

believes that "students need a role model, someone who looks like them, has experienced

some of their struggles and who can relate to many of their life experiences."

Other participants related that their zeal to be a role model to the challenges of

race rather than to those of socioeconomics. Several expressed wanting their students to

experience adults who look like them in positions of authority. Caryn explained,

I wanted to come back not only just for the content portion of it, but also to serve

as a good role model for young black students, so they can know, "I can graduate

from high school, I can go on to college, I can be married, and I can be successful

and enjoy this life." I want them to see that…. I come to school professionally

because it makes me feel good, but I also come for them, so that they can have an

example of what it is to be a professional.

Gerard expressed the importance to students, particularly male students, of seeing an

adult who looks like them in a positive position.

I think it's important, especially when you're dealing with inner-city youth;

you've got to be able to see somebody that's doing it in order to say that you can

do it as well. So, I think that's a definite reason why I stay, because I know the young black guys, they need somebody positive, even though they might rib me and this and that, I know that being able to see me means a lot to them. If their whole experience was just females, they would have a whole different perspective: "Where the men are? They don't care." They need to see somebody there that looks like them that cares, that shows concern, even if you're getting onto them and whatever.

Bruce explained that telling young black men that they can be successful is not sufficient. In a previous profession, he held up Civil Rights "foot soldiers" as inspiring role models in talks to African-American students. While he believes such talks were valuable, he is convinced that black male students need to see successful African-American men in their daily lives. He explained,

Has anybody ever written instructions down and you didn't understand it, but when you saw them do it, you figured, 'I can do that'? Well, I think that being here completes my journey. Kids can see, "Hey, I can do that." And that's a strong motivator. As long as they see that and as long as I also give them the tools to achieve it…

The teachers verbalized that their job is to be a living example. Shane discussed that he would not even buy alcohol within the city limits. He explained that he would only drink when he was out of town with his friends. He explained that he always wanted his students to see him as an example of a good life.

Daniel explained that several in the focus group seemed to have a "simmering anger" about systemic inequities and social injustices. He explained that he focuses, instead, on preparing his students to be successful to prove that society is wrong in its judgment of inner-city youth. Shane repeated this idea in his interview when he discussed candid conversations with students about to give up and drop out of school.

> And I tell my boys, "You have three strikes against you: you're black and you're male and society is still against you. But that should not stop you. That should not stop you. That should give you more energy … The best revenge is sweet revenge, not cold revenge."

The teachers explained their commitment to their students in a variety of stories. Several of the teachers acknowledged that their students have enough struggles in life and stated the belief that the last thing that children should have to worry about is whether they are going to receive a quality education. Bruce wanted to assure that his students did not have to deal with one more struggle in their lives because they lacked a dedicated teacher in his teaching position.

> With everything that the kids I deal with on a daily basis have to deal with … We're talking about—and you don't have to pull the violins out—but you're talking about violence, you're talking about poverty, you're talking about low self-esteem. With all the things that the kids I encounter on a daily basis have to deal with already, the one thing they don't need to deal with is somebody who just doesn't care or somebody who is just phoning it in. That's the one thing they

don't need to deal with. That's not fair, and they shouldn't have to deal with it. Some of this stuff is so much beyond their control, but education shouldn't be beyond their control. It should be a stabilizer in their world; and, if it's not, then what chance do they have?

Caryn explained that she remained for a similar reason.

I know that not only a lot of times they're not being built up, in a lot of cases, they are being knocked down by some parents. So, specifically, I stay here because I want them to know that there is something more out there. For those children—and, like I say, it's not everybody—but, for those children that may not understand that there is something beyond here, I stay here for them.

Overall, the teachers viewed themselves as vessels of hope, strength, and vision. They wanted to be a bridge connecting students between their current circumstances and their futures.

The teachers want to arm students with the necessary skills, both academic and social, to be successful in their future endeavors. They do not view themselves as superstars or even people to be celebrated. They possess an attitude of service. They perform duties that feel called to perform because teaching urban students is what is right. Some yearn to be agents who help equalize the playing field; others view their work as their duty to be of service to people less fortunate; and others want to be a light for students who are surrounded by darkness. Regardless of specific motivation, the group of teachers expressed an understanding of the complicated context in which they

teach and a commitment to their students—students of color from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

The teachers view their instruction as the vehicle that will ultimately move students beyond their current situations. Daniel had created a personal challenge to be better at his craft so that he could have greater impact on student learning.

> I like to try to improve on it, and I do see it as a challenge. And, again, it's not anger, but a lot of people say, again, "those kids." "Those kids." And I don't get angry about that, but these kids can learn. You may have to use a different approach, but these kids are perfectly capable. I always tell my kids that I would stack them up against anybody. I would stack them up against anyone if the playing field was even. If the content wasn't there and it was just thinking on your feet, I would stack them up against anyone. The problem comes when we put in content and other things that become building blocks.

Because they understand that they are struggling to save lives, they are extremely concerned about their own actions. Caryn explained,

> And the reason I do my job and try to do my best is because I feel like I'm cheating them if I don't come in here and do the very best I can do every day. In some way, I've robbed them when I come here and I don't do what I'm supposed to do, especially through my content. If I haven't taught the way … I go home and I rethink, "What went right or what went wrong?" so that, hopefully, I can go back, if it was something that I didn't go right, to correct it.

This concern for student learning helps to link these teachers' sense of social justice with their high levels of reflection, which was the next dominant theme that arose in both the focus group and the interviews.

Theme Three: Reflection on Practice

The teachers conveyed dedication to bettering the present and future lives of their students and a belief that they can prepare students to overcome their difficulties and live successful, productive lives. They understand that many of their students face many challenges in their lives, but they believe that education has the power to transform their students' lives. They view education as the great equalizer and believe that their role is to remain and provide quality instruction for their students. This passion to help students transcend their current circumstances influences the decisions of this group of teachers to remain in an urban educational system.

These highly effective teachers reported being extremely reflective on their pedagogical practices. They do not view themselves as having mastered the art of teaching. They continuously examine their practices to identify areas of weakness. They constantly identify parts of practice that they can strengthen and work to increase their knowledge of content and pedagogy. This reflection helps them to return each year because they want to maximize their effectiveness. The teachers have built reflection into their routines. Reflection has become a part of their mindset. Tyrik explained,

Sometimes before tutoring starts, I sit back and think about the events of the day. I basically look at the flow of things—how smoothly things flowed, my transition

from one thing to another, and my ability to always be up under the umbrella of a

big picture.

The teachers did not discuss the reflection as a separate part of their duties but a natural

process. Bruce commented,

So, that reflection is a part of what I do. You can never turn it off. As a teacher,

you can't turn it off. You can be talking to your best friend or whatever and that

reflection is there. You're always thinking, "Hey, I could do this." It kind of

haunts you—in a good way.

Cornelius described having embedded reflection into his practice from moment to

moment.

I'm instantly replaying what I said [and my] facial expressions. I mean, before the

bell rings, I'm already: "Mental note; I'm gonna explain it this way." … I think

that does help. I mean, you learn from your mistakes, so the thing is, it's not a bad

thing unless you never correct them. So, I always look at it, "OK, I kind of

messed up here. I can tweak that a little bit." I make a note, and then next year

when it rolls around, that's what I do. If it doesn't work, then it's something else,

whatever else comes to me.

The teachers described viewing their reflection as a process for bettering

themselves. They want to pinpoint specific components associated with their instruction

that can be stronger. They are constantly alert for their mistakes. Isabella stated,

So, yes, reflection is very important, because you're not going to do everything

right for every child one way. You've got to be able to criticize yourself for the good of the students. That's what it's all about for me; it's for the good of the students… I need to be immediately concerned about the students sitting in my classroom. Am I getting it over to them in a way that they can understand and take with them beyond my classroom?

These teachers described constantly analyzing their words, movements, and facial expressions. Few are ever satisfied. Cornelius explained,

And, truthfully, I'm disappointed with myself every day. I'm like, "Man, I could have done better." I mean, like every day. Every year I feel like I don't do enough. Every year. Yep. I'm always feeling like I could have improved, so I'm always going for that vision I have in my head.

Yet, Tyrik explained that he tries not to judge his mistakes and weaknesses as failures but, instead, as opportunities for growth.

Honestly, understanding when you lose is the only way you can win; because, through your loss, you can gain the knowledge, you can gain the reflection. You have to understand, when you lose, you have to say, "You know what, I f'd up today; the day did not go right at all. What can I do to alleviate this problem tomorrow and the next day? So, guess what, I am still trying to build up my skills.

This sense of disappointment combined with glimmers of hope has created an inner personal challenge for most of the teachers. Their constant reflection and the nagging idea that they can present each lesson more effectively influence the teachers' decisions

to remain each year. Daniel commented,

> I think that reflection helps you long-term. I don't think any teacher should be
> depressed when they think about how things went poorly. I think, if anything, it
> should be kind of uplifting, because you think, "Well, I'm gonna make sure this
> doesn't happen again. I'm gonna make sure this doesn't happen again" and find a
> way to improve it.

Bruce discussed how the reflection propels him into returning each year so that he can
correct mistakes from the year before,

> I just think that … personally, I screw up a lot, and … but I have this phrase I live
> by that says, "Make mistakes; don't practice them." I always think, "Next year, I'm
> gonna fix that; next year, I'm gonna do that like this. Next year … " And, before
> you know it, next year becomes 5 years, 6 years, 8 years, 10 years.

Gerard described another component of reflection—the reward that accompanies the
recognition that something that he has tried has gone well—and discussed how the
resulting sense of accomplishment influences his decision to return.

> I'm still trying to feel some things out, but what is so great is, when you see that
> something doesn't work and the next year you try something different and you see
> a light bulb go off with the child. It makes you feel good… That piece—"Some of
> what I am doing is working"—makes you want to stay… That reflective piece
> really helps you to kind of stick with it, in the sense that "Yeah, somebody's
> getting something. Somebody's gaining something. I see that they're able to kind

of process some of what we're doing."

Several teachers explained that their reflection drives their instruction. Their ongoing assessment of their own practices helps them to rate their effectiveness and make necessary changes. Shane even discussed bringing students into his reflection process. He described how he uses his students' ideas about his class and his instruction to help him evaluate himself and his lesson design.

> Because I wanted to be better; and I still want to be better. I send out a survey before and after asking my kids, "What do you expect out of our class?" And then, before the end of a year, I ask, "Did I fulfill your expectations; and, if I didn't, what can I do to better myself?" …I listen; and, if it fits me, I modify it; if it doesn't, I put it in the back of my head and I save it, because there might come a time when I need that suggestion. But I always look at it that everything somebody tells me is to better me, because you always have a different group of kids each year.

Others agreed that reflection helps to evaluate practices in light of new students. These teachers work to tailor instruction to meet the needs of their students, and the reflection process makes this possible. Margot explained,

> You always go back to the drawing board, because the factors we are dealing with are so diverse. Our children are different every year; and that's the wonderful part about it, and it can be the thorn in our behinds, y'know, because sometimes you can get some real tough ones. But it keeps us at this point where we have to

change, because our students are changing; and we have to reflect, because they

are changing every year. And, if we don't, it can mean death to us as professionals

and to our kids' achievement.

Tyrik's interview supported this idea,

There are things that, in the urban society, a teacher must be a continuing learner;

they have to. And they have to try different things. Some things are not going to

work; some things are going to work. And, guess what, some things are not going

to work this semester; but, with my group of kids next semester, it may work. So,

there are things in education that you just have to keep trying different things.

There is no silver bullet, and there is nothing that is going to take care of

everything in a nutshell. You have to have different things in your arsenal and try

different things.

Daniel, Margot, and Alexandra each made available a copy of Entry Two, a piece

submitted earlier for certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching

Standards which focused on an analysis of a video lesson The Board designed the

questions for Entry Two to promote deep levels of lesson analysis and high levels of

reflection. The reflections of Daniel and Margot on their weaknesses aligned with their

interviews, in which they both expressed the constant desire to be better at their craft. For

example, Margot reflected in Entry Two,

Also I would use more of the figurative language terminology as we discussed the

poem. At the time of this video recording, most students were able to identify the

various types of figurative language in the poem. In retrospect I realize that I

should constantly refer to the particular devices as simile, metaphor,

personification, etc. in order to increase retention of these concepts.

Daniel reiterated in the focus group the need for constant reassessment of lessons and

lesson delivery when he stated,

That's the first thing I think of when something … when I do something … I

think, "How do I do this better?" And I think about how it went today and what

we could do better. And I try to step back and look at the big picture of how I'm

going to do this, how I'm going to work this semester. It's day-by-day.

The teachers recognize that reflection helps drive them to return each year. This

reflection component, juxtaposed with passion for students and social justice, often seems

to present itself as personal challenge. Daniel explained,

And if the puzzle is solved, I'm bored with it. I'm ready to move on to the next

shiny object. But at our schools, that puzzle is never quite over, never quite

figured out. I can always get it a little better, but I've never gotten it down. And

that's kind of good in a way. I know I can get it better; I know I can figure it out. I

just need a little more time; I'm going to do this different. And that helps. And,

God help, if I ever didn't have that, I would go ahead and quit.

The teachers discussed the desire to be better to meet a personal need to perfect their

craft. Bruce stated,

I'm not a perfectionist, but I am an optimist; and I believe that whatever I did

today I can do better tomorrow. As long as I feel like I can do it better tomorrow,

then I'll be here tomorrow.

This group believed that this desire to continually improve on practice is linked to their

need to be the best that they can be for their students. Isabella explained,

It's a growing thing, and each year I hope I'm trying to do something a little bit

better. I think it's a good way for me to get to know myself. Just be better. Help

the children. That's what I'm trying to do. I keep coming back so eventually I'll

get it right, and then I'm going to retire. (laughs) No, I'll retire long before I get it

right.

Pedagogical reflection has helped the teachers recognize that teaching offers

many opportunities for personal growth. This realization encourages teachers to return

each year to increase their impact on students. Cornelius explained how reflection works

to create personal challenge and, in turn, keeps him returning each year.

I want to be a perfectionist in the fact that I don't think I'll ever be satisfied until I

can actually get a whole classroom on the same page at least one time. And, if I

do it one time, if I can't duplicate it five times in a row, then I still won't be

satisfied. So, until that happens, I'm going to keep going at it. (laughs) It doesn't

ever happen, but if I can get that to happen at least one time and then do that five

more times, then I'll be satisfied…. I think that's part of what's bringing me back

every year. It is a challenge.

Some participants explained that their personal reflection on practice helps them examine

ways to address the challenges of educating youth in an urban area. They reported that reflection on strategies for mastering the challenges inherent in teaching encourages their yearly return. Margot stated,

I come back because there is a challenge in education that is unparalleled to any profession. And, I come back because in education, if you are blessed to find a group of colleagues that are effective as well, they will challenge you to grow also. And, I come back because I know that I'm going to meet more students whose light bulbs are going to come on because of effective instruction and because I've taken the time to say, "OK, I need to be better: Let me go to this workshop; let me do this; let me go across the hall and ask this; let me see what this teacher did ..." That's why I come back.

Tyrik's description of education's challenges supported this idea.

I like to say that teaching is an ever-changing … Just like you're on the sea: You don't know whether you're going to have rough seas, whether you're going to have calm seas; and there are different things you have to do with the ship in different situations. Just like in the classroom: When things change, there are different things you have to do. So, you just have to get good at doing those different things and recognizing those things. And, guess what, the more years you teach, the more things you have in your arsenal and the better you are, and dynamics change every year. So, it is a challenge. If you want to do this, you have to face it, and you have to enjoy the challenges.

Their practice of reflection assists these teachers to embrace the overall challenges of education rather than shying away from them.

The teachers have found reflection to be a necessary component of effective instruction. They believe that their constant reflection helps them identify strengths and weaknesses, each of which influences their decisions to remain. Their successes motivate them to continue, and their failures encourage them to return so that they can try again.

Some teachers noted that reflection can occur as part of a collaborative process as well as in individual practice. These teachers described pairing with a colleague to help each other identify effective and ineffective parts of lessons and teacher-student interactions. Margot mimicked her regular reflective discussions with a colleague: "And, you know, 'What did I do wrong here? I'm just not getting it across to this kid. What did you do?'"

Isabella's interview supported the idea that reflection of practice does not always have to be an isolated activity. Isabella, who has been teaching more than 15 years, finds that at times her practice is stagnant. Because she wants to continue to grow, she sought an opportunity to discuss pedagogical strategies with a teacher who had less than 2 years of experience. She emphatically explained,

OK, I can learn from second-year teacher. She's new, she's fresh, she's young. Maybe she is saying something, doing something … because after 16 years, you kinda stuck … you kinda … Give me something new; give me a new idea— something. Because it's frustrating when you're at the board and you think you

are teaching your heart out.

Isabella's teaching is about her students rather than about her ego. She continuously looks for colleagues who can offer her insight and new instructional techniques. Though she constantly reflects inwardly, she finds that reflecting on practice with others and learning about their practices can be rejuvenating and rewarding.

Theme Four: Professional Community

The theme of professional community also emerged during the focus group. The teachers discussed the importance of healthy, productive collaboration with other teachers. They talked about the necessity of forming unions with like-minded teachers. Many elaborated on how these relationships increase their resilience and foster their decisions to remain, describing how these mini-communities within their schools encourage them to become better teachers. They related that witnessing others who are dedicated to student learning feeds their own passions. They acknowledged that collegial collaboration about instruction, celebration of student successes and problem-solving conversations about student failure, as well as venting sessions about contextual struggles have an enormous impact on their lives as teachers.

In addition, the focus group in itself demonstrated the strength of a community of effective teachers. The powerful energy created by this gathering of teachers created a strong voice. Their connection with each other through their primary purpose empowered participants to discuss personal concepts and enabled them to broach sensitive topics. This interaction in itself showed the strength of collaboration among teachers, lending

credence to considering community a strong factor of influence in a teacher's decision to remain.

Though the focus group offered strong vocal appreciation for the impact of professional community, the individual interviews did not fully corroborate community as a qualifying theme. A comment by Bruce helps understand the inconsistency behind this finding. He stated,

> If you were in it for community, the turnover would kill you and you'd be gone. And maybe, because of that the turnover is self-perpetuating. You have so many people that leave; they either move up or they move out. If I were looking for one that I'd say, "Don't hang your hat on," don't hang it on community. It's not stable.

Though too much contradictory data exists to identify community as a theme, the amount of conversation about community by those who find strength from it is worth noting and the conversations about community as a motivating factor influencing teachers' decisions warrant analysis.

The focus group identified reliance on community as a practice that fosters the effectiveness, strength, and annual return of the participants. Alexandra explained, "I love my co-workers! There are certain people like, if you are working on something, they automatically know that if you are a part of it, they are a part of it." Margot continued this conversation in the focus group, explaining the importance of community and its influence upon her practice,

And I suppose that the people we would more aspire to surround ourselves with are the people we know we can be in a professional learning community with (two voices: "Right."), individuals who can help us with instruction… You have to, I guess, be around individuals who are going to help you grow and help you understand that, yes, it may be difficult… And it's OK to vent; but you stay at vent only and not move into more productive, proactive conversations, you know, more so than reactive, I think then that's where you'll become stagnant and you won't grow. You want to be around individuals who are going to help you grow and not bemoan all the negative aspects of the environment – understand that we are here for a purpose, and this is what we can do to help one another grow.

After other participants spoke similarly, Margot reflected on a conversation with a colleague earlier that week. While analyzing the classroom dynamics in each teacher's final class of the day, they realized that their students' actions could be a reflection of the time of day and their own tiredness.

So, that's why the conversations and the community are very important; because we help keep one another on track and help keep one another analyzing the true purpose – the kids … this is why we are here. Sometimes it may be us; sometimes it may be them. So, what do we do to rectify the situation? So many dynamics are involved – our emotions, their emotions. But, if you leave the whole schema of the day and you're going home saying, "It's them, them, them; I hate this, hate that" and never have any productive conversations about it, that can be quite

detrimental.

Margot related that had she left that day focusing on the students' behavior rather than her practice, she would have felt defeated rather than inspired to change her own practices.

Gerard acknowledged that other strong teachers challenge him to be better in his own classroom.

A fuel for me is being around those other teachers that you can see in the classrooms that are actively doing things, they are working, they are trying out different things, they are motivated to do things. … It's a fuel for me because it says to me, "Am I doing enough? What different things do I need to try? Is it going to be effective and do well for the kids that I service?"… So, effectiveness that surrounds you is not going to do anything but enhance you or keep the level of your game, in terms of what you're trying to offer to students, to keep that up as well.

Margot continued this conversation in her individual interview, sharing that witnessing good instruction as she walks by a classroom rejuvenates her and helps her feel less isolated. She explained,

It takes education out of the isolated box of the classroom, and it makes it a communal effort. They say that it takes a village to raise a child. It takes a community to nurture a teacher. And that's an effective collaborative community that's filled with questioning and encouragement. You have to have it.

These teachers described community as a factor that positively affects their teaching and, therefore, student achievement.

Others highlighted the emotional support offered by community. These teachers discussed the stresses of teaching in the urban district and identified support from other teachers as a factor that sustains them through days on which they feel overwhelmed. Daniel stated, "I love the fact that I have friends in the faculty that know exactly what I'm talking about, and they can help out." Isabella discussed one colleague's value as a sounding board. She explained that many days she has been aghast at things administration has said in a public forum that included students. Having a colleague with similar passions has allowed her to vent without contributing to the toxicity in the culture of the school. In addition, she discussed how these interactions go far beyond venting and often entail productive conversations about teaching. For both sets of conversations, she relies on teachers who share a similar purpose.

> If you're not effective, if I don't feel that you're there to do your job, that you're there for the children, then I just feel a disconnect. We're not on the same wavelength. We don't have the same purpose. I wouldn't be close to you. You might be funny. You might be humorous, great person to be around, but when push comes to shove and I really need some help or advice, I'm not coming to you because it's not a funny time. It's not something I need you to cheer me up about. I need you to listen, possibly give me some sound advice about.

Daniel also discussed the importance of colleagues during times of stress. He reflected on

an incident from early in his career.

> I don't see how you could succeed and stay being an island in our school system,
> because it gets so—I know you feel this—it gets overwhelming. When my first
> student got shot … He was in my class and he left and they shot his face off, like
> 30 minutes later, outside the school … I was devastated. I can't imagine being an
> island and not being able to go to people who know what you're going through,
> and who teach there and care also. I mean, being able to cry and cuss and smoke
> and get all that out of your system. I can't imagine not having that. I can't see
> how you could do it without it.

Daniel explained that, after this horrifying experience, he depended on the emotional support of colleagues who understood the teaching context, cared about students, and shared his passion. This was not an incident from which he could recover only using his resources at home. Several of the teachers expressed the need to have a community of teachers that understands the stresses associated with the context. They found that many of their experiences are not easily explained to someone from the outside; many times they need an empathetic ear that has knowledge of context. Lanie credited community with adding to her resilience, her decision to return, and her effectiveness. For her, community is a vital component of her overall professional decisions. The support at both the school and the district level impact all areas of her teaching.

Interestingly, one participant conveyed a different slant on the importance of community to him as a teacher. For Samuel, the community that influences his decision

to return is the actual community in which the school is located. He has taught at the school for so many years that he feels a commitment to the community at large. He explained,

> I think the fact that I've been there for a period of time and I know a lot of the sisters, the brothers, the mothers, the fathers. It's gotten to the point now that I've taught the mother, I've taught the father, I've taught the sister and brother. I know where they were at that particular time. Now, I'm teaching their kid, and I can steer them because I know the makeup of their mother and father, what they have done, and how they were in school. Sometimes, the child might be the opposite, but I can motivate them and steer them in the direction to keep them on track.

Thus, Samuel feels a connection to the families of the students. He believes that he is better able to relate to students because has become an extension of their families and a part of their larger community. His relationship with the school's broader community influences his decision to remain.

Though in the focus group Tyrik commented, "Teacher support is vital," during the individual interview, he explained that community is not an influential factor in his remaining each year. During his interview he explained,

> Now, to some it may be; but I don't take it that way. Some people need a lot of people around them and nurturing them. I've never been the kind of person to need a lot of nurturing. I can accept nurturing if it is there. If it's not … I'm going to do what I have to do, regardless. I'm not the type of teacher that needs a lot of

nurturing.

Tyrik was not the only focus group participant who later rejected the importance of community as a factor influencing staying power. Bruce agreed that positive collegial interactions can have a positive impact on practice and resilience but questioned its overall influence on return. He expressed the opinion that a teacher would become quickly disheartened if he or she always relied on colleagues for support. In addition, Cornelius explained,

> For me personally, that's furthest from my mind. I think that has something to do with everyone's individual personality and how they like to maneuver or whatever, but, me, I'm more the type: "OK, tell me what I need to do. Give me one, two, and three. Leave me alone and let me do what I need to do." So, it helps, it is good when you do have faculty and staff who are on the same page, but that doesn't really drive me personally. It's a good thing; but if it's not the case, I'm still going to do what I'm going to do regardless. Just tell me what I need to do and leave me alone.

Caryn liked the idea of community but expressed that this was not a reality in her work environment. She acknowledged that other like-minded teachers existed but explained that because of the layout of the school, she rarely has opportunities to mingle with her strong colleagues. Caryn, however, expressed how positive collegial conversations in content-based professional development help her to strengthen her content knowledge and pedagogical skills. For these teachers, community does not have an impact on their

decision to remain. They understand their overall purpose and are content to walk alone in fulfilling their mission.

In summary, though appreciation for teacher community played a large role in the focus group conversation, participants expressed diverse opinions about community in the individual interviews. Some described teacher community as necessary to their effectiveness and influential on both their resilience and their staying power. Some related that community adds to their effectiveness and their resilience but does not necessarily support their decision to remain. Others expressed the opinion that the need for community depends on the personality of the teachers and reported that they do not yearn for collaboration, communication, or emotional support from other teachers. In a reflection on the study's findings during the member checking phase, Margot wrote,

> That "community" didn't emerge as a major factor was not surprising because as I reflected upon this I realize[d] that there were times that I didn't have the support but I had a strong resolve to fulfill my purpose which was the kids. Community helps but it doesn't determine whether I stay or not.

Though multiple forms of data supported community as a factor influencing teachers' decisions to remain, too much contradictory data existed to identify community as a definitive factor. However, because of the reoccurrence of this theme in multiple interviews, the researcher viewed the idea of community as a worthy topic of discussion.

Theme Five: Teacher Leadership

Much of the data produced by the archival documents could be used within the

themes that arose during focus groups and individual interviews. The supplied pieces helped to corroborate the stories that the teacher participants told. However, the archival documents produced a commonality significant to the study that was not specifically supported by the conversations that took place within the study. Overall, the archival documents served as a piece of documentation that magnified the teacher leaders that served as the collective sample for the study.

The documents proved that a significant commonality among all of the participants was their role as teacher leaders both within their schools and the district. This theme was evident during the analysis of the archival documents and is worthy of noting; however, the influence of these roles on their decision to remain or their resilience was not resolved within the confines of this study. Though the theme was considerable within one phase of data collection, its absence within the conversations make anything beyond initial conjecture invalid.

Of the participants nine have served as department heads, seven worked with school improvement, all tutored outside of class time, nine sponsored clubs, eight have served as athletic coaches, four have been integral members of accreditation teams, all have led professional development, and twelve have mentored and coached teachers. In addition, eight were involved in Saturday programs specifically designed to impact student learning through emphasis on either academics or character.

The résumés of the entire group of participants documented many roles outside of the classroom. Their leadership roles revealed careers far beyond "just an eight-to-three

job with ample summer vacation." Tyrik presented the researcher with a portfolio that he

compiled to apply for graduate work for administrative certification. The letters within

the portfolio indicated that both administration and teacher colleagues recognized his

great leadership outside of the classroom.

Daniel, Margot, and Alexandra each made available a copy of Entry Four, which

each had submitted in previous years for certification by the National Board for

Professional Teaching Standards. The primary purpose of Entry Four is for teachers to

analyze their impact on student learning outside of the classroom by identifying and

analyzing their accomplishments, the significance of each accomplishment, and each

accomplishment's impact on student learning. Some of this work appeared on their

resumes, while other activities seemed to reflect everyday actions. For example, Daniel

wrote about his involvement with a club at the school,

As a school still haunted by the ghosts of segregation, many of our students felt a

disconnection with the history of the community and the school. It was difficult

for students to be enthusiastic about going to class and actively engaging in

learning when the physical environment of the school was littered with debris,

gang tags on the walls and profanity over all the walls… Incorporating lessons

taught from World History, we discussed how the Renaissance was a rebirth of

both the old glory of Romans and Greeks, as well as the new accomplishments of

early Renaissance thinkers. Drawing a parallel with the Renaissance of the past to

the potential future of our school, the students and I formed the Renaissance

Society. For the past 5 years, we have endeavored on weekends to restore much of

the former glory of our school, while incorporating the ideas and sentiments of the

current student body… students are allowed to express their learning creatively,

painting murals on the walls that often reflect an Afro-Centric theme or the

struggle of women in America.

Through this club, Daniel worked to develop students' self-esteem. The students worked

to create a learning environment that valued their culture. Alexandra and Margot also

discussed their involvement with students outside of the classroom. Alexandra discussed

her tutoring sessions with both students and parents,

During tutoring this school year, Mrs. J. one of my parents attended afternoon and

weekend sessions to seek help on problem solving skills that she could use to

reinforce the concepts taught during class thereby allowing her the opportunity to

also work with her child. She took notes, asked questions, worked problems and

helped the students.

In Entry Four, the three teachers analyzed their work with parents and community, their

roles as leaders and collaborators, and themselves as lifelong learners.

Some of these roles beyond the classroom involved working directly with

students, and others involved being change agents for teachers to improve student

learning throughout the school. Gerard's interview comments emphasized the importance

of working directly with the students outside of regularly scheduled class time,

Extracurricular activities are important. When I was at Westside High I coached

football. That was a great experience, to be able to interact with students on an entirely different level: Not only do you see me as a teacher, you see me as a coach. I'm here with you … I was spending more time with the kids at school.

These teachers' extra involvement with the students is a way to demonstrate to the students that they care about them and their success both in and out of the classroom.

Though résumés such as Margot's depicted high levels of leadership, the vast efforts of these teachers outside of the classroom never became a significant topic of conversation. This year alone, Margot has developed and delivered professional development, tutored before and after school, and served as a department head, the lead writer and monitor of both the school improvement plan and school accreditation, a mentor and coach to teachers, and the school's Title I coordinator, yet, interestingly, she did not discuss these positions. Daniel briefly discussed the importance of reaching students outside of the regular class time. Yet the discussion focused on students' needs rather than on his extending himself.

> You have to realize … we all do our bit … sometimes you feel like your bit is important; sometimes you feel like it's not. I always feel like whatever I do at school is important. That's why I do stuff besides social studies, because sometimes I'm not sure that social studies is that important to my kids. Passing the exam is important, so I'll definitely teach that; but I'll spend just as much time on how to tie a tie and getting an ACT application ready and applying for college as I will on my classes.

The selected teachers did not see themselves as superstars. When asked in the individual interview, "What are the rewards of your perseverance? In other words, what is in it for you?" Isabella stated, "I don't think it's even about me." This response might help to explain why these teachers did not mention their own extra efforts and demanding responsibilities. Perhaps the extra efforts of these teachers are inextricably linked to their desire to better the lives of their children rather than to aspirations for their own lives and careers. Shane supported this conjecture with a comment during his individual interview,

> I don't like to be recognized. The only reason I like … If it involves my kids and all, I don't have a problem, because, first and foremost, everything revolves around my kids. Now, if it is to bring focus to them or light to them, cool; but, if it deals with me, I would rather just be left alone and put in the corner.

The lack of conversational focus on themselves supports the primacy of these teachers' passions for students. Their leadership efforts are deeply connected to student achievement, and they offer them primarily in the service of creating an environment that can give students an opportunity to succeed.

The lack of conversation about the leadership leaves this theme in an emergent state. The researcher believes that the teacher participants' roles as leaders are significant but cannot attest to teacher leadership's overall impact on teachers' decisions to remain or their resilience. Their leadership could be attributed to the criterion sampling and be evidence of administrations' own ideas of effectiveness juxtaposed with the researcher-

provided criterion. This theme may be inherent in the selection process and may have little impact on resilience or retention.

These leadership roles, however, could have led to opportunities and fulfillment within the jobs of the teacher participants, which subconsciously influenced their decision to remain or their perseverance. Their leadership roles may help them to feel more needed and accepted within the community, lessening the impact of the challenges within the context and helping them to feel successful. Their leadership roles may increase the levels of support that they receive from administration or may help them to form meaningful relationships within the community. On the other hand, these leadership roles may be a subcategory within teacher participants' passion for students and learning, and their actions outside of the classroom may be completely connected to their hopes and desires for their students. In conclusion, teacher leadership is an important theme that arose from the analysis of archival documents, yet the level of influence that the leadership has on retention or resilience was not resolved during this particular study.

Theme Six: External Factors

The overriding theme with respect to external factors influencing effective teachers' decisions to remain is the absence of a theme. The teachers reported that factors associated with the district do not influence their decisions to return each year. The teachers are neither overly positive nor overly negative about the operational aspects of the district. Some discussed their school administrations, but only one identified them as a strong influence on their staying power. Margot explained why administration has little

influence on her decision to remain,

> I developed this philosophy early on: Do not become attached to an administrator;
> just do not. The people that are going to be there pretty much are the faculty. I
> have seen, within my short tenure, four principals; so I have learned not to put all
> my eggs in those baskets.

Daniel explained that he has "no political aspirations" and no concern about what either his school administration or the central office staff thinks about him as a teacher. His main concern is participating in activities that can impact student learning. He reflected on being selected to participate with a particular outside program, explaining that the only reason that he even bothers with the program was that he sees its potential to impact student learning. He works to please the children; he has his own goals and "as long as they don't interfere with that, we have no problems." Lanie experiences administrative support as vital. She explained, "They try to give me the support that I need for the things that I'm trying to either improve or implement. If they didn't do those things, then I might not choose to come back." Others, however, described support from administrators as nice but not a necessary factor influencing their decision to remain.

The only external factor that to which this group of teachers ascribed value is high-quality professional development. Most of the teachers discussed professional development as an important part of their professional lives in terms of resilience and not retention. Though the teachers expressed gratitude for the opportunities, as well as the emotional and mental rewards, associated with effective professional development, they

reported that this factor has little influence on their decision to return.

In summary, several factors influence this group of teacher leaders' decisions to remain. The teachers have a passion for students and their learning, which encourages their yearly return. This passion for students is supported by a dedication to social justice and a desire to give students opportunities that are experienced regularly by nonminority, nonpoor students. These two concepts weave together to create a supporting theme of effective pedagogy as a means of lessening inequities experienced by students. Thus, teacher participants constantly reflect on their practices to identify weaknesses that they may work to correct tomorrow or the following year. To make these changes, teachers rely on collegial conversations or professional development as a guide for effective instruction.

<div align="center">Subquestions to the First Research Question</div>

The first research question consisted of four subquestions. In examining the data, many of the data that best answered the subquestions also supported the primary research question. To avoid repetition, the researcher chose to organize the data within context of the research questions and subquestions. This, however, does not reflect a belief that the data is unconnected. The researcher understands the cross-over subthemes that integrate with the overall main research question.

Subquestion One: Challenges

Data from the focus group and the interviews answered the first subquestion, What contextual factors do effective teachers in the inner-city high schools perceive to be

challenging? During the focus group, teachers discussed some of the challenges

associated with the teaching context. Though this research question was not a specific

question during the focus group, teachers naturally discussed challenges associated with

teaching in an urban district, underlying the significance of considering context in this

study. Much of the conversation involving context revolved around the need to

understand the struggles of the students. The participants shared stories about students

who lacked life's basic necessities. They lamented over teachers who did not strive to

know their students. They reflected on how many teachers cannot see past a child's

missing an assignment and fail to delve into the circumstances surrounding the absence

of work. Gerard discussed the importance of knowing his students,

> You know, life doesn't revolve around me as a teacher, because they have some
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> other stuff that they are dealing with out there; and I have to be able to tap into
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> some of what's going on with you… I want to have some understanding about
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> what you're dealing with. That helps me to effectively deal with you, to
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> effectively educate you; because if you don't have the tools at home, then I have
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> to find some other resources to help you get to where you need to go You know,
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> I'm asking you to go home and do this, and you're saying, "I don't have a
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> computer; I don't have this; I don't have a parent who will take me to do
>
> anything." I had a student who came to me yesterday and said, "I'm having
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> issues with my parent doing (participant pause) my parents are not being parents."
>
> The members of the group explained that the knowledge of students assumes

unique importance in the urban context. They discussed the struggles that envelop the lives of some of their students. Alexandra talked about a child who was supporting his family,

> Especially when it is a child who is not only a child but also the bread-winner of the family, I've had that to happen … when that child has to go and stay at work. He told me, "I didn't get home till 3:00 this morning" and I say, "Excuse me … what you mean being out that late at night?" He said, "I had to close." I said, "What do you mean 'close'?" I didn't know all this. He said, "Well, I work at night." I said, "You're not even 16 years old yet; it's against the law." He said, "I'm the only one who works. I have to pay the bills. I have to take care of the family. My mom is sick; my dad … we have no idea where he is." So, those are the issues they go through.

She continued by describing a situation in which all the utilities were turned off in a student's home, prompting teachers to come together as a community to pay bills so the family could be comfortable. After the focus group officially ended, but while many members remained to continue talking, Caroline told about taking time to understand the situation of a young man who failed to submit homework. The student's family had lost its home and was living in an abandoned house with no electricity; thus, when the student returned from football practice, it was too dark to see. Caroline reflected on how that experience changed her perspective as a teacher.

These conversations about context continued in the individual interviews.

Cornelius recognized that the struggles that many of his students experience both in and out of school pose a great challenge of teaching in the urban district. He stated,

> Peer pressure … You have students in foster homes … Abuse ... Socioeconomic status ... All of that. You're still in a country where sometimes where just off of your skin color, all sorts of things, you may be considered inferior… That's what I feel I'm combating against … all sorts of things like that … just obstacles, whatever they may be. Because you need education, period, to overcome anything, in my opinion.

Cornelius feels compelled to find a way to overcome these challenges in order to give his students a fighting chance in life. Understanding their present realities and the potential realities of their future, he wants to arm them with the skills necessary to surpass their current situation in life.

Daniel explained that many of his students must make challenging decisions on a daily basis. While acknowledging that students often choose actions that appear absurd to their teachers, Daniel believes that teachers must be aware of the students' struggles and understand that sometimes they, as adults, may not see the entire picture. He reminisced about a particular situation,

> I don't know if I told you or not, I have this one kid who has had a hard time. By every definition, he is a horrible student. He fights all the time. He lives with his grandmother. He skipped the graduation exam because he was afraid his grandmother was going to cash his check. In his mind—and he's a senior—which

is more important, graduating or getting that check? For him, it was a no-brainer:

He skipped school to go get the check. I can't really criticize that. I mean, I'm not

in his shoes… Through talking to his caseworker, I learned that his family has

been real sick. One day, I said, "Hey, man, how's your grandmother doing?" And

he was actually stunned that I knew he had a grandmother, let alone that I knew

she was sick. And he came to class every day. Granted, he was not a model

student; and he skipped school after first block; he left after my class … he didn't

go anymore. We take our victories where we can.

In this situation, Daniel looked at the student's struggles, acknowledged the problem, and

worked to find a solution. Like, Gerard, he understood that he must find a point at which

he could engage the student in conversation by establishing a caring, trusting relationship.

Shane explained that these struggles make his students strong while also wearing

on them over time.

They are survivors. They have to do to survive. They are not given shit. They are

just stronger, wiser—too wise, sometimes. Their innocence is taken away…. But,

one thing I try to teach them is, don't allow your heart to become hard or cold…

Yes, you were dealt a bad hand… You can better it. And I respect them; I respect

them a whole lot for what they deal with.

The teachers expressed that in many ways their students are adults. They explained the

challenge associated with respecting the students' adult-like demands while helping them

to maintain their role as children.

The teachers conveyed both their recognition of the challenges their children face and their belief that part of their role is to prepare them for their futures. They described working to balance their compassion for the students with their overall understanding that education is the only venue that will relieve the students from the bondage of poverty. They acknowledged the need to convey compassion for the realities of urban life without allowing students to use their socioeconomic status as an excuse for failure. They concurred that they want to support, rather than to hamper, the futures of their students.

Daniel explained the importance of balancing compassion and accountability. Daniel believes that teachers in the urban district are fighting for students' lives. They are fighting to help students to become more than survivors.

> You have to feel for the kids. You can't feel sorry for the kids. There is a difference. If I feel sorry for them, I would just give them a dollar to leave. It's not the same. I feel for the kids, but, at the same time, you have to find that zone. … Like Devin is struggling … Devin is having all kinds of home problems. My heart breaks for Devin. He will never know that. I will be miserable to him; I'm wretched to him right now. But, at the same time, I am wretched with a smile.

Margot discussed the same ideas in her interview. She explained the balance required to show students that you care while simultaneously explaining that poverty is not an excuse for failure.

> I do believe if you make that a crutch, they're gonna walk on it and they're going to play you the whole year… Because I feel that education is imperative enough

for me to fight for it on a child's behalf, because if I don't fight for it, wherever he

is working for $7.50 an hour, he is always going to be working there. So, I have to

see the bigger picture… I feel that it is my position, that I have to let them know

that you cannot use life's struggles as an excuse for you to become mediocre. I

talk to them about individuals in life who have accomplished great things through

tremendous feats. Poverty, in and of itself, is not a tremendous feat... So, I think

that you have to walk a fine line with that in this environment, because, if you

allow them, they will want their pity party. I don't want them pitying themselves;

I want them celebrating themselves and finding within them what they can do to

supersede what's going on in their life. Because if they don't, they are going to

run around in this stinking mess forever.

Isabella utilizes her own childhood experiences in a similar approach. Raised in poverty

herself, she is quick to quash children's excuses with her own experience. When students

use poverty as an excuse for not completing a project or submitting an assignment, she is

quick to tell them

"OK, been-there-done-that; that don't work on me. You need to do your

homework in the daytime before it gets dark." Because that's really your only

way out. Education is how you are going to make it out of that situation.

Though Isabella appears tough, she helps students to understand about their choices and

decisions within their own power. She helps them to choose actions which help them to

understand that success is an option for them. Tyrik expressed that an urban teacher must

balance rigor and compassion to prepare students for their futures.

> First of all, I like to be challenging but temper that with understanding in the
> urban … because the reward, like I told you, is the kids leaving and being
> productive. So you have to give them something challenging. but you can't be so
> difficult that they quit. Because sometimes you'll find that some of our kids have
> faced defeat so much that they are quick to be defeated. They're quick to be
> defeated because they have faced it so much. So, they will lie down instead of
> fighting, because they have been beaten so much they don't know how to fight.
> So, what you have to do, you have to give them something difficult but not break
> their spirit.

The teachers work to make accommodations for students without diluting their educational experience.

Caryn and Tyrik elaborated on strategies they have developed to respect students' situations while simultaneously remaining committed to their content. Each discussed the importance of creating time within the class for students to do research and work on the computers. They described respecting the fact that many of the students work long hours to help pay the family's bills and many do not have access to technology at home. Because Caryn and Tyrik want students to experience academic success, they find ways to avoid punishing students academically because of their parents' socioeconomic status.

Tyrik sets high expectations for students and their learning and then works to create opportunities for students to achieve the goals. He facilitates learning "so even the

most challenged student gains a good comprehensive understanding of difficult concepts." He believes that "when children say that learning is easy, but they have knowledge of concepts, the teacher has done a good job."

Cornelius emphasized his belief that helping students modify their behaviors is also an important part of practice. He uses his understanding of the students' lives to help them gain new perspective on their situations. He believes that students need to understand that many people in the world face graver situations than their own.

> I'll go ahead and listen, but after you're done talking, I'll say, "Do you know that
> there is somebody who would love to be in your jacked-up situation right now?...
> When it's all said and done, I hear you. I apologize that it's happening, but that
> does not give you the right to jack up everybody else's education. Therefore, this
> is the consequence …"

He believes that the listening component is a necessity. Students must know that he cares for them, but they also need to realize that their home situations do not give them a right to disrupt their learning or that of other students.

Bruce introduced a new dimension by describing the impact of contextual challenges that the school district fails to address. He explained the condition of the building in which he teaches. He told of occasions throughout the years when the air-conditioning system has failed and the sweltering heat has caused children to pass out in class or when the heating system had failed and students have sat in class wearing large winter jackets and covered with blankets. He questioned how anybody would ever

consider these conditions acceptable in a learning environment. Bruce believes that one

of the negative consequences of such contextual struggles is the societal message they

send to poor, urban students that they are not worthy of basic necessities.

> Anyway, the difference bothers you; and, after awhile, the difference insults you.
> After you're insulted, you have a choice—not even a choice, but I think a process:
> When you're insulted, you either reject the insult or you internalize the insult.
> And the insult is prevalent enough, it's hard as hell to reject it…These kids are not
> dumb. They know that if they were to go to Suburban School, USA, that wouldn't
> be allowed; that wouldn't be tolerated. If they deal with that for 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
> years, after awhile that creates in them a sense of inferiority.

Bruce's words and demeanor conveyed his infuriation at such inequities. He argued that

these conditions affect students' beliefs about themselves and, therefore, help determine

their behavior in society.

> Because your expectations determine your actions, and the physical appearance,
> not just of their school but of the community they live in, the physical nature of
> those things develops an expectation; and when that expectation is at a certain
> level, the actions have to follow the expectations

He continued his angry description of contextual inequities by relating that teachers must

beg for students to have access to soap in the bathrooms. He described teachers' recent

protest that the lack of soap would spread the H1N1 virus. As a result,

> Just this year, we get soap in the bathrooms. You can't tell me soap didn't exist

before this year. It's just things like that; and it works on the self-esteem and it works on the belief that the kids walk in with.

Another struggle that teachers discussed was the focus on standardized testing and the challenges associated with accountability. The teachers understand and honor the need for accountability. Caroline even suggested that she would welcome the elimination of tenure and the institution of reasonable methods of teacher evaluation, such as a value-added system. Though she said she would be happy to prove that she had helped students accomplish measurable gains in her class, she argued against standardized testing because of the undue pressure imposed on both teachers and students. Margot described the immense pressure associated with testing,

It is a challenge, because you are under an immeasurable challenge to make the children show that they know something; and you are showing that they know a specific set of objectives, which in no way encompass true knowledge. And, it angers me! And, if you don't get these children to pass, they don't graduate; and, it's tied to your effectiveness.

Though standardized testing is not unique to the urban district, the teachers expressed the belief that some of the problems and deficiencies of such testing are exacerbated in the urban area. Margot pointed out that much of this exacerbation is due to the comparatively lower level of reading ability in urban students. She explained that teachers at the high-school level receive many students that are more than 3 years below grade level in reading. Urban schools have been unable to compensate for the depleted

vocabulary resulting from limited exposure in lower-socioeconomic homes characterized by conversations consisting of verbal commands rather than in-depth intellectual exchanges. She referenced a study that reported the discrepancy between the number of words that children from varying levels of socioeconomic backgrounds had been exposed to upon beginning school. These reading challenges result in the failure of the first administration of the graduation exam by comparatively more urban students. This failure rate creates what Margot labeled "urgency in the urban district."

Many of the teachers expressed frustration that school administrators seem to evaluate them by checklists rather than by their efforts to provide authentic instruction. Margot has concluded that the focus on standardized testing hinders her instruction.

So, to me, that impedes the amount of authentic project-based instruction that I can do and the level of creativity. I'm creative, but the level of creativity that I can do in this class is severely thwarted, because I must get to the next objective and mark down that they have mastered it on the sheet of paper before we are evaluated by the walk-through team from the state and the city.

This year the checklist for accountability pushed Daniel to a level of extreme frustration.

And, especially this year, it just seems like one of the biggest burdens is that we are overwhelmed with paperwork trying to tell us how bad we are. I mean, that's the only thing that really discourages me. I mean, you're trying your best, you're working really hard, and yet the only observation you get is "Well, I can't tick this off the box." And that is a real issue. I'm not sure how much it affects me in

the classroom yet; but I can see how, if it continues, it would."

Daniel related that a recent observation visit by members of the central office staff had resulted in rave reviews and public commendation for the immaculate documentation of a teacher notorious for not teaching but, instead, handing out worksheets and having students sit in silence for the entire block. He continued, "These academic audits piss me off, because I think they are terribly wrong. It's not a bad idea, but the application is driving me insane." The teachers agreed on the need for a more effective way to monitor teaching. They expressed concern that the audits do not focus on the primary purpose—student learning—but, rather measure activities that do not best represent the overall efforts of teachers.

Daniel's story revealed one of the problems with teachers' efforts to attain Adequate Yearly Progress. Daniel and others expressed that these efforts have created three types of teacher. The first type of teacher teaches from bell-to-bell, engages students in learning, and accomplishes significant gains in student achievement. This teacher's diligent teaching leaves insufficient time for excessive documentation of her efforts. School administrators typically admonish this teacher with multiple criticisms due to insufficient evidence of her efforts. The second teacher does not make teaching a priority but excels at creating documents that seem to reflect teaching efforts similar to those of the first teacher. Though this teacher's students do not receive quality instruction, the teacher receives multiple commendations. In the focus group, Bruce explained the irony of this situation. He said, "You got some people who are dynamite on

paper, who go into a class – I mean, they got the standards, they got everything, and

haven't taught jazz … and can't teach jazz." The group acknowledged with affirming

laughter their familiarity with this situation. The third teacher possesses all of the

qualities of both of the first two teachers, excelling at both teaching and documentation.

The problem is that these teachers push themselves to their own emotional detriment and

often resent that they must "teach all day and document all night" to prove that they are

teaching. Bruce said that many times he feels overwhelmed by the additional paperwork

of new initiatives and new measures for judging teacher effectiveness. He said, "It's

almost like one of those things where you just want to go sit down with somebody and

say, 'Can I just teach?'"

Another contextual challenge raised by participants is society's perception that

teachers who work in the inner city are lower-quality educators. Margot stated,

I think a part of the misconception is that, you know, if you are teaching "over

there" that you're somehow stellar, and if you're teaching here you are

substandard… what people fail to understand is that teaching in an urban

classroom calls for more skills – social skills, pedagogical skills, more skills than

you would even need teaching in one of "those" systems. You could take one of

"those teachers" and put them in a classroom here for a week, and they won't last

one day. What they fail to realize is that the level of skill and strategy that you

need to teach in an urban system is far beyond what you would ever need to teach

in one of "those systems."

Shane identified passion as the only factor that can explain why urban teachers remain. He asked, "What other individual will go into a situation knowing that you're not going to get paid shit, you got all these attitudes bombarding you, and you're not going to be appreciated?"

Society's judgment of these teachers, however, angers them less than does society's judgment of their students. Shane ranted about suburban teachers who are quick to judge the actions of his students.

It is the way that other teachers talk about us. You go to these workshops… I know what you're talking about when you say, "Oh, you teach at that school or those kids." I said, "Excuse me! Those students … those students … let me tell you something about those students. When my students, and if, by chance, if my students were to break into some place, it's because there was need. (several "um-hmm's") They need something; it's not because of fun. Also, my folks come to school because they want to, because there is safety there, there is love there. Where you teach, on the other hand, you have individuals who are taking drugs when they don't need to be taking drugs, and they are taking drugs that their parents are taking; and nine times out of 10, when they break into a place, they break in because of it being fun. Until you come into my place, walk in my shoes, stay in my place, don't say shit about my goddamned kids.

The teachers believe in their students. They understand the struggles of their students and are offended when people judge their students without respecting them.

Another challenge for this group of teacher leaders was the ineffectiveness and lack of commitment of some of their colleagues. The teachers' leadership at the school level parallels their desire to influence the overall culture of the school. If passion, dedication, and energy were contagious, none of these teachers would work at "failing" schools. Though the teachers did not discuss their leadership and the overall results they would like their efforts to yield, some discussed their frustration with ineffective colleagues. Bruce talked about the pain of seeing his students sitting in the classrooms of disengaged teachers.

> You can go into classrooms and see that kid who really wants to learn so bad, and you can see the look on their face, like they're actually in prison. You can see the bars around them. They really would love for somebody to just open the door and let them out and take them to a place where they could really learn. That breaks your heart.

Bruce's distress at observing students disconnected from learning is understandable because he left a better paying job to teach inner-city youth and spends long hours at the school to prepare his academic team for competition. He probably feels that the actions of disengaged teachers counteract his own efforts to some extent.

Isabella also discussed her frustration with the practices of some colleagues. She believes that faculty members are emotionally connected and sincerely caring for one another, but she wishes that they all had the same passion for students.

> I'm thinking, if we were all in education to educate children, I think this would be

a much better … It wouldn't be so dysfunctional … It doesn't seem as though we

are there for the students. Some of us are there to see … to get a little check

without putting forth much effort. And some of us, it's more of a social thing, and

if I get around to teaching, OK, but it's more of a social hour for seven hours. Can

you teach some time? Let's try one day a week, and then we'll build up to two

days out of the week. Aw, come on.

As a department head, this is probably frustrating. Balancing friendship and leadership

could be a potential struggle that teachers did not discuss in the interviews.

When discussing the importance of community in the focus group, Margot was

quick to point out that her strength comes from other teacher leaders. She emphatically

expressed that not everyone in the community gives her strength. She stated, "Some

people in the environment are toxic. I know that might be a very harsh word." The other

members in the focus group responded in unison, "No, it's not." Margot continued,

"They can be very toxic, very negative – nothing is ever right." Margot's multiple

leadership roles have exposed her to many teachers who balk at requests to change

pedagogical strategies to meet the needs of the students. Gerard confirmed this collegial

challenge in his individual interview. He stated,

I don't want to surround myself with a deadbeat, because all it's going to do is

drag me down. I've always been like this: If I'm going to do the job, I'm going to

do the job. I don't want to be the worksheet teacher, like, "Sit down. Here's your

worksheet. Just go to it."

For someone like Gerard, who has often worked 12-hour days at the school, ineffectiveness and apathy among other teachers cause frustration.

Overall, the teachers' attributed the struggles of their jobs to context. The teachers consider themselves in competition with the students' lives outside of school. They realize that their students experience many pressures beyond the classroom and that they must find ways to capture students' attention and help them value the rewards that education can offer. They respect their students' struggles but do not allow the students use their problems as excuses for failure or mediocrity. Several participants expressed the belief that inequities within the educational system further encumber student learning and increase professional struggles within the urban context. The teachers conveyed their passion for teaching and their frustration that standardized testing, in their opinion, impedes the delivery of authentic instruction. They are hurt that society devalues their efforts but are much more concerned that society devalues the efforts of their students. These teacher leaders worry that some other teachers have fallen into the belief that they are unworthy of excellence and their students are incapable of succeeding and as a result are helping to fuel society's beliefs. This group of teacher leaders believes in themselves, the purpose of education, and their students; they become frustrated when the challenges of the context and society's beliefs about urban teachers and urban students lead to greater inequities and greater challenges.

Subquestion Two: Rewards

Data from the focus group and the interviews provided answers to the second

subquestion, What contextual factors do effective teachers in the inner-city high schools perceive to be rewarding? In the focus group, after much discussion about contextual struggles, the researcher posed the question "What keeps you in the door?" In unison, the group answered, "The kids." Shane quickly followed the group's answer by saying, "They are more appreciative." Shane's comment began an exchange about the rewards associated with teaching in the urban district.

This group of teachers easily identified the rewards of their teaching. They reported gaining much satisfaction from their students and their students' successes in school and in life. They related the rewards of urban teaching to the challenges of urban teaching. Margot explained, "The reward here is a bit greater. I see that there is a greater mountain to climb here. And, once you reach the summit with the children, I believe that the celebration is more meaningful."

The teachers reported that their jobs and efforts make them feel good. Samuel explicated, "I leave every day feeling good. I don't feel guilty that I didn't try. The reward of looking back and seeing that I helped; I was a part of their success." Isabella explained the excitement associated with the moment that a student finally understands a concept, "I like the look on a child's face when you can see that the light bulb just came on. You've been dancing on the table, whatever it takes, and it came on. You can see it all over their face." Daniel described a similar feeling,

> The reward is a lot of the intangible things. The reward is that first time when a
> kid gives me an answer. It's kind of weird … but the first time he gives me an

answer that he didn't know … and he smiles and he's proud of it and he makes it loud. And that's like a reward that makes me smile… And, again, I think there's not enough to be said for feeling good. And it does, it makes you feel good, like you've done something. And again, I don't see myself as doing charity work at all; but, at the same time, I feel good knowing that I've done the best job I can do.

These teachers enjoy their jobs; they enjoy their children. They wrest satisfaction from knowing that they have impacted the lives of their students. They love to see their students succeed. Lanie finds great pleasure in her students,

I am able to build relationships with the students that I come in contact with. Just seeing the light bulb go off, when it does go off, is a reward in itself. I enjoy what I do. I enjoy young people and being able to make a difference in their lives— teach them academics and share a part of their life and their culture.

Shane's reward is "knowing that I changed lives … knowing that the kids that were put in my path, I did them justice." Bruce expressed similar satisfaction, celebrating that he has been able to accomplish feats that others consider impossible. He referenced competitions in which his academic team successfully competed with students who have many more resources as occasions on which he has experienced the rewards of his efforts.

The overall reward for these teachers is the ability to impact the lives of others. Margot gave a beautiful metaphor for the satisfaction created by the efforts of these highly effective teachers. She reflected, "But, deeply and intrinsically, you actually put [down] your pen and write your chapter in somebody else's life"

The teachers recounted feeling the rewards of their hard work when former students return to share their successes and their lives. Margot mentioned, "They come back to you and they say, 'Thank you.'" Lanie shared the joy she feels when students return,

> Seeing these students succeed, watching them graduate, watching them become citizens of the world. They come back and visit, and they tell us their successes in college. They come back and tell us where they have gotten jobs. They share their families with us. All of this they come back to share with us because we made a difference in their lives. And, just seeing them succeed in whatever they choose to do with their lives, that's reward enough.

In his individual interview, Tyrik discussed the pleasure he derives from visits with former students who have gone to college and look happy and in good health. Isabella explained the joy from the "heads up" that she receives when students return from college to tell her how well she prepared them for their current classes. Daniel laughed as he discussed the problems that are now arising because of the number of students who disrupt his instruction by stopping by to say hello. Bruce elaborated on the rewards of visits by former students and stated, "After years of doing it, when kids come back and they've gone to school … That is a great thing."

The teachers realize that they have played an integral role in creating productive, knowledgeable citizens. The students' success is the fruit of their labors. Tyrik explained,

> So, honestly, the only thing is the good feeling that, hey, you know you have kids

going out there who are productive. And the feeling of accomplishment that, hey,

you made a difference. For me, as long as my basic needs are being met for my

family and things of that nature, that's what it really boils down to—making a

difference in somebody's life.

The realization that his students have become respectable citizens gives Tyrik a good

feeling that is not only a great reward but also a major influence in his yearly return.

Shane, like Tyrik, discussed the power of students returning as adults,

And that's all I needed. That's all I needed, just to see that I've done something.

That's the reward. Do I expect it every day? That's ludicrous. But, as long as I

know, as long as I feel, that I'm doing the best that I can for my kids … As long

as I know, as I feel, that I'm trying to be better than I was last year, and I get up

and I like going to work, then I'm cool.

Gerard also discussed the reward of students' success as adults. He always makes sure to

"really keep them in front of you at all times… just thinking about those kids who have

done well." He experiences student success as an ongoing reward, as well as an

influencing factor in his return. Isabella talked about the joy of frequently running into

former students in the Wal-Mart parking lot. Having former students greet her with

smiles and praise when she least expects them is a byproduct and an ongoing reward of

teaching. Seeing that her former students are productive is a blessing. She stated, "But,

that feels good; it feels good that I made some type of impact on you. I think that helps."

Tyrik's comment summarized this reward.

It makes you feel good as a teacher to see your kids in society and being

productive. That's the biggest reward that you have. We're not getting rich doing

this … but to know that you're making a difference.

Caryn derives similar pleasure from students returning and sharing their stories. She also

described the pleasure of watching students every year learn to apply their classroom

knowledge to their own civic actions. She expressed the internal reward of her students'

registering to vote and taking on service projects. She explained,

In one specific class, I had a kid to petition the City Council to have a house torn

down in his neighborhood because it was an eye-sore to the rest of the

neighborhood. So, when they become good citizens, when they find out that, "I'm

responsible to my community," that's the most rewarding thing…

Watching her students apply classroom content as responsible citizens participating in

their own neighborhoods brings Caryn joy.

These teachers experience most of their rewards in the actions of their students.

They love the good feeling that their teaching produces daily. They regularly see fruits of

their labors from past and present students. Their reward is an inner joy that comes from

helping others. They feel that they are needed by the students and the community and

take pleasure in fulfilling that need.

Subquestion Three: Literature

A discussion of the third subquestion, How do these identified rewards and

challenges align with those presented in the literature on urban education?, will appear in

section 5 as all of the findings are connected to the existing literature.

Subquestion Four: Strategies

Data from the focus group and the interviews supplied answers to the fourth subquestion, What strategies do teachers use to maximize rewards and manage these identified challenges in the research setting? The overriding theme that the data revealed is that these teachers rely on God and faith to survive the frustrating days and to guide them in their work with students as agents of change and as role models for students in need of positive influences. This theme was neither discussed nor alluded to during the focus group but became a topic of discussion in the small intimate environment of the interviews.

The teachers believe themselves to be instruments through which God changes lives. They believe that they are fulfilling a deeper calling by working in the urban district. When asked, "What's in it for you?" Isabella answered,

> You know, I don't think it's even about me. I don't think it is. I think I am an instrument being used, but it's not about me per se. It's just my situation; it's just my circumstance. I think God could use anybody in my situation; I just happen to be it.

Isabella views herself as an instrument of God's will and believes that, through her urban teaching, she is fulfilling a greater purpose. Others, too, expressed that this spiritual sense of purpose helps them to overcome obstacles and constantly polish their skills. Margot explained,

> And, I think, in that, as well, knowing that, in a sense, you are designed for a
>
> purpose. And, when you are sent for a purpose, knowing it's not going to be an
>
> easy role; because, within those purposes is where you find how to hone yourself
>
> and become better than you are. That talent … You know, how you may have to
>
> grind some garlic … In a sense, that grinding process happens, where that talent
>
> within you is ground out of you because of the challenges that you face every day.
>
> And, it's just … What you have within you comes out in the classroom if you are
>
> here for the right purposes.

This sense of purpose helps the teachers persevere and fight the battles because they

understand that their job is part of their role in the world. They find comfort in fulfilling a

calling. Tyrik explained that his internal drive to teach was "faith-based" and connected

to a greater purpose.

For many, this sense of calling serves as a motivating factor to remain in the

urban district. Isabella remarked, "I come back because I believe that this is God's will

for my life. At this point in time, this is what He wants me to do." Shane could not even

come up with another explanation for his love for the children and his profession. He

stated, "The only one I can give credence to is God. But I've always wanted to be here. I

couldn't think of any other place to be." Shane explained that he has a disease that caused

his doctors 30 years ago to give him 2 to 3 years to live. He continued passionately, "Do I

profess to be a Christian? Hell, naw. Do I believe? Yes, because I've been through too

damned much not to believe that Somebody was looking over my shoulders. But, He put

me here." The teachers believe in their works and see their daily actions as contributing to the greater good.

Some participants consider their work with the students to be extensions of their work with the church. Gerard explained that his job fulfills a portion of his role in life commenting, "You know, service is life for me, that you can serve somebody, get to somebody." Caryn described her urban teaching job as an extension of having always seen her family and her church reach out to help others. She remarked, "Even in church, that's what we do: We serve the community; that's our purpose, to serve the community." Her job as an urban teacher fulfills the ideal of giving back to the community that she learned at a young age. She views this giving back as her responsibility to her people.

Most of the teachers expressed that their spiritual perspective helps them maximize the rewards of urban teaching. They used their faith as a means of management. Margot exclaimed,

I'm a deeply spiritual person. I really do depend on prayer, and I depend on

leading and guiding and direction from the Lord. I just really do, because … I

know without that, I wouldn't come back … no way! I mean, I need Jesus!

Faith helps these teachers feel, as Margot expressed, that they are not trying to move a mountain alone. The immense challenges of urban teaching seem manageable through prayer and steady, purposeful actions. Samuel reflected, "I know that I need to do what needs to be done. I need to keep going. But, those challenges can take back my spirituality. I just pray. I just keep God first in everything that I do." The teachers believe

that their spiritual connection helps them to understand that their role as an educator in the urban district is part of their spiritual walk. They believe that teaching urban students is God's calling for them. They know in their hearts that God purposely placed them in the community to be a support and an agent for change.

The teachers use their faith to help them stay focused on their primary purpose as teachers. Their prayer fosters perspective on their challenges and joy about their successes. Prayer helps them to deepen their understanding of their children's struggles so that they can soften their hearts and teach with compassion. They use their spiritual relationship to guide them in maximizing their impact on children's lives.

The teachers manage many of their challenges by designing and implementing effective instruction. The teachers believe that their students have a deep desire to learn and that one of their primary roles is to find methods to ignite student excitement about content. They believe that they can help children excel in all areas if they tap into the minds of their students. The teachers recognize the challenges and use them to make their instruction more meaningful for students, which, in turn, is more rewarding for them as educators. Margot explained,

> Our kids lack exposure. They are not reading as much. They don't get a chance to travel the world… let's says, globally inclined. And, I think that, just to see the light bulb come on when you bring the world to them, if you bring different ways of thought to them, if you bring different pieces of reading to them... When you see the light bulb come on, it's more profound or something. They really

appreciate your bringing the world to them; and they're more inclined to be
passionate about going out there to meet the world.

Margot related using a piece of poetry that allowed one of her students to reflect on her own life. The poem discussed how a caged bird flapped its wings until they bled. She posed the question to her children, "Have you ever felt like you've been a caged bird? Have you ever felt like life was going on on the outside, but yet you were on the inside trying to get out?" One of her girls had just returned to school from a suspension after engaging in a fight with other girls over problems that started in the community. In addition, the girl had bruises all over her body from a supposed beating by her boyfriend. Through the writing the girl realized that if she stayed in her current situations, she would block herself from receiving blessings from her talents. She was able to engage with the text and relate the text to her own life. After students wrote in their journals, they began a class discussion. Margot reflected on the experience,

I'd say, "Why do you think he continues to beat his wings, knowing that he will not be able to get out?" And some of the children said, "Well, Ms. Chapman, despite some of the things that may be going on or the cages that you may be in, doesn't mean that you stop fighting." And I thought that was so profound. It's instances like that; you can create a place for them to find comfort even within your subject area. You have to create those places, and it comes with good planning.

Other teachers also spoke about the importance of reaching students through good

instruction. Samuel stated, "I care; and, by caring, I feel that if I don't grab hold of them, if I don't motivate them, if I don't show them the direction to go, then …" Tyrik discussed how students always wonder how they are going to use his content in their lives. He went through the series of questions that he always asks the children so that they can see the role of content in their lives. He asks questions that extend beyond their current school year and school testing. He commented that after all of the questions, "I've pretty much touched about 80% of the kids in that class. I say, 'Well, you need this.' So, I have to break it down; I have to touch everybody."

Caroline reflected on first integrating African American authors into her literature curriculum. She acknowledged that this practice is now considered to be common, yet 20 years ago this was an extremely innovative approach. She discussed how she learned that making instruction relevant was a powerful method for engaging students. She used African American literature as a springboard for teaching the classics.

The teachers believe that good instruction is a powerful tool toward overcoming the challenges of the urban environment. These highly effective teachers deal with fewer classroom management problems because the students respect their efforts within their classrooms. Teachers discussed how their presence changes the demeanor of their students. In the focus group, Alexandra described how students' behaviors change the moment she crosses the threshold into the room of a teacher whose students are out of control. Other teachers in the group related the same experience. The researcher attributes these teachers' special relationship with students to effective instruction because their

personalities, teaching methods, and management styles cross the gamut.

The teachers also described the necessity of establishing meaningful relationships prior to implementing rigorous content. Ashley explained that she does not have as many challenges as others because she works to create relationships on the first day of class.

> Students know that it is my deepest desire to be fair with them in every situation.
> And when I make an error in judgment, I quickly let them know that I was wrong.
> This helps them know that I'm human and like them make mistakes.

They work to create learning environments that foster student learning. In the focus group, Tyrik claimed, "We're in a situation where we must reach kids in order to educate them. You've got to reach them on an emotional level." Margot quickly agreed, "Yes, there are a lot of factors that you've got to go through before going through the content door." In his interview, Gerard's explanation of relationships elaborated on Margot's idea,

> They have so many things they are dealing with in their lives, that school is not a priority. And, once you get through "I'm having an abusive situation at home, I don't have enough food to eat, I don't have proper clothes, I'm a key-latch kid … I'm dealing with all that, and then I have a deficiency with reading or I have a deficiency with math …" That's what I mean: Before I can even deal with your deficiencies or what I'm supposed to help you with, you have some other things that we have to break through in order for me to get to where we need to go.

The teachers described having learned that, for their students, student effort often

parallels teacher-student relationship. Caroline's account of a student who had an 'A' average in her class but was failing another teacher's class highlights the significance of teacher-student relationships. When Caroline questioned the student to gain an understanding of the low grade, the girl informed her that the teacher did not care about her and, therefore, she did not care about the teacher's work. Caroline was amazed that this student was willing to fail a class because she did not like a teacher. However, for this student, relationships motivated academic achievement.

The teachers expressed wanting students to experience in their classrooms an appreciation of student opinions, student questions, and student engagement. They establish relationships with students based on mutual respect. Margot explained, "Just showing them mutual respect. I respect them deeply: I respect their voices, I respect them as people, and I let them know that I do." Margot revealed that she helped to assuage student anxieties about reading and writing by helping students experience their ideas as important and respected within the confines of the classroom. Ashley revealed that each week she selects a star student, which is often not an 'A' student but, instead, a recognition of a low performing student for a positive action, effort, or grade.

Shane reiterated the importance of showing students respect when he shared a story about substitute teaching in an urban high school in another state. He regularly greeted his students with "Yes, sir" and "No, sir." This obviously had an impact on the students. One day a young man came to him and told him to move his car. Shane was a bit worried and wasn't sure what to expect; nevertheless, he followed the child's

instructions. Later in the day, a gunfight ensued and the teacher's car that was now in the

same place was "riddled with bullets." Later the student explained to him that he

protected his property because he had never had an adult to show him that level of

respect. This impacted Shane's teaching and relationship building in future years. Shane

later explained the importance of knowing your students and paying close attention to

their needs,

> You know the kids. When you see a kid that has no soul in their eyes, then you
>
> have to pay close attention; because, when a child comes to you and you look in
>
> their eyes and there's nothing there, you have to understand that that child has
>
> been through something that she lost her soul, or he lost his soul. Are they
>
> nonreturnable? No. But you don't have to be the one to push them off the grid.

Bruce discussed the value that he places on his relationships with students, emphasizing

that he bases the relationships on mutual respect and constantly nurtures them. He honors

the bonds of trust that characterize these relationships.

> Going back to the idea of believing in the students, that does go both ways. I don't
>
> want to let them down; I really don't. I don't want them to think I don't care, that
>
> I'm not going to teach them anything, that I never come, that I'm always gone.
>
> Naw, I wouldn't want to break that trust; because it's been broken enough
>
> already; and I don't want to add to it.

Bruce stated that the trust that sustains these relationships also contributes to his

resilience and to his remaining in the district. His relationships with students help him

maximize his rewards and minimize his challenges. He believes that the relationships, along with his engaging instructional methods, prevent some of the behavioral issues that plague other teachers and maximize his enjoyment as a teacher.

The teachers described creating student relationships on a person-by-person basis. Gerard explained that he evaluates each relationship separately, making frequent adjustments in his approach as he develops an accurate understanding, deepens his compassion, and creates effective goals. These relationships help teachers to manage their classrooms while paving avenues for differentiated instruction. This idea was supported by the videos that the researcher collected as part of the archival documents. Daniel, Margot, and Shane shared videos of their classroom teaching. Each video showed a solid connection between teacher and student. The students actively engaged in discussions about content, and the teachers utilized questioning to guide student learning. The students appeared to be comfortable. In each video, the students and teacher shared in laughter. These videos provided visual evidence of the student-teacher relationships described in both the focus group and the individual interviews. They gave credence to Tyrik's comment in the focus group, "You know, you have to establish the relationship before you can get to the rigor." Each teacher had obviously fostered a classroom community that provided the context for rigorous lessons marked by lively relational participation. These teachers know their students, appreciate their interests, and hear their academic voices. The depth of their understanding helps them reach their students.

Interestingly, a substrand of pedagogy wove throughout the subquestions. Teacher

participants believed that one of their challenges was providing authentic instruction while simultaneously providing evidence of that instruction required by multiple levels of administration. They believed that some of the administrative assessments impeded high-quality instruction. Yet, in contrast, as teachers continued their conversations, they expressed a common belief that high-quality instruction is one of the best strategies for minimizing challenges and maximizing rewards. The teachers found great satisfaction when students experienced success within the classroom or returned later to express their gratification.

<center>Second Primary Research Question: Intersectional Relationships</center>

Data from all sources of inquiry contributed to the answer to the second primary researcher question, What, if any, intersectional relationship exists between the concepts of teacher resilience, teacher retention, and teacher effectiveness as the constructs relate to teachers' decisions to remain?

The teachers' responses indicated that passion for students—a deep love for students—drives everything they do. Why do these teachers come back year after year? The teachers attributed their remaining in the urban district to the students. Ashley stated, "The love and commitment I have for my kids keeps me going, it renews every semester." Cornelius explained, "I come back each year to Forrester City Schools to light somebody's bulb. One is great, but if I can do a whole classroom, that's when I'll be like, I can go out on top." The participants challenge themselves day after day to better their practices so that they can better impact student achievement. Margot explained,

The children. The students. My passion for seeing them grow as learners. I come

back because this is almost like a big science experiment. Man! You have

theories and hypotheses, and you test them, and you throw them out, and you try

it again. And you have some of the craziest characters in the mix that can make

you laugh or cry. It is one of the most dynamic professions ever!

The data revealed that this passion for students relates closely to teachers' faith

and their need to give back. Commitment to students and desire to better their students'

lives foster the teachers' resilience and influence their decisions to remain. Bruce stated,

Internally, it is my desire to see students that wouldn't have somebody to care

about them and their future in the absence of me… But, internally, the idea of

doing it right is important for me.

He later continued and built on this idea,

Yes, I feel drawn to reveal the possibilities… It's just that idea of "Hey, I can, I

think with my skill set and the experience that I've had, I think that I can bring

something positive into the lives of somebody who might not necessarily get

that." Hey, I can't beat it. So, I'm going to keep doing it as long as I think I can

do that… As long as I feel like I can make a difference.

The focus group and interviews indicated that passion for students and social

justice are connected to teacher effectiveness. Concern for students and their lives

constantly drives the need of these teachers to impact student achievement in the

classroom and success in life beyond the classroom.

Reflection on their practice helps these teachers raise their level of effectiveness, increases their resilience, and influences their decisions to return. Daniel explained how the reflection helped him in his day-to-day efforts and fostered his resilience over time. Daniel stated,

I always say, "I lost the battle, but I'm not going to lose the war." And that does give you that resilience, because you're … When you reflect on what went wrong, you also reflect on what went right. And, again, I think everybody thinks of how you can do it better, and that does give you that resilience to put up with the really bad days, you know…

Caryn, too, discussed how her reflection helped her return each year and also explained how reflection fostered her motivation to go to work on a daily basis.

So, when I think about what it is I've done right or wrong, then it helps me. I'm excited about getting up the next morning to come in to see how it's going to go the next morning: Is this going to be good? That excites me.

Lanie shared the same level of excitement,

I come back because I can correct something that wasn't maybe as good as it could be or wasn't as successful as it could be… It's something that you look forward to doing. It's something that makes you come back: "Yeah, I can do this better, and I'm going to do this better." And you do whatever you need to do to make it happen better.

This group of teachers revealed a dedication to professional reflection and an

understanding of the impact of reflection on their overall effectiveness. Through

discussion, they realized that reflection also impacts their resilience and staying power.

During the focus group, Daniel reflected on how unreflective teachers can become toxic

in the school setting.

> The thing is, the next day is another chance. I think there is a break where some
> teachers, instead of reflecting inwardly, they externalize that and say, "Well, you
> can't teach these children. They didn't learn in sixth grade; how am I going to
> teach them in ninth grade?" And I think that's a kind of a justification for why …
> and it becomes a kind of negative, downward path that, over time, if there is no
> one there to try to help correct that, it just poisons the soul.

Through this comment, Daniel acknowledged the importance of reflection and its overall

power on a teacher.

The reflection component created a circular dynamic in that the teachers

identified their deep connection and belief in students as the impetus for their reflective

practice. Reflection, in a sense, is a by-product of the teachers' passion for students and

student learning. The teachers reported that they reevaluate their teaching when their

students struggle with a concept, with the goal of better reaching students to foster their

success. This level of reflection fosters teacher resilience. When they fail to achieve the

day's teaching goals, their reflection helps them relate their failure to aspects of the

lesson design or teaching style, thus motivating them for the next lesson and preventing

discouragement about their students' deficiencies. In addition, reflection influences

teachers' decisions to remain by fostering the desire to continue to master their craft. Many of the teachers reported using the summer to attend multiple professional development seminars to increase their content knowledge and hone their teaching skills.

The teachers expressed gratitude to the district for its exemplary professional development department and the support it provides for outside professional development. Professional development emerged as the only external factor that had significant impact on this group of teachers. They reported that the professional development opportunities both in and out of the district have contributed to their feeling valued, added to their resilience, and increased their overall effectiveness. Overall, however, the teachers admitted that they would probably return even without this high-quality professional development. They attributed their probable return in the absence of professional development to their commitment to the students.

Many of the teachers expressed appreciation for the executive director of professional development and her commitment to both students and teachers. They noted especially that she helped them acquire valuable professional development, encouraged them to be lifelong learners, and consistently secured classroom resources for them. Daniel declared that professional development has influenced his decision to return by enhancing his loyalty. The system's continued investment in him has inspired his continued investment in the system. Bruce also pointed to the support of administrators such as the director of professional development as positively influencing his decision to remain. He stated, "And, as long as they care, it's kind of like the student thing, it's hard

to let them down; because they are trying to make it possible to do what you do, and you don't want to spit in their faces."

The teachers acknowledged that high-quality professional development experiences have enabled them to change their practices and increase their effectiveness. Margot detailed some of the transformative learning experiences she has had as a teacher. She noted that many of her innovative strategies and changes in pedagogy resulted from national conferences, Pre-AP training, and her intensive weeklong professional development with the National Urban Alliance. Margot concluded, "And these experiences have been the thing that helped me to change my practice." Tyrik, too, discussed how valuable professional development experiences have helped him to return each year. He recalled experiences at national conferences, Pre-AP training, and a marine biology internship. Caryn explained that such experiences also create a new level of professional excitement that help her to return.

> Once I've gained all that knowledge, I'm really excited at the beginning of the
> school year, because I have all this new content that I am ready to share with my
> students for the next school year.

Learning through professional development energizes these three teachers and inspires them to apply their newfound knowledge to their lesson designs.

Some of the teachers discussed how professional development helps them to return to the district each year. Margot stated,

> One other thing that helps me come back is professional development. Since I've

been in the Forrester City Schools, those opportunities to learn more have been abundant. They have been abundant! I mean, if you're not taking the opportunities in Forrester City, it's due to the fact that you're a bit lazy, because they exist.

Several teachers acknowledged that professional development not only increases their content knowledge but also helps them feel part of a larger learning community. Daniel explained,

Most of the time you get something useful out of it; you think of how you can apply it to your class. The other way I think it helps is that you get to be around like-minded people, and that always reenergizes. I love—especially when I go to professional development just for social studies—and I love to make connections with people like Bruce, where you can develop a real rapport and you can bounce ideas off each other. We would call each other all the time to argue about something or to bounce some ideas off. That's the kind of thing that does keep you going.

Margot described feeling energized by the relationships formed through learning opportunities. She commented, "Realizing that you're connected in so many ways and that you're not isolated, that helps." Caryn related the positive impact of the contributions of a colleague from another school during their professional development sessions reflecting, "When we're together for professional development, not just talking to me but even his conversation in the group, it takes me to another level."

Despite the teachers' appreciation for professional development and its positive impact on both effectiveness and resilience, most concurred that they would probably return even if the district did not offer these valuable opportunities. Gerard explained,

> If I didn't have PD, I'm still going to feel the same way about the kids, so that means I'm going to have to do it on my own. You may not send me off to do anything. Maybe I'm researching more, maybe I'm doing more Internet or getting more people to bring me things in. But, it makes it so much more … it makes you feel better about your system…

Though at the beginning, Tyrik discussed how professional development influences his decision to return, he realized in the end that his decision is all about the students. He stated,

> But, really, there is nothing that Forrester City does that drives me. There is nothing that they give me that really drives me. Everything that drives me is based upon the children themselves. That's what drives me. And, guess what, if Forrester City didn't do as much as they did, guess what, I would probably still be here.

The teachers in the sample expressed their appreciation for professional development. They believed that it added to both their effectiveness and their resilience. They recognized professional development as one of the rewards of working in an urban district. Margot explained, "We're in a unique position as a district, because, you know, most of the students in our district are below the poverty line, so we have tons of

professional development money." The teachers attested that professional development opportunities help rejuvenate their spirits, their passions, and their minds but confessed that they would probably return each year without such opportunities.

The teachers who acknowledged reliance on professional community attested that relationships with like-minded teachers add to their resilience and challenge them to be better teachers, thus adding to their effectiveness. Those teachers who surround themselves with community rely on like-minded colleagues as outlets for frustration, cohorts in lesson reflection, supporters with whom to share high and low moments, and fellow soldiers in the fight to educate youth who have been left behind. However, their professional community does not necessarily influence their decision to return each year. Overall, even these teachers return for the students.

Overall, teachers have a deep passion for students and their learning, which influences their decision to remain, their resilience, and their effectiveness. Their passion affects their effectiveness because they feel a need to provide their students with a high-quality of instruction. Their drive to engage students in learning is partly grounded in their commitment to social justice, which creates a sense of urgency. This intertwinement of passion for students and dedication to social justice creates an underlying feeling that ineffective instruction cheats students of the possibility of success. This pedagogical theme that arises from the passion for students, the devotion to social justice, and their ideas of effectiveness creates an additional theme that is grounded in teachers' reflection and their desire to perfect their craft. This need to better themselves is a substrand of

these previous themes because the persistence towards perfection is neither self-indulgent nor self-promoting but rather a desire to offer their students a pathway to future successes. For many of the participants their spiritual connection provided the framework for both their passion for students and their commitment to social justice. They believed their role in the urban setting could be attributed to a spiritual calling which they relied on in challenging times to help them to persevere. Teachers worked to increase their overall effectiveness by engaging in quality professional development and collegial relationships both of which supported their resilience.
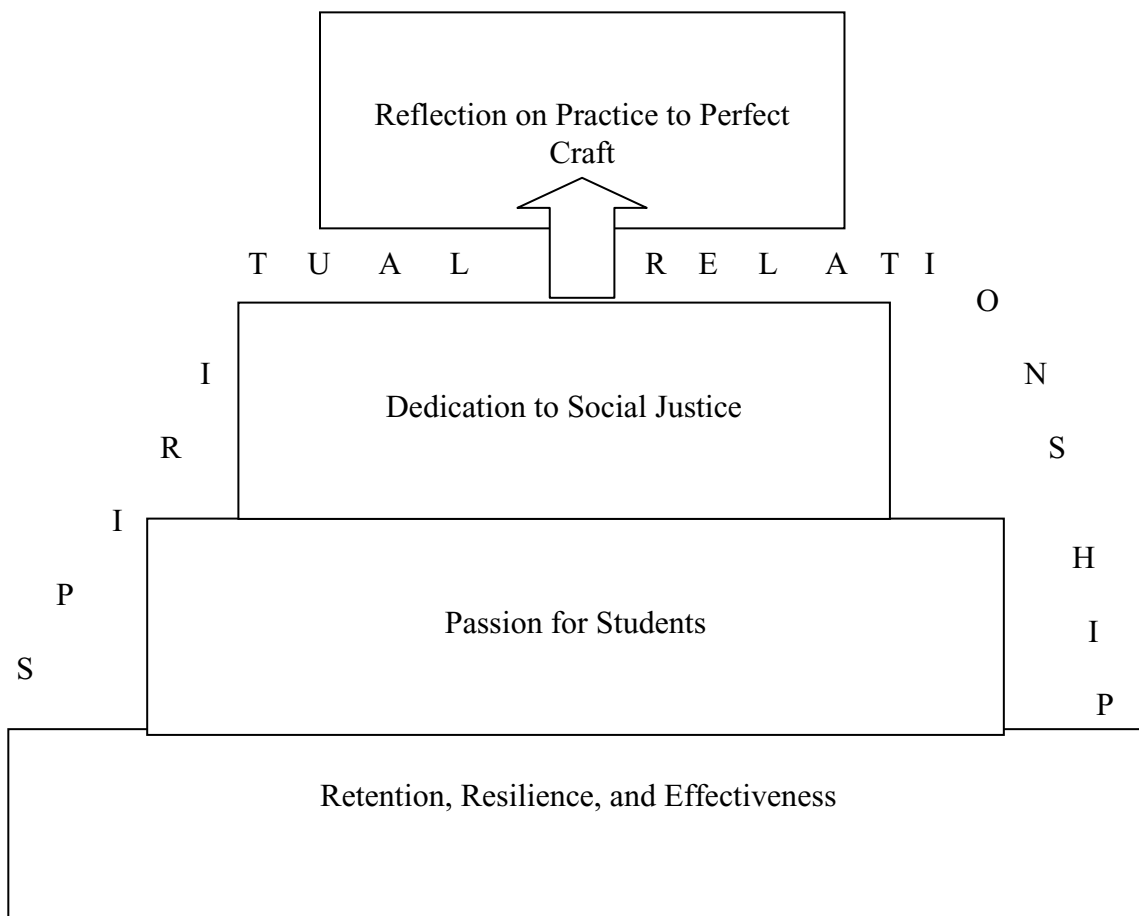
Figure 1: Factors associated with retention, resilience, and effectiveness

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│                                             │
│              Community                      │
│                 and                         │
│         Professional Development            │
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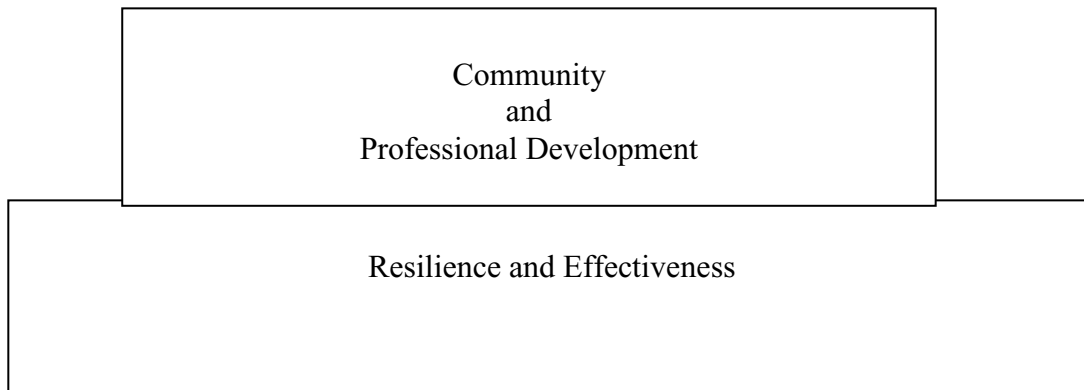
Figure 2: Resilience and effectiveness factors not associated with retention

Nonconfirming or Contradictory Data

Nonconfirming or contradictory data were limited. The theme that had the biggest

discrepancy within the data was that of reliance on community. The previous section

highlighted the teacher participants' varying experiences with community and their

beliefs about its impact on their decisions to remain.

Criterion sampling may have contributed to the paucity of contradictory data. The

selected teachers have reputations throughout the district for their effectiveness and

ability to impact student learning. This commonality could have created a sample with

similar motivations and a shared purpose.

In addition, the leaders in the urban system may have subconsciously looked

beyond the characteristics that the researcher used to identify effective teachers.

Administrators could have had their own set of criteria and motivations in choosing

participants that, in turn, created a more homogeneous mixture of teachers. A common

view of effectiveness may be engrained in the minds of urban leaders; thus, the identification of effective teachers could have also included concepts such as, teacher leader and team player that the researcher did not include in the ten identifying criteria.

This group of reflective practitioners shares a belief in their abilities to mold the futures of their students. Though outside sources identified all the teachers as effective, they are modest about their practices; they are extremely humble. In part, their reflection keeps them always striving to be better and to modify their pedagogical strategies to raise student achievement. None boasted of their high levels of effectiveness; they expressed wanting to be better and stronger. This level of reflection keeps teachers focused on their own weaknesses rather than the weaknesses of their students; they do not use the urban students and their characteristics as excuses for failure or mediocrity, a trait that often characterizes teachers in low-achieving schools.

<div align="center">Reliability, Credibility, and Validity</div>

Initial themes emerged during the focus group. These themes were briefly discussed at the end of the focus group. The researcher asked members of the group to reflect on these ideas and think about how these themes aligned with their experience and motivation. Each individual interview began with a form of member checking. The interviewer reviewed themes that emerged in the focus group, and asked each interviewee to respond to the themes. The researcher gave interviewees an opportunity to develop each theme further from their personal experiences, clarify comments from the focus group, or rebut the group's idea.

The researcher gave each participant copies of transcripts relevant to his or her participation. Teachers who participated in both the focus group and the individual interview received a copy of each. The researcher asked participants to examine the transcripts and gave each an opportunity to expand on any ideas or make any necessary changes.

At this point, the researcher had a conversation with Shane. She pointed out two particular places where he named and spoke negatively about another school's principal and a member of central office staff. The researcher explained that these comments did not impact the overall data and suggested that he authorize her to strike them from the record. Though Shane attested that he would be happy to stand behind his words, when the researcher suggested striking them for his protection, he agreed and she deleted the comments from the transcript.

The researcher gave Bruce, Margot, and Tyrik copies of section 4 with a request that they respond to the findings. The first response to the findings came from an initial discussion of the findings with Margot. Before giving Margot a copy of section 4, the researcher sat down with her and read to her all of the quotes that the researcher had pulled from her transcripts as well as the researcher's own words that framed the comments. The researcher had conducted Margot's interviews in December and was reviewing the data with her in March. At the time, Margot was exhausted. Within the prior month, her students had finished high-stakes testing, the school had undergone a huge academic audit that her team had organized, and she and a colleague had completed

and submitted the school's accreditation report. Her fire and her energy were dwindling. As the researcher read her all of her comments, Margot's eyes filled with light; she jokingly commented, "Stop lying. I didn't say that… Really? I said that?" Her own transcribed comments rejuvenated her. Her own words helped her to remember the purposes that encompass all of her actions. She found joy and pleasure in reviewing her thoughts. She truly believed that the researcher had chosen parts from the conversation that represented her true feelings. Because of the positive experience, the researcher decided to give each participant all excerpts from section 4 that used their words and ideas.

During the review of the findings, Margot wrote, "I think this chapter captured the essence of the focus group and interviews. There seems to be an authenticity that emerged as passionate educators realized the commonalities between them." Tyrik believed that the story was accurate, easy to read, and liked the way it was organized. In one section, he was concerned that the researcher's description made him appear to be lenient rather than compassionate. He reiterated his commitment to high standards and student achievement. Though the researcher did not think the section painted him in a negative light, out of respect for him and his practice, she reworked the section to ensure his satisfaction.

The researcher accomplished triangulation by the use of multiple forms of data collection. The initial form of data collection was the focus group. The focus group was a method of data collection that helped to maintain a focus on the specified case, reputedly

effective, core-area, secondary teachers within the defined district. The interviews

allowed for member checking, an in-depth investigation of themes, and an overall

investigation of the subunits. Three participants shared videos of their teaching, all shared

resumes, two shared administrative evaluations, three shared writings that were submitted

for national certification, and one shared a portfolio that included letters of

recommendation for graduate work, proof of professional development, and reflections

on leadership.

To lend credibility to the findings, the researcher exposed her potential biases in

section 3 and worked to describe the findings using substantial quotes from the focus

group and the interviews. The in-depth description of the process and the data helped to

establish trustworthiness in the findings.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The data were analyzed to look for both themes and answers to the research

questions driving the study. The data gave insight into factors influencing teachers'

decisions to remain as well as revealed relationships between teachers' decisions to

remain and their resilience. The following section will summarize the findings, draw

conclusions from the data, suggest relative applications, and propose future studies that

could benefit the body of educational literature.

SECTION 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of Study

This case study, utilizing embedded-case design, identified highly effective teachers within a southeastern urban school district as its case and the selected participants as subunits of the case. The researcher used multiple forms of data to achieve triangulation and to draw valid conclusions. These forms of data included a focus group of 10 people, 13 individual interviews, and archival documents. Though a focus group is not a typical form of data collection in a case study, its inclusion fostered focus on the case rather than on the subunits and allowed continuous comparison of the subunits to the case. Four of the individual interviews were conducted with teachers who did not attend the focus group. The researcher conducted these interviews last and analyzed the data separately to corroborate the primary data. Teacher quotes interspersed in the presentation of the findings added validity and captured the stories of the teachers.

The primary purpose of this study was to discover factors that influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting. Overall, the teachers in the study remain because of their commitment to students, dedication to social justice, and desire to improve on their crafts.

The secondary purpose of this study was to identify intersectional relationships between retention, resilience, and effectiveness with respect to urban teachers. This phase was significant because of existing research that has used findings grounded in either retention or resilience interchangeably with the other construct without an existing framework explaining their potential intersectional relationship. Thus, examining these two relationships and their potential intersection with teacher effectives became a

secondary focus of the study. All of the actions of the teachers in the study center on concern for their students. The students, social justice issues, and constant reflection influence their decision to remain, impact their daily perseverance, and encourage them to maximize their effectiveness. For those who rely on communities of other effective teachers, these communities impact their resilience by helping them overcome challenges and increase their overall effectiveness by encouraging them to excel. Professional development also increases both resilience and effectiveness but has little impact on retention. The participants' faith sustains their resilience by offering a perspective that maximizes professional rewards and minimizes professional challenges. Many of the teachers attributed their urban teaching to a sense of spiritual calling and return each year in response to a certainty of purpose about teaching in this urban district. Dedication to students and social justice intertwined with the teachers' sense of spiritual calling to influence their decisions to remain in the district. Their faith influences their sense of calling and their passion for urban students, and prayer and a spiritual perspective influence their resilience.

<div align="center">Interpretations of Findings</div>

Passion for Students, Dedication to Social Justice, Perfection of Craft

The data with respect to the primary question driving the study —Given the well-documented challenges of urban schools, what factors influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in the inner-city high schools of a southeastern metropolitan area?—yielded three themes. The teachers attributed their annual return to their students, their

passion for social justice, and their inner need to perfect their crafts. All these themes, however, could simply be linked to one overall theme: the students. These highly effective teachers share a passion for their students. Ashley explained,

> I learned early in my career, that it is not about me, but the kids. My kid's success is what drives me to continue. Each student who didn't understand a concept and then learned it through my help is exhilarating. And when I actually reach that student that others have written off as being un-teachable, makes it all worth it.

> Their dedication to achieving social justice relates to their love for their students. The teachers see the negative influence of societal inequities upon their students. The teachers serve as equalizers because they want to see their students succeed. The participants do not view themselves as foot soldiers for mass movements of societal changes. They simply want to help students overcome their many challenges so that they will have an opportunity to succeed in life. Their desire to improve their teaching is an inner drive linked to their students rather than to ego. The teachers want to be better for their students. They understand that only through education will their students have a fighting chance in the world. The teachers strive to increase their pedagogical knowledge so that they can more effectively help their urban students bridge the perceived gap between high school content and their lives.

Easley (2006) found that teachers began teaching because of a sense of calling and moral commitment and remained or left dependent on the extent to which they believe their calling was fulfilled. This researcher agrees that the teachers interviewed

remain because their urban teaching fulfills a sense of calling. This study's findings differ from Easley's (2006) in that he focused on the disconnection between teachers' expectations and their realities, faulting administration for shattered visions. In this current study, however, teachers learned to employ strategies to bridge relational gaps between them and their students and engage students through meaningful instruction— two strategies that helped teachers to fulfill their calling and believe that they served a purpose.

In a phenomenological study by Morris (2007), teachers in challenging urban elementary schools attributed their remaining to (a) meaningful relationships with students, (b) intrinsic rewards from parental relationships and student successes, (c) exciting instructional initiatives, (d) collegial interactions at the school level, (e) fulfillment of their need to be needed and appreciated, and (f) the satisfaction of overcoming challenges. Morris (2007) summarized that teachers remained because they loved their students and believed "that their work was crucial" (p. 84). Similarly, the current study found that the most influential factor on teachers' decision to remain is their relationship with students. Rather than highlighting rewards associated with parental relationships, these urban teachers highlighted the absence of such relationships. Lanie discussed parental involvement as a contextual struggle. She stated,

> Parental involvement is difficult, because you would like to be able to share the successes as well as the failures with the parents; but a lot of our parents are not involved with their child's education as much as I would like for them to be.

Though teachers in this study also discussed the importance of collegial interaction, most credited it as influencing resilience rather than remaining. Some credited community with little or no influence on either their resilience or their decision to remain. The intrinsic rewards associated with student successes, the focus on instructional strategies, and the satisfaction associated with overcoming challenges were all intertwined in a theme of teachers' honing their crafts through professional reflection. These factors did not emerge as individually influencing teachers' decisions to remain, but their combination and the strength emanating from their intertwining strands created a strong theme. Finally, the fulfillment of the internal need to be needed and appreciated emerged as a strand in the larger theme of dedication to social justice. These teachers focused intensely on the factors in students' lives that result in both their need for and their deep appreciation of good instruction; the teachers recognize their students' contextual struggles and work to arm them with strategies for rising above their current circumstances.

Nieto (2003) utilized reflective writing and collegial conversations to explore with eight urban teachers the factors contributing to the perseverance of teachers of poor students of color in spite of their challenges. She identified several attributes shared by these teachers: (a) deep passion for students and their learning, characterized by meaningful student-teacher relationships, (b) belief in the purpose of education and hope about its rewards, (c) anger about societal inequities experienced by their students, (d) commitment to personal learning and professional growth, and (e) dedication to social justice and educational equity. The current study, too, found that the teachers remain

because of their deep passion for students, which they nurture through meaningful student-teacher relationships. The data from this study revealed that these teachers' hope and belief in education was not necessarily a specific theme linked to their resilience or their decision to remain but, instead, helped to connect the instructional strand to that of social justice. The teachers recognized the inequities experienced by their students and realized that education is their key to success. Themes of simmering anger and hope were subcategories in the overall dedication to social justice. Their commitment to their own learning results from their high levels of reflection and desire to perfect their craft so that they can more effectively impact student learning. These themes also closely aligned with the findings of a study by Patterson et al. (2004) in which teachers' resilience was partially defined as (a) attributing their perseverance to a sense of mission and a commitment to equity and social justice, (b) highly valuing professional development and professional learning opportunities, and (c) remaining committed to their students' learning. Teachers' dedication to social justice as a factor influencing both retention and resilience supports Roselle's (2006) claim that a commitment to civic service may nurture both remaining and persevering.

Leadership

The archival documents revealed that the participants in the study are leaders. They are extremely involved in all aspects of student learning, including the overall operation of the school, and in extracurricular activities that impact students' academic and social growth. Interestingly, neither in the focus group nor in the individual

interviews did the teachers discuss their multiple roles. Rather, they consistently talked about their students and their students' challenges and strengths. They discussed their teaching methods, especially their use of differentiated strategies to impact student learning and to help students incorporate academic content into their worlds. They spoke of the constant reflection that guides modification of their teaching practices to meet the needs of the students. Yet, they neither flaunted their high levels of leadership within the school and the district nor mentioned the many accolades they have received over the years.

Several researchers have suggested that districts could decrease attrition rates and increase teacher satisfaction by creating leadership opportunities for classroom teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Margolis, 2008; Quartz et al., 2008). Epp (2007) identified teacher empowerment as a factor influencing the decisions of nationally board-certified teachers to remain in their current settings and to transfer to schools whose administrators utilized shared decision-making processes. Margolis (2008) reported that one teacher related that her work as a mentor for another teacher influenced her decision to remain by rejuvenating her and reminding her of her passion for students. These findings could help to explain the satisfaction of this group of teacher leaders. Though they did not specifically discuss their leadership roles, these roles may help to mold their experiences and increase their satisfaction. This group of teachers may more readily see positive results from their efforts than an average teacher. They may wrest additional satisfaction from administrations' implementation of their ideas. Their roles as

leaders may help them to feel as if they are valued members of the school community, thus, influencing their decisions to remain.

Patterson et al. (2004) found that effective urban teachers identified the reward of leadership roles within their schools as a factor that increased their resilience. The teachers in this study could potentially have different experiences within this context than the teachers who were not identified by multiple sources. The teachers may have more positive experiences as a result of the respect that administration awards them. This respect may also influence their relationships within the community with other teachers, students, and parents. There may be multiple rewards that are by-products of teacher leadership positions. These teachers' positions may unknowingly influence their perseverance. The teacher participants' leadership roles could create benefits of which the participants were unaware. They may see their leadership roles as embedded within their jobs and extra responsibilities but are unsure of how these roles change their overall experiences.

The common theme of leadership revealed in the archival documents of highly effective teachers raises interesting questions about the effect of leadership roles on teachers' remaining in the district.

- Does the absence of teachers' attribution of leadership as a factor in their remaining suggest that their leadership activities only subconsciously affect their decisions to return?

- Does the experience of being an integral part of the school increase

teachers' commitment to the school and the district?

- Do leadership roles encourage teachers to excel in the classroom because they believe themselves to be under the watchful eyes of other practitioners?

- Do the additional responsibilities of leadership bring privileges that impact teachers' resilience or staying power?

- What role does teacher leadership in the urban district play in retention, resilience, and effectiveness? Or, did the teachers' leadership roles give them more recognition within the district, increasing the likelihood of their selection by central office staff? Therefore, was the common theme of teacher leadership unintentionally embedded into the design by the use of reputational data and source categories outside of the school?

- Or, do leadership positions arise naturally from effectiveness so that administrators are more likely to assign leadership roles to highly effective teachers with over 5 years of service?

- Does the archival data from these teachers substantiate the above researchers' claim that teacher leadership increases retention and raises satisfaction?

Contextual Challenges

Subquestions to the primary research question explored challenges linked to context, rewards associated with the urban district, and strategies used to minimize

challenges and maximize rewards. In discussing the challenges related to context, the teachers lamented the cultural challenges that their children face on a regular basis. In a reflective moment, Margot discussed viewing the movie *Precious*, in which the lead character's life represented a synthesis of the problems faced by many of her children. None of the problems in the movie had shock value for her because she had heard all of the problems before. The only part of the movie that shocked her was that one child was plagued with all of her students' problems. The teachers discussed poverty, institutional racism, teenage pregnancy, violence, substandard academic preparation, abuse, government checks, and long work hours. They identified overcoming the influences and pressures that their students experience from the outside world as one of their greatest challenges. The teachers agreed that inherent in their jobs is helping students see beyond their current situations to envision a successful future. They discussed the necessity of employing innovative methods and pedagogical strategies to engage students in learning. They share the conviction that education is one of the few methods that can provide students tools to overcome their obstacles.

The teachers showed no evidence of using these contextual challenges as an excuse for student failure nor did they allude to the fact that these challenges cause them an undue amount of stress. Rather, they discussed these challenges in a matter-of-fact manner as inherent in the urban environment. They recognize these challenges as realities and work to create strategies to provide their students a quality education despite the challenges. Lindsey et al. (2005) indicated that this approach, which does not blame the

students for failure but instead focuses on internal practices within the school, is a key to creating a foundation for effective change.

Educational literature has identified school violence as a contextual challenge in the urban district. Smith and Smith (2006) attributed attrition rates in the urban district to high levels of violence, even though the teachers in the study actually attributed their leaving to high levels of stress. While the interviewed teachers discussed violent episodes that had occurred within their schools, they never specifically attributed their leaving to violence. It is possible that these teachers considered school violence a contextual reality. The study, therefore, left unanswered the question of whether violence was the leading factor in the stress of departing teachers or one of many contextual realities that the teachers found to be overly stressful.

Though the teachers in the current study also discussed the violence in their schools, they did not identify violence as the most defining characteristic of the environment but, rather, as one of the sad realities of their children's lives. They expressed neither fear nor stress in response to the reality of violence but merely reported the violence as one of the factors that impedes learning if they do not work to engage students in instruction.

These possibly discrepant findings suggest that perhaps the stress associated with some of the struggles of their students' lives affects teachers in different ways. Data from a study by Kukla-Acvedo (2009) indicated a school's behavioral climate was less likely to lead to the departure of experienced teachers. The study's design limited the researcher

in further exploring this theme. Perhaps, in the current study, the deep connections to students and the safe classroom environments shared by teachers help them overlook the violent outbreaks in the hallways. Moreover, their purposeful relationships with students may lessen their chances of experiencing violent outbreaks in their own classrooms, supporting a claim by Quint (2006) that the absence of a relationship with a student can contribute to the escalation of trivial issues beyond the scope of the initial problem.

Participants in the current study identified society's perception of urban teachers as substandard educators as a challenge associated with teaching in the urban district. Teachers expressed frustration that, as reported by Margolis (2008) and Inman and Marlow (2004), many people view urban teachers as less effective than suburban teachers. These teachers countered this perception by asserting that effective urban teachers, who encounter multiple societal forces and cultural obstacles, must possess a broad and unique set of skills and use a myriad of strategies to engage students in learning, an opinion aligning closely with a point made by both Haberman (1965, 1991a, 1991b, 1994, 2000) and Weiner (2006).

The teachers were especially vocal in expressing frustration about society's preconceived notions about their students, including an overall lack of faith in poor, African American youth. Interestingly, Groulx (2001) found that many preservice teachers possess preconceived negative notions about the urban district and its students. The study participants emphasized that everything they do is to help their students, and they yearn for others to grant their students the same level of respect. Shane talked about

how his concern and respect for his students overrides his recurring impulse to drop

extracurricular responsibilities.

> I have a problem with "those students"… Now, things that I do, sometimes that I
>
> don't want to do… you say, "I ain't gonna do this next year, I'm tired," the same
>
> time of the month comes up and you forget about what you said you weren't
>
> gonna do and you're more active in it because of "those students."

Shane expressed disdain for critics who judge his students without trying to understand

the effect of the ills of poverty on students' actions. He reflected that hunger and the lack

of basic necessities can drive a child to become a survivor who fights for the right to eat

and be clothed. He linked resulting thefts to the will to survive rather than to morality, a

phenomenon detailed by Wilson (1996), and contrasted such theft to the boredom-

relieving crime of children of well-to-do parents. These teachers channel the anger,

frustration, and sadness evoked by contextual situations into a deeper sense of caring for

their students, lending credence to a conclusion by Hafiz-Wahid-Muid (2010): "Negative

emotions are generally regarded as something to be discharged but analysis of the data

revealed that these emotions can be harnessed to enact a pedagogy of care" (p. 239).

The teachers understand that neither society nor all educators share their belief in

urban students. A study by Hanushek et al. (2001) reported what the participants of the

current study consider a heartbreaking reality—that teachers they studied "favor[ed]

higher achieving, non-minority, non-low income students" (p. 337). The findings of the

current study suggest that the study by Hanushek et al. (2001) might more accurately

have attributed the leaving of those teachers to their inability to adapt to the environment and form meaningful relationships with students than to student characteristics.

The lack of clarity about the impact of poverty on education (Ng & Rury, 2006) complicates the evaluation of educational research regarding poverty The U.S. Department of Education identified poverty as a legitimate group when it identified students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as a subgroup for data disaggregation with respect to adequate yearly progress (Bomer et al., 2008). Several researchers and practitioners have discussed the role of poverty in education and student success, and all have purported that their hypotheses explain either the problem or the solution (Berliner, 2006; Bomer, 2008; Council of Great City Schools, 1990; Delpit, 1995; Gorski, 2006; Lindsey et al., 2005; Ng & Rury, 2006; Payne, 2005; Quint, 2006; Wilson, 1996). The current study's teachers acknowledged poverty as a contextual struggle, as well as a defining characteristic, of the urban district and their students' lives. However, they consider helping students envision lives beyond their current situations one of their most important roles as educators. They fulfill this role by keeping their soft hearts hidden while they work diligently to ensure that students do not use poverty as an excuse for failure. The teachers do not want their students to learn to use their financial struggles as a crutch. They want to provide students with all of the necessary foundational skills to be successful.

Bruce elaborated on issues of equity as creating a contextual struggle within the educational system. He purported that his students have a deeper understanding of the

injustices than adults may believe. He declared that his students are well aware that the

heating and air-conditioning systems of suburban schools are always in working order.

They are aware that in the schools across town, no child must ever worry about having

tissue, soap, or paper towels in the bathroom. He explained that the graffiti on the walls

of urban schools, typically judged harshly by outsiders, often reflects students' feelings

about their substandard environment. Bruce's comment mirrored Kozol's (1991)

assertion that urban students hear society's message and "understand this theme--they are

poor investments--and behave accordingly" (p. 99). Bruce extended this reasoning to

parental behavior, explaining that the parents' lack of fighting for the rights of their

children represents their life experiences rather than their lack of interest in their children.

> To understand the mamas in Pinewood or Smithfield or Cherryfield, is that
>
> internalization: After awhile, once you begin to internalize the idea that this is
>
> what I get, this is what it's supposed to look like. You don't know—that's not
>
> true; you do know that it could be better—but you don't expect anyone to make it
>
> better for you.

His explication of the effects of inequities within urban schools mirrors that offered in

educational literature (Berliner, 2006; Kozol, 1991).

Tyrik conjectured that many of these inequities are cultural realities for a school

system segregated by socioeconomics and race.

> Statistics say when you fracture school systems, you are making things
>
> segregated. Guess what? People segregate themselves. It has nothing to do with

the school system itself. People segregate themselves. But, socioeconomically …

Beyond color, that's the great segregator. And, for some reason, those Caucasians

who are in a socioeconomic situation together congregate together. A Caucasian

in the socioeconomic situation of the kids here would not move to the city of

Forrester; they would move somewhere in the county where their socioeconomic

situation is. And the same here; you find more people of color move into this

socioeconomic. And so you got people segregating themselves, and it just so

happens, schools are in that area. That's just the way it is.

The Smiley Group, Inc. (2006) also revealed segregation as a current educational

theme, acknowledging that the schools of today are more segregated than 20 years ago

and that the schools of lower class, African Americans are often described as low

functioning or poorly performing schools. Tyrik's experiences in the urban district, as

both a student and a teacher, give credence to this quote. In the early 1970's this urban

community within the larger urban district had a clear divide along race lines, and

students were serviced by two different high schools. Over a 20-year period, the face of

the community changed to a predominately African-American community with people of

varying socioeconomic statuses. Over the last 15 years, the socioeconomic condition of

the community has drastically changed. The community not only segregated among race

but also class. He expanded on his observations about the etiology of such cumulative

changes.

And it's systemic here in this area. And, in a lot of urban areas you will find

those systemic kind of things that occur, just negative social situations; because all the people who have prospered, who were a positive influence, have moved away because they said, "I don't want my kids around this. I don't want to be bothered with this." So, when they leave, what do you leave behind? You leave everyone that is in a homogenous type of society.

Tyrik explained that teaching becomes a bit more difficult each year as students face increasing societal demands and negative influences.

Some researchers have asserted that equitable educational funding and a revitalization of urban communities must precede true educational reform (Anyon, 1994; Berliner, 2006; Bomer et al., 2008; Delpit, 1995; Gorski, 2006; Kozol, 1991, 2007; Little, 2001; Ng & Rury, 2006; Staratt, 2001; Zhou, 2003). They believe that even the best teachers cannot help effect widespread changes without a broader investment in the community. A great teacher alone cannot fix the problems associated with a poverty-stricken community. Gerard's interview comments related to this argument.

The social-justice aspect is important, but we've got to deal with that first within the community dynamic, within that inner-city community—to let them understand that "You don't have a sense of entitlement, but neither are you some type of charity case either. You've got to get out of that and kind of get at it, make some things happen."

Gerard realizes that integrating community into the process is fundamental to making lasting changes within the school.

Teachers' struggle to adapt to the urban environment poses an additional contextual struggle that did not necessarily fall into the scope of the study, but which many of the teachers referenced. Discussion of this struggle led to conversations about new-teacher support. These two ideas intermingled as teachers discussed their own strategies in adapting to the environment, as well as the struggles of new teachers in the past and the present to do so. Some of the teachers referenced their unorthodox methods and conversations with students and acknowledged that they could not suggest that new teachers relate to students in a similar manner. The overall idea of, "You can't do what I do," surrounded many of these discussions. These teachers realize that they have spent years becoming a part of the greater community. They take pride in their reputations for effectiveness among the students and believe that their reputations give them leeway to use loving, but harsh-seeming firmness to insist that students modify their behaviors. Because of the relationships they have worked to establish and the reputations that they have spent years building, the teachers experience that the students grant them greater freedom to express themselves than they would grant to an adult new to the environment or a familiar adult viewed as uncaring.

Daniel shared with the focus group his gratitude for teachers who molded him and helped him to recover from his mistakes as a new teacher. He then looked at the pressures associated with standardized testing and reflected, "The pressure is even harder on these newer teachers, because they feel like they are constantly being inspected. And it's not like it's a matter of constructive criticism, it's more like a series of check boxes." He

continued,

> New teachers should be focusing on trying to build rapport with the kids and
>
> focusing on becoming on a better teacher; and, instead, they are terrified: Should I
>
> be tutoring? No, can't be tutoring, I've got to get my bulletin board ready.

The teachers' consensus that the urban district requires a different type of support aligns

with much of the existing literature on new-teacher development in urban areas (Foster,

1982; Epp, 2007; Holt & Garcia, 2005; Quartz, 2003; Thompson, 2007). The question

evolved to how to help new teachers acclimate to the environment and create

relationships with students while adhering to all of the expectations associated with

documentation?

A study by Moore (2008) supported the teachers' self-reports and observations

about the initial difficulty of adapting to the urban environment as a new teacher. Moore

(2008) found that cultural and socioeconomic differences impeded student learning under

new teachers not properly coached in classroom management and building relationships.

In the current study, some of these teachers, too, had to acclimate themselves to the

environment in order to experience success**.** Though some researchers have focused on

the frequent disconnect between teachers and students created by their racial differences,

Margot asserted that class differences can also create a relational disconnect, which can

render adaptation difficult even for teachers of color.

> I guess it seemed like they were thrust into the situation; and it was a cultural
>
> shock for them, even though they may bear the same color as the children that

they teach. But it became a cultural shock, because they don't have the same

morals and values, value system, as the children that they teach.

Caryn discussed her initial struggle in relating to her students. Even though she shares

her students' racial heritage, her upbringing and life experiences differ greatly from

theirs; and she had to learn to appreciate the various struggles that many of her students

face.

These divides can be overcome by building relationships and openly

communicating about similarities and differences between teachers and students. Once

teachers learn to build relationships, these cultural differences can open new topics of

communication and become a learning experience for all involved. Lanie explained,

It's nice to come in and learn things about a different culture that you were never

exposed to when you grew up because you grew up in a rural area. You have

different experiences than they do. So you come in and you learn how their family

dynamics work. You learn what's important to them. You learn hairstyles and

music. You're exposed to those things that you wouldn't be exposed to if you

worked somewhere else. It's interesting, and it's fun. And you get to share your

things with them, and they enjoy listening to the differences. You're able to share

your experiences with them—places, maybe, that you've traveled that they've not

gotten to travel and places that they've gone to they'll share with you. It's just a

wonderful sharing of differences in culture.

Lanie has found ways to bond with her students by using their differences to her

advantage rather than allowing those differences to exacerbate an already existing generational gap.

In addition, teachers in this study worked to bridge these relational gaps through meaningful instruction. Tyrik pointed out the need for teachers to help students grasp the importance of education while simultaneously appreciating outside demands on that student. Many teachers work to integrate discussions about cultural challenges into their teaching practice. Margot and Caryn discussed strategies they employ to engage students in talking about their lives within the context of their academic content areas. Delpit's (1995) research supported the strategy of assisting students to consider their current surroundings in order merge their social and academic voices.

Thompson (2007) found that new teachers needed specific supports, one of which was administration. Easley connected a teachers' decision to remain or to leave to the strength of the administration. Ingersoll (2005, 2006) found that teachers who left attributed their leaving to poor administration and student discipline. Several other studies have also cited poor administration or lack of administrative support (ECS, 2007; Epp, 2007; Groulx, 2001; Marvel et al., 2007; McKee, 2003; Thompson, 2007; Zwicky, 2008) as well as poor student discipline (Epp, 2007; Farkas et al., 2000; McKee, 2003; Public Agenda, 2004) as leading factors in teachers' decisions to leave.

The influence that teachers in these studies attributed to administration and student discipline raises some interesting points. The teachers in this particular study, however, rarely referenced their administrators, instead focusing on their students and the

rewards of student success. Several teachers in the study did discuss that other teachers in their environment constantly blame administration for lack of support and lack of leadership and link administrative shortcomings to their unhappiness, ineffectiveness, and problems in the classroom.

Many studies have alluded to the lack of administrative support as a defining characteristic in teachers' decisions to leave. This raises an interesting question: How do teachers define administrative support? Participants in this study spoke informally after the focus group about the support that they receive from administration with respect to programs, finding additional resources, and overall leadership. They contrasted their positive perception of administrative support with the negative perception of new-teacher colleagues who complain about lack of such support, reaching consensus that the new teachers are equating their own lack of management skills with a lack of administrative support. The new teachers, for example, use write-ups as a form of classroom management and perceive a lack of administrative support when administration tires of constantly dealing with minor offenses and begins sending students back to class rather than intervening.

The participants reported having persevered through multiple administrations, some supportive and some not. This lends itself to the questions, Might teachers who ascribe their leaving to ineffective administration more accurately ascribe it to their inability to connect to students? Would these teachers have remained had someone helped them to nurture their relational skills and build relationships with students? Is

building student-teacher relationships teachable or is this an innate skill?

The teachers identified the use of standardized testing in school accountability as a contextual struggle that creates pressure. They welcome professional accountability because they work diligently to help students succeed in their classes and believe that they add value to students' knowledge and skills. However, they concurred that current teacher evaluation measures being used by administration at the schools and the central office, including measuring teacher effectiveness by a teacher's possession of mounds of documentation, neither represent their efforts nor accurately measure their work with students. This finding aligned closely with a study conducted by Tye and O'Brien (2002), who found that growing numbers of teachers were leaving the profession because of increased standardized testing, which added to their paperwork and decreased their level of authentic instruction. Given the level of frustration expressed by this group of effective, dedicated teachers, one could safely assume that teachers who are a bit less committed may find this a factor worthy of changing careers.

Contextual Rewards

The teachers expressed feeling inwardly rewarded for their efforts. They take great pride in their students' successes. Overall, as Tyrik stated, "What's in it for me? Honestly, the good feeling of it all." The teachers described their joy in helping students, most of whom they have found to appreciate their efforts. They described feeling a heightened sense of reward when students succeed after teachers have worked to overcome the obstacles inherent in urban education. They experience immense pleasure

in seeing the light in the eyes of a child who finally understands a concept. The teachers described experiencing fulfillment, inner peace, and a sense of purpose from giving back to society and from working with urban students. Many discussed the ongoing rewards that they experience when former students return to thank them for their efforts and to share stories about their successes in life. Lanie continues to teach in the urban setting because she feels that her students need her; she experiences the reward of feeling needed and the satisfaction of fulfilling her students' needs.

> If you are going to make a difference, you can't give up. If you give up, your students give up. They can see it. They know if you're pushing. They know if you care. My students are what keep me going, because I know they are going to be able to sense if I'm giving up on them or if I don't care anymore.

She and her students keep each other going. They give each other the strength to persevere.

Other researchers have reported similar findings about the motivation and rewards of returning urban teachers. Nieto (2005) found that many of the urban teachers in her study began their careers with a sense of mission and that their altruism, as well as internal fulfillment, leads them to remain in the urban district. Brunetti (2006), in a study focused on retention, found that teachers' internal fulfillment influences their resilience. Thompson (2007), in a study focused on retention and attrition, found that urban teachers who remained described their teaching experience as "rewarding," "meaningful," and "enriching. (p. 87). Harper (2009), in a study examining factors influencing both

retention and attrition, found that teachers who remained believed that they were making a difference in their children's lives, while teachers who believed that they could not make a difference were more apt to leave. The reports of teachers in the current study confirmed these findings about factors influencing teachers to remain.

Several teachers indicated that they experience rewards in preparing students of color for their futures. Several of the African-American teachers explained that they consider working with African-American youth specifically important because the youth need to see people of their race as successful professionals. They want to be role models for their students. Molding the minds of students of their race provides an additional inner reward and significance for them. Several researchers discuss the different roles that race plays in education (Delpit, 1995; Groulx, 2001; Hilliard, 1995; Howard, 2006; Kozol, 1991, 2007; Lee, 2007; Lindsey et al., 2005; Marable, 2000; Nieto, 2003; Singleton & Linton, 2006; Walker, 2002). The desire of these teachers to help students who historically have not benefited from education to the extent that their White counterparts confirms the significance of the role of race in education noted in the literature**.**

Maximizing Rewards and Minimizing Challenges

The teachers used several strategies to maximize their rewards and minimize their challenges. Most discussed the use of prayer as a management tool. They described prayer to be a strategy for remaining calm rather than feeling overwhelmed by their surroundings. In addition, they reported that their spiritual walks help them remain

focused on their overall purpose rather than becoming frustrated by contextual annoyances. Their prayer and spiritual life help them balance compassion with rigor.

Marshall (2009) examined the influence of spirituality on preservice teachers' decisions to enter the field of education. The researcher interviewed 18 first year undergraduates at a Catholic institution who were enrolled in a program for elementary education. The researcher found that preservice teachers lacked the "language to talk eloquently about how their spirituality related to their teaching," but clearly felt as if they had been "called" to teach and believed that their work would influence a larger sphere by "helping the world to be a better place" (p. 38). Marshall recommended that teacher preservice programs help prospective teachers to examine the spirituality of teaching and their own motivations. In addition, Marshall (2009) believed that encouraging teachers to stay may require "reaching into teachers' inner core, the desire for meaning and connection that made them want to teach in the first place" (p. 39). This recommendation aligns with this researcher's belief that professional development should include opportunities for veteran teachers to recommit to their passion for students and their belief in purpose, potentially strengthening their resilience and staying power.

In a quantitative study, Duffy and Blustein (2005) surveyed 144 college students and found that spirituality influenced students' beliefs about their own potential for effectiveness within their chosen careers. They, however, found that no significant relationship existed between spirituality or religiousness and a commitment to the career choice. This raises interesting questions, does the spiritual connection that these teachers

possess influence self-efficacy and strengthen purpose to the extent that they strive to

maximize effectiveness? How does their sense of belief in calling and purpose increase

commitment once entering the field?

In a qualitative study Baldwin, Maldonado, Lacey and Efinger (2004) conducted a

phenomenological study utilizing semistructured, open ended interviews of eight

resilient, successful women leaders. The women discussed many of the adversities that

they had experienced in both their personal and professional lives. The researchers then

examined both internal and external factors to which the women attributed their

resilience. Baldwin et al. (2004) found that "several participants pointed out that God

and/or their spirituality helped to keep them focused and to persevere" (p. 20). The

women expressed their belief that their relationships with a Higher Power helped to

"sustain" them, keep them "focused," overcome "adversity." The findings in this current

study link the strands of spirituality that exist in the literature on teaching as a career

decision and resilience.

Well-planned, meaningful lessons designed to engage students in the learning

process serve as another method of maximizing rewards. Margot offered the example of

helping students find their voices through literature and journaling, which she uses to add

value to content, increase student buy-in, and foster students' self esteem. These teachers

believed that good instruction helps overcome environmental challenges and evidences to

students the value that teachers place on their lives and development. The teachers

attested that the students recognize and show gratitude for good instruction, receiving it

as clear and convincing evidence that a teacher cares about them. They professed that good instruction helps with classroom management and reported that they encounter fewer classroom problems than teachers who do not put forth the same level of effort. Patterson et al. (2004) acknowledged that a defining characteristic among effective teachers in their resilience study was their use of varied pedagogical strategies to maximize student learning. In an interview conducted by Quartz (2003), the researcher found that teachers' helping students "to feel efficacious is an important component of teachers' own sense of efficacy" (p. 107)

The data demonstrated that the teachers work to create meaningful relationships with students. This group of teachers has learned that they must establish a certain level of respect prior to instituting rigorous instruction. The teachers understand that if they trust and believe in the students, the students will trust and believe in them. They know that students need to experience being in a safe learning environment in order to learn, and they work to create relationships and an environment in which students feel free to express their thoughts and ideas. They want students to experience success.

Nieto (2003) acknowledged the importance of relationships with students to the perseverance of urban teachers. Similarly, Thompson (2007) found that to remain in the urban setting teachers should appreciate the importance of student-teacher relationships and hone their skills at both creating and sustaining these relationships. The resilience studies all identified teachers' commitment to students and their learning as important factors in keeping teachers going (Brunetti, 2006; Nieto, 2003; Patterson et al., 2004).

Likewise, Thompson found that 67% of teachers with over 3 years of experience attributed their decision to remain to their students. Moreover, in a study focused on retention, McKee (2003) concluded that teachers remained out of dedication to the profession and commitment to student learning.

Several researchers have found that relationships with students are at the foundation of successful teaching in the urban district (Dantonio & Beisenhertz, 2001; Delpit, 1995; Education Development Center, 2005c; Ladson-Billings, Darling-Hammond, & NPEAT, 2000; Mahiri, 1998a; Moses & Cobb, 2001; National High School Alliance, 2005; Nieto, 2000, 2003; Payne, 2005; Stanford, 1997; Wong & Wong, 1998). Delpit (1995) and Nieto (2003) claimed that these relationships are foundational to teachers' cultivating the respect and trust of African-American youth. Several of the participants in the study supported this claim, citing instances of their students who showed great levels of success in their classrooms but failed in classrooms whose learning environment was drastically different. Gerard stated, "They want to just know that you care. If you can't show that through …some type of giving of yourself, then it's going to be kind of difficult for you to get a lot from them." These instances supported not only the claims about relationships but also suppositions of researchers, such as Dwyer (2002) who explained that learning can only take place in a safe, nurturing environment.

Some of the teachers described relying on their colleagues to create a community providing both power and support. They value other like-minded teachers as

collaborators and as sources of empathy and have created communities in which to discuss challenges as well as solutions, reflect together on effective and ineffective instructional strategies, and work to find ways to engage their learners. The data revealed that, while community is a factor in the resilience of some teachers, it plays only a limited role in the overall practice of others.

These findings can be aligned with several studies. First, several researchers indicated the importance of community in the life of new teachers (Inman & Marlow, 2004; Thompson, 2007). Community helped to decrease the isolation that many new teachers felt. Other studies have found that teachers have left due to a lack of collegiality among the staff (Anyon, 1995; Groulx, 2001; Thompson, 2007). In addition, Zwicky (2008) found that neither the "stayers" or "leavers" attributed their decisions to the community of teachers but some of the dissatisfied teachers on both sides attributed their dissatisfaction to a feeling of isolation and being disconnected from the other teachers.

Conceptual Framework

The theories that the researcher chose to frame the study address decision-making, culturally relevant pedagogy, and the racialization of poverty. Bonvin (2003) stated, "teachers make rational decisions within the context of what they believe" (p. 290). This group of teachers believes in urban students, believes that they are needed, believes that room for improvement always exists, and believes that they change lives. They make decisions to return each year because of these deep-seated beliefs.

The researcher chose Weiner's (1983, 1985) attributional theory to help analyze

the teachers' decisions. The theory presents corollaries that guide the examination of one's expected outcome of an event based on the stability of the factors that define the specific event. This approach proved to be very significant with respect to this study's findings. Weiner's third corollary states, "Outcomes ascribed to stable causes will be anticipated to be repeated in the future with a greater degree of certainty than are outcomes ascribed to unstable causes" (p. 559). The factors that had the greatest impact on teachers' decisions to remain were (a) devotion to students, (b) dedication to social justice, and (c) commitment to honing their own skills. Each of these factors is extremely stable within the bigger picture of the urban district.

Each year teachers can expect to be given students to teach. They can choose to create relationships with these students and impact their learning through creating an environment that nurtures student achievement. In the urban district, teachers can safely expect to have children who are emotionally, socially, and financially needy. The teachers can expect to have students who will share a great appreciation for effective instruction. They can expect to have students who have been denied a quality education and have experienced immense pressures and heartbreaks outside of school. Each day, teachers have the choice to reflect on their lessons and examine the effectiveness of their techniques or approaches in relating the content to students.

The fact that no external factors influenced teachers' decisions to remain is significant. Because words like "chaotic" often characterize the urban district, teachers who look to external factors for satisfaction or stability may find themselves perpetually

disturbed. Daniel stated, "The stuff that bothers me a lot of times … there is some stuff I can't change. I can't change the depressing realities of the kids. The only way I survive it is looking for the bright spots." He constantly looked to the things within his power. Most participants viewed administration as unstable, which, according to Weiner's theory, lessened the chance that teachers would identify this factor with their decision to remain. Interestingly, only one participant expressed that supportive administration impacted her decision to remain in an urban setting. Similarly, teachers like Bruce, who viewed teacher community as fluid, may have been less likely to identify community as a factor in their return than were those who viewed their teacher communities as stable and unchanging.

Glasser's (1998) choice theory is another theory that helps analyze the teachers' decision-making process. The theory posits that, rather than being victims of their circumstances, people choose how to process and respond to the information around them. Glasser (1998) sees dissatisfaction and misery as the cognitive and emotional results of the internal perceptions and external behaviors, actions, and manners with which people respond to external influences. Teachers in this study reported great satisfaction in their jobs. They respond to the unmanageability of the context by employing measures that help them to manage mini-environments within the greater school environment. The teachers respond to the information around them by engaging students in meaningful instruction after forming trusting relationships with them. Rather than internalizing the multiple problems that plague their students, they work to create

avenues for students to experience success. Daniel explained, "It's a matter of them learning how to learn; it's a matter of them feeling confidence. And, when you start looking at it that way, the smallest victory is a huge victory." The teachers' victories help them to return.

Glasser (1998) argued that people are "genetically programmed to try to satisfy four psychological needs: love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun" (p. 28). These teachers evidenced throughout the focus group and their interviews the manner in which they satisfy these psychological needs in themselves and their students. The teachers create classroom environments infused with love and a sense of safety and belonging, as well as high-quality instruction, which in turn helps their students to love them. The teachers, regardless of their race and socioeconomic background, reported their own sense of belonging in the urban district. Caroline discussed a geographic move away from the city that she and her husband made years ago. At first, she was faced with the possibility that she might have to leave the urban district in exchange for teaching at a rural district closer to home. She was horrified at the possibility of having to leave her students. She made a decision to commute nearly an hour rather than to leave the urban district. They cannot see themselves in another environment teaching different types of children.

These teachers exercise a carefully considered power in the learning environment. Though their management styles vary, they all evidenced earning their power through trust and attraction rather than by fighting to establish dictatorships. Bruce and Gerard

both related that new teachers' misunderstanding of the effective use of power often

contributes to their frustration and ultimate demise. Bruce explained,

> You have teachers coming in – you know, they tell you it's easier to lighten up
>
> than to tighten up and all this kind of stuff – and you walk in and you're a John
>
> Wayne and you leave Mickey Mouse. So, I think it is the powers that you bring to
>
> bear – less coercive, more expert, more attractive. Those things that we use kind
>
> of make our experience in the classroom something that's more pleasurable; we
>
> don't go in ready for war every day.

These teachers' appropriate use of power increases their staying power by helping them

establish classroom environments that are enjoyable for themselves as well as their

students. Gerard discussed the development of his understanding of the appropriate use of

power in urban student-teacher relationships,

> My first experiences were "I'm going to be a teacher. I'm going to lay it down.
>
> This is what I'm going to expect. I'm going to make sure that every kid knows
>
> what the rules are and this and that." But, then, coming in, learning about kids
>
> who are coming from half-way houses, have been raising themselves, have had all
>
> type of situations that they have had to encounter in their home lives, my rules
>
> don't mean a whole lot to them. I have to really meet them where they are, get to
>
> know them.

> The participant teachers reported feeling a sense of freedom in their instructional

approaches despite their shared frustration that standardized testing thwarts authentic

instruction, They all related that the administration grants them the freedom to try new instructional approaches that have the potential to positively impact student learning. Daniel stated,

> Even when the paperwork is bringing me down a bit, I love the fact that I still have a lot of freedom in my classroom with my kids. I can teach what I think is important and pretty much know that I'm not going to get messed with much.

Overall, the teachers have fun with their students. They enjoy their students, with whom they laugh and celebrate successes. Daniel stated,

> And, one thing about work, that's one thing: I'm always smiling. I can't help it. Even when I'm mad, it's hard for me to drop the smile; because I enjoy the kids. I really do. I enjoy being around the kids. The kids can make me laugh, no matter what. And I love to see them do well. I can laugh with them. I can cry with them, too. I love to see them happy. I love to see them learning things. That makes me feel better, too. It goes both ways: When they are feeling good about something, it makes me feel good. And I go home with that.

The teachers in this group look forward to going to work. Their work with urban students regularly fulfills the four needs whose satisfaction Glasser defined as essential.

Several researchers have worked to create a framework for culturally relevant pedagogy (Banks, 2006; Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b; Nieto, 2003, 2006b). This group of teachers exemplified Ladson-Billings' description of a teacher who embraces culturally relevant pedagogy. The analysis of data consistently revealed the

teachers' commitment to students and their belief in students' potential. They believe in themselves and their own power to be a change agent. They make no excuses for student failure but, instead, examine their approach and constantly seek better ways to meet the academic and emotional needs of students. They look for ways to build on students' strengths while simultaneously addressing their weaknesses. They do not view themselves as visitors but as part of the community. Their students rarely sit in silence but, instead, collaboratively discuss content to derive greater meaning from a text or to solve a problem. The teachers take pride in the relationships they form with their students and the role that these relationships play in the establishment of classroom community, teacher power, and classroom management.

Banks (2006) explained that the goal of multicultural education is to improve race relations in order to help students develop the skills necessary to function successfully in a multicultural society. The teachers do not shy from conversations about race nor the role that this socially constructed attribute plays in society. Gerard regularly reminds his students that their competition is not sitting next to them but, rather, in a suburban classroom across town or in a classroom in another state or another country. Shane and Bruce described that they seek to empower their students to prove society wrong by encouraging them to embrace their racial background and work to surpass society's expectations of them.

The racialization of poverty and the interconnectedness of the realities associated with the urban area, race, and poverty (Berliner, 2006; Marable, 2000; Wilson, 1996)

provide a theoretical framework for understanding contextual aspects of this study. This framework proved helpful in analyzing conversations about race, socioeconomics, and systemic inequities. Wilson's work provided context and additional validity to Shane's description of urban students' engaging in theft for survival.

The work of all of these authors offered context for Tyrik's discussion of school segregation by providing a historical framework for the resegregation of schools along lines of race and class. Similarly, the work of these authors frames the conversations with Bruce about social justice and systemic inequities. Conversations about this theme appear throughout this section in relationship to contextual struggles and in the previous section in relationship to social justice.

In summary, the theories framing the study address decision-making, culturally relevant pedagogy, and the racialization of poverty. This group of teachers actively chose to return to the urban district. They find great rewards from students' successes both inside and outside of the classroom. They see the inequities created by poverty and believe that they have a role in leveling the playing field. Their commitment to social justice is grounded in their understanding of the intersection of race and class. They are deeply aware of issues and challenges related to context and work to engage students in meaningful instruction. They realize that they must use unique pedagogical strategies to create avenues of learning supporting student success.

Implications for Social Change: The Importance of Teachers Decisions to Remain

The provision of high-quality instruction by effective teachers is a step toward

lessening the nation's achievement gap. Thus, understanding factors influencing effective

teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting is a preliminary step toward consistently

providing urban students with excellent teachers. The teachers in this study remain in the

urban district because of a passion for students, dedication to social justice, and an inner

drive nurtured by reflection on their practice. Professional development, a community of

learners, and a spiritual perspective strengthen their motivation and their practice. Little

that the district does for these teachers, besides professional development, influences

their decisions to remain. Yet, understanding how to lessen fiscal expenditures associated

with attrition, recruitment, and hiring is an essential concern for the district and an

underlying factor in social change. The findings, then, raise the question, How can a

lower-socioeconomic district work to influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in

an urban setting?

Some studies have insinuated that repairing dilapidated buildings and providing

better resources will influence urban teacher retention (Buckley et al., 2005; ECS, 2007;

Epp, 2007; Margolis, 2008; Marvel et al., 2007; Stallings, 2008; Thompson, 2007).

Findings from this study, however, suggest the fallacy of such reasoning, because these

dedicated, effective teachers remain despite dilapidated buildings. Margot laughed about

missing her "old" building with the "big ole rats" because she valued the teacher

community that existed within its crumbling walls. She believed that the culture within

the dilapidated building was healthier than the culture in her current, newer facility.

These teachers have learned to look beyond the physical aspects of the school. Teachers

like Bruce consider social equity, rather than retention, the appropriate motivation for

repairing urban school facilities. Bruce pointed out that repairing buildings is the right

thing to do socially because it helps students to see their value and overcome some of the

insecurities that resulting from inequities within the system. This study found that these

teachers focus on seeking resources for their students rather than for themselves. Samuel

stated,

> They don't have everything they need. I find myself always buying packs of
>
> paper, ink pens, pencils, notebooks; and I have myself issuing them out. They'll
>
> say, "Well, my mom says she's going to buy it," and 2 weeks later they still don't
>
> have pencil or paper.

Alexandra accesses her contacts throughout the community to provide for her students.

She and the other teachers provide their students with resources needed for learning, not

because this action will retain good teachers but because providing equally is what is

right.

Perhaps the most effective way for urban districts to influence their best teachers

to remain is to nurture their teachers as learners, professionals, and change agents. These

teachers remain because their actions with students make them to feel valued. They

consider that their role with children is vital to the lives of their students and the overall

community. Student success provides their reward. They love the feeling they receive

from helping students succeed and find joy in making a difference in the lives of children

who have experienced much turmoil and heartbreak. They return each year to be better

than they were the previous year and to reach more students through good instruction. To help good teachers to stay in the classroom, urban districts need to look at strategies that will enhance the positive feelings cited by these teachers as their motivation to return. Taking actions that will nurture teachers' inner commitments to students and to the district could perhaps further magnify the rewards, influencing retention and resilience and potentially impacting social change.

In addition, this study provides a framework for an initial understanding of the factors influencing highly effective urban secondary teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting and of the intersectional relationships between retention, resilience, and effectiveness. Future quantitative studies that build on the initial findings may help districts design programs that nurture and mold teachers' positive perceptions of their students, efforts, and results as well as of the district itself.

Finally, this study adds to the body of literature on urban education structured from a nondeficit perspective. The teachers of this study recognize the daily challenges of the students and understand realities associated with urban life, including poverty, violence, systemic inequities, inadequate resources, and lack of preparation. These teachers, however, do not allow these constructs to act as excuses for low student achievement. Instead, they work to engage students in academic endeavors to help them rise above their circumstances. The teachers believe in themselves and in their own power as change agents. They recognize the innate strength of their students and build on these strengths rather than focusing on students' weaknesses. This study sheds light on

the realities while providing strands of hope.

Recommendations for Action

Supportive administration is an added benefit to teachers, but the teachers who look for strength from the outside rely primarily on a community of their classroom colleagues. Thus, to effect changes, a system should create embedded opportunities for teachers to increase their knowledge of both content and pedagogy. A system should find ways to engage teachers in meaningful conversations about instruction and to help teachers transform their practices to better meet student needs.

These teachers have developed the habit of continually assessing their strengths and weaknesses. They constantly analyze their practices and seek ways to maximize their effectiveness. Margot discussed the connection to students that nurtured by high-quality instruction,

> If you haven't found a way to bridge the gap between subject area—your love for your subject area—and passion for the children, there can be a disconnect there. And the only way you can do that is by constantly honing your skills as an educator—not only know your content but how to teach that content—and to teach that content in relevant, effective ways that reaches our population of students as they change each year as they come to us.

Teachers find rewards from students' successes; thus, districts need to ensure that they are helping teachers to create strategies for students to rejoice in their successes. Isabella reflected on the good feeling associated with one of her student's first mathematical

successes. She experienced pleasure when the student called her mother from class and took her test home to hang on the refrigerator. Districts need to ensure that they are providing teachers with opportunities to hone their skills so that they feel connected to their classrooms and their students. Districts can foster such honing through content-based professional development or the institution of professional learning communities. Some of these meetings should be job-embedded because of multiple student-based, outside commitments. If teachers constantly cancel tutoring or clubs for professional meetings, they will lose the connection with students and hamper the student-teacher relationship that is vital for urban teachers.

The teachers' high levels of reflection foster their continually tweaking lessons to increase their impact. They reflect on their style, their presentation, and their lesson rather than blaming students for the failure of a lesson. Reflection reminds teachers that the next day is a new day and a new lesson, leaving them rejuvenated rather than overly frustrated. Districts need to develop a venue for teachers to learn to effectively reflect on practice. They need to teach their teachers how to process a lesson, pinpointing areas that they can modify to engage students more effectively in learning. Districts can accomplish such teaching through a commitment to collegial coaching or to teachers' completing an instructional-based entry for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The findings of this study suggest that districts avoid creating reflection forms. As districts understand the importance of reflection in practice, administrators may become tempted to create guided-reflection forms for teachers to submit. Because of the focus on

standardized testing and high volumes of evidence-based documentation, another form
may actually thwart the reflection process rather than encourage it.

The data of this study reflected a group of teachers with a deep passion for
students that strongly influenced their decisions to remain. The teachers' passion for
students intertwines with a commitment to social justice and a dedication to providing
quality instruction for students who have a great appreciation for good teachers. These
two factors greatly influence the staying power of this group of teachers. Thus, a district
should look to develop programs that reward outside work with students, thus
encouraging more teachers to create relationships that, in turn, influence their instruction
and their dedication. In addition, educators who plan professional learning opportunities
should utilize this finding to their advantage by creating opportunities for teachers to
share their stories about powerful experiences with students. In a study by Margolis
(2008), one of the participants who served as a mentor expressed how this relationship
rejuvenated her and reminded her of her passion for students, thus influencing her
decision to remain. Administrators should constantly give teachers opportunities for
collegial discussions that remind them of their overall purpose. The conversations from
this study gave teachers a venue to express themselves, for which most shared their deep
appreciation.

This study highlights the importance of establishing meaningful relationships with
students. Many of the teachers attributed their success in classroom management and in
reaching students to their relationships with their students. Typical new-teacher programs

do not offer teachers guidance in establishing relationships but, instead, discuss only rules, procedures, instruction, and assessment. The inner city, however, requires unique skills, which need special attention from the onset of the school year. Urban districts should analyze their new-teacher induction programs and ensure that new teachers have ample time to learn about the nuances, challenges, and rewards of the urban setting as well as the basics before ever crossing the threshold of the classroom.

The findings also indicate that a sense of teacher community adds to some teachers' resilience. Thus, principals can use this information to create opportunities for collegial interactions. Knowing that community is not important to all teachers, principals should identify strong teachers who find strength from collegial partnerships and engage them in creating a professional learning community with new teachers. This would help to fulfill the needs of new teachers as well as identified veteran teachers.

In addition, because community holds such a great value to some, administrators should work to help create a community and culture that is conducive to teaching and learning. The teacher participants had experienced varying levels of support from administration over the years. They had learned to persevere and remain effective in spite of administrators. Many discussed the pressure that administrators endure as a result of student test scores and revealed techniques administrators utilized to effect change, some of which included intimidation, public humiliation, and continual rants. Though some expressed appreciation for the great administrators of the past and the present, the participants preferred discussing colleagues and students. Few found strength from

administration. Many did not see administration as stable because some teachers had worked under as many as four administrators in less than 10 years. Participants lacked trust in the idea that administration would remain, and many were indifferent towards the leadership styles of various administrators.

These teachers were able to remain effective and persevere despite the toxic school cultures that many of them had experienced. They realized, however, in the focus group the power that existed among them. They jokingly discussed the impact on learning that could happen if all of them were allowed to teach in one building. They saw the potential for change in harnessing their power, their dedication, and their beliefs. Administrators have the power to make this level of change happen. Administrators should work to identify the strengths of their teachers and engage all teachers in leadership opportunities to create overall buy-in to the community. In addition, districts should look at helping school-based administrators in the creation of positive school culture. Administrators should work to bond teachers around a common purpose and help to build upon their strengths rather than berating their weaknesses. Though these teachers were able to remain effective, they acknowledged many instances where other teachers felt defeated by administrators and gave up. Though the teachers, still held positions within the school, they no longer worked to engage students in learning opportunities. They had given up because of the school culture and their own dissatisfaction, which inevitably hurt students and worked to add to rather than decrease the achievement gap.

A strand throughout the study and evidenced in various themes was that of

effective pedagogical strategies. This group of teacher participants looked for innovative manners to impact student learning. They were dedicated to students and committed to providing them with quality learning opportunities. They, however, felt berated by accountability measures that assessed their effectiveness through a narrow lens of paperwork and test scores. They believed that teacher assessments defined by checklists lacked the ability to truly measure their practices. Though the group understood the spirit behind these administrative measures, they believed that their implementation was impeding effective teachers more than motivating nondedicated teachers. The group believes that this immense paperwork has done more to deter teachers from providing quality instruction than to raise the levels of teaching and learning. The group fears that some teachers have lessened their actual teaching time to provide opportunities for documentation. Though the intentions of the assessment are noble, the application within the urban district has potentially hurt student learning or added to teacher burnout. Districts should work to design innovative means of teacher assessments that reach beyond paperwork. A new creative approach for measuring teacher effectiveness is needed.

These changes with administration and within the evaluation process could help to build an overall trust within the environment. Changing the culture of the teaching environment has the ability to change the culture of the learning environment. The teachers and the administrators are extremely worried about testing data and miss the cultural changes that could better help everyone to attain the testing goals. If teachers had

a common belief of the importance of their role as teachers and change agents and believed that they were an integral part of the overall learning community, real changes could happen in the school. Districts should work to support administrators in providing opportunities for team building and consensus building among faculties. As the trust between teachers and between teachers and administrators grow, the changes within the environment will support student learning.

These teachers believe that they are fighting for students' lives. They believe that mediocrity in their work can have grave consequences for children. They see their work as crucial and worry about their children's futures. They work to find innovative methods to engage students in the learning process. They see the inequities in funding and the achievement gap regularly. They understand that without Title I funds, they would be lost and would be fighting a war without any working artillery. Their stories shed light on problems that exist because schools have resegregated along lines of race and class. The teachers have listened to politicians who attest that charter schools are the answer, but these teachers have seen the truth. Charter schools and private schools set up rules of no tolerance and expel any children who do not conform to their standards. Those students then come back to the public school where administrations' hands are tied. The school works to create avenues for success with behavioral and academic services, and few consequences can be handed down for behavior that impedes learning for the student and others. The charter schools' or private schools' data shine with students of similar demographics while the public school gets berated for being ineffective. Meanwhile,

nobody discusses the uneven playing ground that the system created between schools in the same neighborhood. The researcher suggests that legislators investigate charter schools from a different perspective before drawing the conclusion that they are the answer to the problems of urban education. Legislators should understand if all schools were allowed a "no tolerance" policy, greater rates of people would remain uneducated and poor.

The above scenario does not even address the inequities among the schools in the urban district and those on the other side of town. The resegregation of schools has created problems beyond the scope of this small paper. Teachers on one side of town are concerned about the impact of last night's winter pageant on percentage of homework return; whereas, on the other side of town, the teacher is worried about how the economy is affecting her students' access to shelter and food. Teachers on one side of town are concerned that the students do not receive enough parental attention because the nanny spends too much time with the children; whereas, on the other side of town, the teacher understands that the single mom is working two jobs and the high school student is working until midnight to ensure that everyone eats. The teacher participants believe that many of the teachers across town that are considered superior could probably survive for less than a week if given the opportunity. Changes beyond the scope of school districts will have to be made before real changes will ever happen.

These great teachers believe that once their students hit the benchmarks, the goals and expectations change. They attest that the game rules change once their poor, minority

students become successful at winning. They believe that people work to ensure that their students must always be a step below in order to justify the property values and tax base on the other side of town. The people across town must believe that their schools are superior academically because they have paid to be in isolated communities. These teachers believe that they know the truth, yet they fight to beat the odds. They understand that changes will have to happen on many levels before systemic changes will happen. Yet, the teachers continue to believe in the future of their children. The problems with segregation among the lines of race and class will inevitably have long-term consequences for future generations if not addressed.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on understanding the factors associated with effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting. A quantitative extension to this study would require using the findings of this study in conjunction with other retention and attrition studies to examine the significance of each reason for remaining. This would include a survey that could be sent to multiple urban districts that asks teachers to rank each reason for remaining on a Likert-scale. An initial format to the survey is included in Appendix A.

The first step in the study would be to test this survey for both reliability and validity. Ensuring that the results would be the same each time the tool was utilized and to ensure that the instrument properly defines each concept being evaluated is a necessity; this tool has not yet been evaluated and is still in a preliminary form. After the survey is

deemed both reliable and valid, this survey could be used to examine the significance of certain factors with respect to their influence on a teachers' decision to remain in a specific urban school. The survey would be sent to a random sample of teachers with over 5 years of experience in multiple urban schools with over 90% of minority students and greater than 60% of students on free or reduced lunch. Because each statement has one independent and dependent variable and the data are ordinal, the researcher suggests the use of one-sample median test in order to determine the significance of each factor.

Another quantitative extension to this study would be to examine not only the influence of each of these factors on a teacher's decision to remain but also the reality of each of these factors within context. For example, a teacher may rank the building being nice as having little influence on his or her decision to remain. However, before understanding the importance of this particular influence, the researcher should know whether or not the statement is even true in context. Thus, an extension could be having participants rank each idea with respect to their decision to remain and then rank the truth of each statement. A teacher ranking "I remain because I feel supported by my principal" low on the Likert-scale and ranking "I feel supported by my principal" high on the Likert-scale has different implications than a teacher ranking both statements low. Understanding the influence of factors that currently exist within context is necessary to creating a more complete picture of retention.

Another quantitative extension to this study could include the question, Is there a relationship between perceived teacher effectiveness and reasons for remaining? Do

teachers who are perceived as effective remain for the same reasons as those who are not

perceived as effective? This would be a very important extension to this study. Because

of the quantitative design, large numbers of teachers could be reached. Teachers deemed

to be highly effective could receive a survey with one code and those not deemed as

effective could receive a survey possessing a different code. Because this will use two

independent groups and ordinal data, the researcher suggests the use of the Wilcoxon-

Mann Whitney test to analyze the data results. The primary question with this design will

be the ascription of highly effective and not highly effective to multiple teachers. The

defining of effective and the collection of reputational data will need to be clearly defined

Though this is a valid question, answering this question may cause ethical

research problems. During the collection of reputational data for the current study, the

researcher clarified with informants that the use of the data was merely to create a sample

for the interview process. Many informants welcomed reassurance that the research

would not investigate an inverse relationship focused on teacher ineffectiveness. The

consent form clearly explained that if a teacher's name were not marked the researcher

would not assume the teacher to be ineffective but, instead, would assume that the teacher

did not meet the study's criteria or that the administrator did not have sufficient

knowledge of the teacher's practice. Assuming that a teacher is ineffective because

nobody chooses the teacher as meeting eight out of 10 characteristics of effectiveness

may not be ethical. This hurdle could possibly be solved by adding a new component to

the survey, which would include teachers' ranking themselves on the 10 criteria of

effectiveness and asking the question, Is there a relationship between teachers' self analyses of effectiveness and reasons for remaining? Do teachers who view themselves as effective remain for the same reasons as teachers who do not view themselves as highly effective with respect to the given criteria? Utilizing the Rice (2006) study as a guide in conjunction with the 10 criteria from this study could create an initial framework. Rice found that a significant difference existed in reasons for remaining when comparing more effective and less effective teachers. Because Rice conducted this study in Australia, the study's findings would require an American extension. This researcher, however, does question the validity of self- assessment data**.**

Consideration of a format including self-selection raises an additional question. How would the teachers in this study have ranked themselves with respect to the 10 criteria? The researcher is not certain that the teachers would have identified themselves as meeting eight of the 10 criteria. Though the teachers in this group share positive assessments of their own excellence, they are also very judgmental of their own practices. Their constant reflection on practice keeps them always striving to be better. So an interesting question arises: Would these same passionate teachers emerge from a self-selection procedure? Would they have ranked themselves highly within eight of the 10 categories, or would their deep reflective natures block them from acknowledging that level of strength in practice?

This idea poses an additional question: Do teachers considered ineffective by students and administrators view themselves as effective? In an informal conversation

with some of the participants, a discussion arose about teachers' perceptions of their own practices. The participants discussed specific teachers whose struggle with classroom management leaves them little time to teach content, reporting that these teachers view themselves as effective but view their students as wild and the administration as unsupportive. These teachers may hold a higher view of themselves and their practice than would an outside observer. Findings reported by Sachs (2004) support this line of questioning. In a quantitative study of attributes of urban educators, when she found that the data showed no significant difference in attributes between effective and ineffective teachers, she hypothesized, "It is possible that the ineffective teachers may have given socially desirable responses regarding their beliefs that did not match their practice" (p. 184)

The design of the study ensured that administrator-informants both in and out of the building possessed knowledge of a teacher's effectiveness with students. Yet the data revealed that the students, too, deem these teachers effective. Many of the teachers related that many of their students return years after graduation to express their gratitude for excellent instruction. In addition, Gerard shared a story about receiving a commendation from the university of several former students.

> I had three or four kids that went off to University Wonderful, and they asked them a question when they were there their freshman year about who impacted you the most in your coming up, in your education. I had three kids that had letters … the University of Wonderful sent me letters that said, "These students

said that you impacted them." They sent me this congratulatory letter for being

an effective educator, and it made me feel so good. I was like, "Wow!"

Thus, a qualitative extension of this study could investigate students' perspectives of the

effectiveness of teachers by utilizing students as the primary informant-source category.

What characteristics do student believe that effective teachers possess? Would the same

group of teachers have emerged had students served as the informants? From the

conversations with these teachers, the researcher believes that students would have

identified all of the teachers identified by administrators. The more astute question would

actually be, Would additional teachers have been identified by students? Do some

teachers have a deep passion for students and their learning but rebel against

administrative orders considered unrelated to student achievement?

During the collection of reputational data, some of the informants wanted to

discuss their choices as they brainstormed through the teachers' names; whereas, others

preferred to keep their comments to themselves and leave their responses more

anonymous. This phase produced unexpected results and ideas for future research. First,

two informants made observations such as, "I would have chosen Mr. X or Ms. Y 10

years ago, but something has changed," "I would have chosen Mr. X or Ms. Y prior to

the merger of two high schools," or "I would have chosen Mr. X or Ms. Y prior to the

death of the spouse." Each comment led to a conversation with the researcher about

teachers' losing "the fire in the belly." This reflection leads to important questions that

subsequent research could analyze: (a) What factors lead urban teachers to losing their

passion for teaching? (b) Is there a relationship between years of service and perceived effectiveness? (c) Is there a relationship between years of service and reasons for remaining? (d) Do shifts in administration have the ability to impact teachers' commitment to students? (e) As administrative shifts occur and teacher leadership roles change, do teachers who were once leaders in their schools, but are currently overlooked, lose their overall dedication to the educational process?

The common theme of teacher leadership arose from the examination of archival documents. Though the theme was evident in their practices, the teachers did not discuss it in the focus group or any of the interviews. Questions for future research include: Do leadership positions within the school influence a teacher's decision to return? Do teacher leaders receive privileges and special treatment that influence retention or resilience? This could make an interesting mixed-methods study. First a researcher should identify several schools with similar student demographics. The similarity of demographics is important because of the influence of context on teaching and learning. Having teachers who experience similar challenges and rewards is important because the focus of this study would be the specific influence that teacher leadership has on retention, resilience, and privileges. Thus, limiting the number of variables that could be attributed to context is important. Once the sites are determined, the researcher should set up interviews with the principals of each school to gather a list of the teacher leaders at the school. Once the sample has been provided by the different administrators, the researcher should try to secure 10-15 teacher leaders for a focus group and a minimum of five for individual

interviews. During the group and individual interviews, the researcher should seek to gather information about the teachers' leadership roles, the aspects of job satisfaction specifically linked to their leadership, and their beliefs about how their leadership impacts both their retention and their resilience. The participants should also be questioned about their perceptions of any special treatment that they receive from administration, students, or other teachers as a result of their leadership. Once this data have been collected and analyzed, the researcher should find 10-15 teachers, who were not identified as leaders to participate in individual interviews. During this set of interviews, the researcher should focus on perceptions of teacher leadership at the school level, specifically collecting data on the participants' perception of the administrators' treatment of teacher leaders. The data should be used to create a two-tiered survey that first compares involvement in leadership positions to job satisfaction and involvement of leadership positions to intent on remaining. The second tier should collect information from both sets of individual interviews and the focus group to create an analysis of teachers' perceptions of the treatment of teacher leaders. This is significant because if teacher leaders are afforded luxuries beyond the average teacher, one could argue that the luxuries not the leadership affect the satisfaction. Examining teacher leadership from a new lens may give a more complete understanding of its impact on teachers' decisions to remain.

Caryn made a profound comment during her interview. When asked whether she thought that that some of her struggles or commitments were unique to the urban district,

she stated, "No, I don't. I think there is somebody in Highest Peak or Lovely Pine who feels like, 'I owe it to these children here to help them.' So, no, I don't." Teachers in the suburbs may have the same level of passion for students; they may feel needed to the same extent as the urban teachers. Some might describe their students as "latch key" children of upper-class, detached parents who work long hours and have many social commitments that take them away from their children. They may believe that their students are lonely and need guidance. They may view their students as worldly but needing somebody to lift them up. Thus, the examination of contextual influences on retention, resilience, and effectiveness is another potential avenue for research. How do teachers' decisions about remaining in an urban setting compare to teachers' decisions to remain in a suburban school? Do the teachers use similar strategies for maximizing rewards and minimizing challenges in districts with contrasting demographics?

Spirituality, prayer, and a sense of calling arose as a defining factor in teacher resilience. Many of the teachers went into detail about their faith and their relationships with God. The researcher conducted this study in the heart of the Bible Belt, thus adding additional questions: (a) Is the spiritual component of this study a regional finding? and (b) Do urban teachers in other areas of the country attest that prayer is a defining factor in their resilience?

A direct contrast in this research with the Morris (2007) study poses additional questions. In the Morris (2007) study, an influential factor in teachers' decisions to remain was the satisfaction associated with positive parental relationships. This

researcher posits that the absence of this theme is directly related to decreased parental involvement at the secondary level, which reveals avenues for future research in a different arena. Are urban parents less involved at the secondary level? If so, What factors influence urban parental decisions to become less involved as students move to the secondary level? When discussing parents, Lanie hypothesized that many parents are intimidated because they feel that they lack the content knowledge to be helpful and, therefore, shy away from actively involving themselves at the secondary level. Thus, Do parents feel overwhelmed by the rigor of the secondary curriculum and, thus, leave education to the teachers? If so, How can a secondary urban school work to bridge this disconnect between the high school and the parent?

Researcher's Reflection

The findings of the study align closely with the researcher's initial assumptions, which she based on two primary factors: (a) her own personal experience in the district and (b) informal discussions with teachers she respected about factors influencing their decisions to remain. The researcher hypothesizes that the findings of the study would have been broader had the design not restricted the sample to teachers identified by three source categories. Informal conversations with teachers not included in the sample group reveal that teachers also remain because they want to maximize their investment in the retirement system; they are comfortable in the system; they like the freedom that teaching gives them to align their schedule with that of their own children; and they can work other jobs and pursue other interests while maintaining a steady income. These teachers,

however, have learned to limit their commitment to their jobs to the eight-and-a-half hour school day.

The researcher initially anticipated more conversations about the intersection of race and class. However, the teachers' discussions of social justice and doing what they deem to be "right" alluded to this theme. Some of the teachers discussed race, others discussed class, and others understood some of the struggles that their students experience as an intersection of race and class. Only Bruce, however, explored this theme in depth and pinpointed what he perceived to be inequities characterizing the intersection of race and class.

The researcher anticipated that the teachers' answers and the factors influencing their decisions to remain would relate primarily to context. Daniel commented,

> I love the fact that I like my kids. I'm not sure if I'd like my kids in another
>
> school system. I'll be honest: I'm not sure if they would be likeable. I truly like
>
> the fact that I like my kids, and they know I like them.

Lanie, who had taught in a system with different demographics, found that she loved teaching in the urban district because the students fulfill her need to feel needed. The teachers feel connected to the urban youth. Some teachers, such as Caroline and Daniel, questioned how effective they would be at a suburban school, not because of a lack of knowledge or pedagogical skills but because of their special love and respect for urban youth.

The researcher facilitated the focus group through questioning and was careful not

to interject her own experiences. The focus group had a powerful dynamic, which carried the teachers into in-depth analyses beyond the expectations of the researcher. Because of the extent of the findings of the focus group, the researcher chose to use the first part of each interview as a time to validate data through member checking. The researcher began with the findings from the focus group and invited teachers to expand on or refute each finding. Had the researcher's comments not been grounded in findings from the initial set of data, they may have appeared leading in a transcript. However, opening the interviews with a summary of the findings accomplished the goal of generating with each individual more in-depth and exploratory data than possible in the focus group. In the four interviews used to corroborate data, the researcher did not discuss initial findings until the end, allowing interviewees to support or refute the findings without skewing the data from their interviews by influencing their answers.

The strength and passion of the teachers who chose to participate in the study inspired the researcher. She felt blessed to have been a part of such open, honest conversations. The researcher hypothesizes, however, that her role as a teacher leader in the district helped participants feel comfortable in expressing their true feelings. Her reputation preceded her, creating a common bond and a sense of trust with participants prior to the focus group and interviews. The researcher is not sure that an outside researcher or an unknown teacher would be able to collect the same rich data without first establishing a bond with the participants.

Conclusion

Quartz (2003) explained that too often researchers examine teachers whom they believe to be superstars, painting them as "martyrs" or "heroes" and lending little data to help in the development of high-quality teacher education programs. She explained,

> The real heroes of urban schools are those who figure out ways to stay connected to their profession, their pursuit of social justice, their colleagues, their students, and their communities. These heroes are not born; they emerge from an extensive network of supports and a solid understanding of pedagogy. (p. 105)

This reputational data from this study revealed "real heroes." These teachers do not consider themselves martyrs, heroes, or superstars. Their actions and words indicate that they are simply dedicated teachers who far exceed administrators' expectations in order to provide their students with the education that they deserve and to which they are entitled.

These teachers stay for their students. They believe that their students need for them to be at the school, and they believe that their children need for them to be excellent teachers. They understand that they are fighting for lives. For them, movies like *Precious* are more than Hollywood scripts. Their students' stories have the power to rip their hearts to shreds, but these teachers do not share their sadness. Instead, they work to give their students hope. They work to arm their students with the weapons of education. They teach so that their students may, in turn, go out and change the world. They want their students to excel beyond society's expectations of them. Their students are "the nucleus,"

and everything that they do is related to student learning and to creating avenues for

student success. Indeed, these characteristics ultimately capture why these teachers

decide to persist, to persevere, to remain with the students and districts who need them

most.

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Appendix A: PROPOSED QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

The purpose of the survey is to gain an understanding of why teachers remain at a specific school site. When ranking each statement, please consider its specific influence on your decision to remain, not the truth of the particular statement. Please rank the following statements using the following scale,

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3=Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

I remain at my current school because

a. I have a passion for my students and their lives   1   2   3   4   5

b. I have a passion for the learning of my students   1   2   3   4   5

c. I am dedicated to issues of social justice   1   2   3   4   5

d. I am dedicated to decreasing the inequities experienced by my students

                                                             1   2   3   4   5

e. I want to teach better than I did yesterday   1   2   3   4   5

f. I want to perfect the lesson or unit that I taught earlier this year   1   2   3   4   5

g. I want to perfect my craft so all students in my classes are successful

                                                             1   2   3   4   5

h. I am given leadership opportunities   1   2   3   4   5

i. I value the relationships that I have with my colleagues 1   2   3   4   5

j. I value the professional development opportunities that I am given

                                                             1   2   3   4   5

k. I believe that I have a spiritual calling to return   1   2   3   4   5

l. I am motivated by my own perceptions of my effectiveness 1   2   3   4   5

m. I am motivated by other's perceptions of my effectiveness 1   2   3   4   5

n. I value the relationships that I have formed with my students   1   2   3   4   5

o. I value the relationships that I have formed with the larger community

    1   2   3   4   5

p. I am internally rewarded from my job   1   2   3   4   5

q. I value my role as a change agent within the lives of my students 1   2   3   4   5

r. I am dedicated to my administrator's vision   1   2   3   4   5

s. I am happy with the financial compensation that I receive   1   2   3   4   5

t. I received great support as a new teacher   1   2   3   4   5

u. I participate in ongoing collegial conversations with colleagues 1   2   3   4   5

v. I am honing my skills to help me in my pursuits of an administrative position

    1   2   3   4   5

w. I believe in the purpose of education   1   2   3   4   5

x. I feel supported by my principal   1   2   3   4   5

y. I believe that the job affords me time to spend with my own family

    1   2   3   4   5

z. I am a member of a supportive learning community   1   2   3   4   5

aa. I am not concerned with the level of paperwork   1   2   3   4   5

ab. I believe that my class sizes are appropriate   1   2   3   4   5

ac. I am surrounded by a like-minded staff   1   2   3   4   5

ad. I am excited about instructional initiatives that are taking place within the school

    1   2   3   4   5

ae. I feel needed and appreciated by students   1   2   3   4   5

af. I feel needed and appreciated by administration   1   2   3   4   5

ag. I believe that my work is crucial   1   2   3   4   5

ah. I feel safe   1   2   3   4   5

ai. I think that the building is nice   1   2   3   4   5

aj. I have adequate resources   1   2   3   4   5

ak. I experience little stress in my job   1   2   3   4   5

al. the students in the school are well-disciplined   1   2   3   4   5

am. the students in my class are well-disciplined   1   2   3   4   5

an. I am autonomous in my pedagogical decisions   1   2   3   4   5

ao. I believe that majority of my students are dedicated to the learning process

                                                                        1   2   3   4   5

ap. I believe that others respect my profession   1   2   3   4   5

aq. I am service-oriented and believe that I am providing an important service

                                                                        1   2   3   4   5

ar. I do not like major life changes   1   2   3   4   5

as. I like that students' parents are involved at the school   1   2   3   4   5

at. I feel committed to the urban district   1   2   3   4   5

au. I am a part of shared-decision making at my school   1   2   3   4   5

av. I enjoy creating opportunities for students to be successful   1   2   3   4   5

aw. I enjoy spending my summers away from my students   1   2   3   4   5

ax. I enjoy not working and relaxing during the summer   1   2   3   4   5

ay. I enjoy being able to work a second job during the summer   1   2   3   4   5

APPENDIX B: LETTER TO INFORMANTS FOR REPUTATIONAL DATA
COLLECTION

Alison Grizzle
Teacher, Appleville High School
Doctoral student, Walden University

Dear Administrator:

Thank you so much for agreeing to help me with the initial data collection for my
doctoral study. Last week, I sent you a description of my study with a consent form. As
you may remember, the main purpose of my study is to explore internal and external
factors that influence highly effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting.
Thus, to answer this question, I must first identify teachers who have a reputation for
positively impacting student learning. The literature identifies that effective urban
teachers possess the following characteristics:

(1) possess a broad knowledge of content and pedagogy,

(2) display a commitment to students and their learning,

(3) are talented in designing and implementing multiple strategies for instruction and
assessment,

(4) have an ability to assess and reflect on practice,

(5) exhibit a commitment to students in the urban district and the community,

(6) dedicate themselves to creating opportunities for students to experience success,

(7) possess a service-oriented approach to teaching,

(8) set high expectations for student learning,

(9) create a community of learners within their classrooms, and

(10) value their students' cultural identities.

*Sources used for above information (Danielson, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; National Board for
Professional Teaching Standards, 1989; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2002;
Nieto, 2003, 2005, 2006a; Stanford, 1997)*

Attached is a list of all core-area high school teachers who meet the selection criteria of
the study, specifically they teach in a school with certain demographic characteristics,
and they have completed over five years of service to the district. Using this attached list,
please highlight all teachers who you believe meet at least eight of the above
characteristics. This is confidential and the results will only be used to identify a sample
population. You are a member of one out of a total of five source categories; thus, the

data you supply will be used concurrently with other data to help select effective teachers.

Thank you again for your participation,
Alison Grizzle
Student Researcher, Walden University

APPENDIX C: INFORMANT CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Alison L. Grizzle, teacher at Appleville High School. You were chosen as an informant for the study because you have direct information about teachers who would benefit the overall purpose of the study. The researcher seeks to interview teachers who have over five years of experience in Forrester City Schools, teach at high schools that possess certain demographic characteristics, and have a reputation for effectiveness with respect to student achievement. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Alison L. Grizzle, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to identify internal and external factors that influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in the urban school district. As a fellow teacher in the district, the researcher seeks to understand both what factors influence teachers to stay and what factors help them to overcome challenges and persevere, while remaining effective with students.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Examine a list of ten characteristics that the researcher compiled from the literature as representative of an effective urban teacher
- Reflect on teachers who you believe possess a minimum of eight of the given characteristics
- Highlight these teachers' names on the provided list of teachers
- Return the list to the researcher via the self-addressed envelope

Overall, your participation in the study should require less than thirty minutes of your time.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at Forrester City Schools will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There could be a perceived danger to the disclosure of reputational data. First, the researcher is not concerned with comparing the effectiveness of multiple teachers. Moreover, the researcher is only analyzing names that are identified by multiple sources as meeting the criteria set forth in the literature. The researcher is not concerned with the

names of teachers who appear in less than three of the source categories. Moreover, the researcher will not look at teachers not identified by any sources as ineffective. The researcher realizes that she is asking people to identify teachers who meet certain criteria set forth in the literature; she is not asking for administrators to identify teachers based solely on their opinion. Not identifying a teacher does not indicate that you feel the teacher is ineffective, it indicates that either the teacher does not meet eight of ten characteristics, or you are not familiar enough with the teacher's practice to make a judgment. The researcher will guard all of this data and will not discuss this data with anybody other than her direct research team. The researcher understands that this is sensitive information and will guard this data. She realizes that this information is integral to the premise of her study and will not do anything to jeopardize this information. The researcher has no interest in identifying which administrator provided which piece of reputational data. This identifier link will only be used to identify which administrators have not returned their sheets. Once sheets are returned all of the identifiers will be destroyed; thus, each returned sheet will still have a code but the code will no longer match a name. At no point, will anybody compare responses to an informant's name. On the other hand, administrators may benefit from taking a moment to evaluate their teachers with respect to the literature on urban teachers and teacher effectiveness. The findings have the potential to benefit administrators, recruiters, and the educational community with respect to a better understanding of urban teacher retention, thus, having the ability to impact students and their learning. Moreover, the research adds to the body of urban education literature designed from a nondeficit perspective.

Compensation:
Each administrator's name who returns a data sheet will be entered into a drawing for a $50 gift certificate. The results of the drawing will be emailed to all informants.

Confidentiality:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via xxx-xxx-1553 or alison.grizzle@xxxxx.xx. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-xxx-xxxx, extension xxxx. Walden University's approval number for this study is 10-07-09-0332623 and it expires on October 6, 2010.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By <u>signing below</u>, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

_____

Date of consent

_____

Participant's Written or Electronic* Signature

_____

Researcher's Written or Electronic* Signature

_____

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

APPENDIX D: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear selected teachers,

      My name is Alison L. Grizzle, and I am a mathematics teacher at Appleville High School. I am currently in the final stages of my doctoral study. The study's primary purpose is to identify factors that influence highly effective teachers' decisions to remain in an urban setting.

      I would like to conduct a focus group and individual interviews with core area, high school teachers, who have a reputation for effectiveness and have been in the district for over five years. After contacting multiple school-based, content-based, and central office administrators, I have compiled a list of teachers who have a reputation for effectiveness based on meeting certain criteria in the literature.

      I would like to invite you to be a part of this study. I will be hosting a catered-lunch to accompany the focus group Saturday, December 12, 2009 from 11 am – 1 pm at Lane Professional Development Center. Please RSVP to alison.grizzle@xxxxx.xxx or xxx-xxx-1553. If you need childcare, please let me know, and I will provide on-site childcare.

      I would also like to invite you to participate in an individual 1 to 1 ½ hour interview to be scheduled any afternoon or evening of December 14- 17, January 4-8, and January 11- 20. In addition, to these dates, you can schedule anytime during the day or evening December 21 – 30th or January 9th. If you cannot attend the focus group but would like to participate in the study, feel free to sign up for an individual interview time slot.

      For better understanding, please see the attached consent form. In addition, I would like to collect any documents that may help me to better understand your practice and your motivations. Appropriate documents may include the following:

- Resume
- Existing videos of instruction
- Grant applications
- Journals of your experiences
- Reflections on teaching
- Any other document that you think would be helpful

If possible, please bring these documents to the focus group.

Thank you for your consideration,

Alison L. Grizzle

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Alison L. Grizzle, teacher at Appleville High School. You were chosen for the study because you have over five years of experience in Forrester City Schools, your high school meets certain demographic characteristics, and you have a reputation for effectiveness with respect to student achievement. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Alison L. Grizzle, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to identify internal and external factors that influence effective teachers' decisions to remain in the urban school district. As a fellow teacher in the district, the researcher seeks to understand both what factors influence teachers to stay and what factors help them to overcome challenges and persevere, while remaining effective with students.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Participate in a 1 ½ hour focus group that will be audiotaped and /or
- Participate in a one-hour individual interview that will be audiotaped and/or
- Provide personal artifacts that help to explain who you are as a professional

In addition, if you agree to participate in either the focus group of the interview, you will be asked to review a transcript of the focus group and/or your individual interview in order to check for accuracy.

Overall, if you choose to participate in all phases of the study, you will be committing approximately
3 ½ hours of your time.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at Forrester City Schools will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There are no foreseen risks associated with this study. The only potential risk is that you may have a colleague who questions why he/she was not asked to participate in the study and questions the sampling procedure, yet the researcher does not truly believe that this will be an issue. Overall, teachers will have the opportunity to reflect on their own

perseverence and persistence despite working in a challenging environment. Teachers may personally benefit from this level of analysis and reflection. The findings have the potential to benefit administrators, recruiters, and the educational community with respect to a better understanding of urban teacher retention, thus, having the ability to impact students and their learning. Moreover, the research adds to the body of urban education literature designed from a nondeficit perspective.

Compensation:
Snacks will be provided during both the focus group and the individual interviews. In addition, each participant will receive a small token of appreciation for participating in the study. Finally, each participant's name will be entered into a drawing for a $100 gift certificate.

Confidentiality:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via xxx-xxx-1553 or Alison.grizzle@xxxxxx.xxx. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-xxx-xxxx, extension xxxx. Walden University's approval number for this study is 10-07-09-0332623 and it expires on October 6, 2010.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

_____

Date of consent

_____

Participant's Written or Electronic* Signature

_____

Researcher's Written or Electronic* Signature

_____

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW SCHEDULING

Dear Focus Group Participants,

Thank you so much for participating in Saturday's focus group. Honestly, I had no idea that the conversation would be so powerful. I hope that you found yourself rejuvenated and amazed by the strength of your colleagues. I feel honored to have spent my Saturday with such great teachers. As I have gone through the recording, I have laughed, cried, and sat in amazement of the strength within the room. The data that you gave me was more than I could have hoped for. I look forward to meeting with each of you individually. I have listed the dates and time of day that each person has requested; please think about where you would like to meet and the exact time of the meeting.

Name	Date	General Time	Exact Time	Location
Margot	12/15/09	4-8	4:00	Appleville
Daniel	12/16/09	4-8	4:00	Eastside
Tyrik	12/17/09	4-8	4:00	Appleville
Isabella	12/21/09	8-12		
Cornelius	12/22/09	8-12		
Gerard	12/28/09	12-4		
Shane	12/30/09	8-12		
Alexandria	1/6/10	4-8		
Bruce	1/11/10	4-8		

Dear Selected Teachers,

Saturday's focus group was an excellent experience, and your input was greatly missed. Honestly, I had no idea that the conversation would be so powerful. I feel honored to have spent my Saturday with such great teachers. As I have gone through the recording, I have laughed, cried, and sat in amazement of the strength within the room. The data that that I collected was more than I could have hoped for. I look forward to continuing the process and meeting with you to gather your thoughts about the topic. On Saturday, the teachers signed up for individual interviews. Some chose to meet after school while others preferred to meet over the holidays. Please look at the available times and decide when it would be convenient for you to meet with me for approximately 1 ½ hours.

Date			
Sunday 12/ 20/09		12 -4	4-8
Tuesday 12/22/09		12-4	4-8
Wednesday 12/23/09		12-4	4-8
Thursday 12/24/09	8-12	12-4	4-8
Saturday 12/26/09	8-12	12-4	4-8
Sunday 12/27/09		12-4	4-8
Monday 12/28/09	8-12		4-8
Tuesday 12/29/09	8-12	12-4	4-8
Wednesday 12/30/09		12-4	4-8
Thursday 12/31/09	8-12		
Sunday 1/3/10		12-4	4-8
Saturday 1/9/10	8-12	12-4	4-8
Sunday 1/10/10		12-4	4-8

Any afternoon after school on 1/4/10, 1/5/10, 1/7/10, 1/8/10,
1/12/10, 1/13/10, 1/14/10, 1/15/10
1/18/10, 1/19/10, 1/20/10

APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Focus Group Questions

1. As you reflect on both the challenges and the rewards associated with your career, what external factors influence your decision to remain in this school district?

2. As you reflect on both the challenges and the rewards associated with your career, what internal factors influence your decision to remain in this school district?

Individual Interview Questions

1. What do you perceive as some of your contextual struggles? For example, what stands in the way of your teaching or students' learning?
2. Do you think the contextual struggles that you just discussed are unique to the urban district? Why or why not?
3. What are the external factors and/ or supports that help you to persevere and overcome these difficulties?
4. As you have thought about factors specific to your context, what do you perceive to be some rewarding aspects specific to your context?
5. What are some of the strategies that you use to maximize your rewards and minimize your challenges in your daily teaching activities?
6. What internal attributes add to your resilience; what internal attributes help you to keep going? To persevere?
7. What external factors add to your resilience; what internal attributes help you to keep going? To persevere?
8. What are the rewards of your perseverance? In other words, what is in it for you?
9. While reflecting on some of the discussions today and in the focus group, what internal and external factors do you believe have the greatest influence on your decision to remain in this particular urban setting?

CURRICULUM VITAE

Alison L. Grizzle, Ed.D.
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Happywood, Tk 35441
231-322-4168
Alison.grizzle@xxxxxx.xxx

Education

Doctor of Education - Teacher Leadership   2010
Walden University Minneapolis, Minnesota
Doctoral Study: An exploration of factors influencing effective teachers' decisions to
remain in an urban setting
GPA 4.0

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards   2004
National Board Certification in Secondary Mathematics Cumulative score 345

Master of Arts - Mathematics Education   1999
University of Alabama at Birmingham   Birmingham, Alabama
GPA 4.0

Bachelor of Arts - Double Major: Mathematics and Literature   1997
Denison University   Granville, Ohio
GPA 3.43

Teaching Experience

Mathematics Teacher   August 1999- Present
Forrester City Schools   Forrester, Tk
Orange Slice High School/ Appleville High School

- Throughout my tenure in Forrester City Schools, I have been active in and out of
  the classroom. I have been dedicated to student learning and have provided tutoring
  before and after school for any interested student in the school. My active
  involvement in school improvement, scheduling, and school curriculum has helped
  to build my knowledge of quality instruction and to develop my leadership skills. I
  have served on committees at the school and district level to impact student
  achievement by improving teaching in the system. My work with the district's
  Executive Director of Professional Development has given me the opportunity to
  coach teachers in multiple disciplines and in various stages of their careers as
  educators.

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Director and Designer of Tutorial Program   July 2000- August 2002
Purpleworld Baptist Church   Forrester, Tk

- In July of 2000, I was contracted to design a reading and mathematics tutorial program in a lower socioeconomic area of town. My role was to design a program that focused not only on homework but also on basic skills, train a staff, advertise to schools, create a tutoring schedule, and maintain accounting records. I created a schedule that placed students with tutors who best fit their needs and learning styles. I trained college students and teachers to tutor students between the ages of 5 and 18.

Tutor   Fall 1992- Summer 1993; Summer 1994; January 1998- August 1999
Reading and Math Center   Forrester, Tk

- My job requirements were to tutor, instruct, and assist students between the ages of five and adult in Mathematics, English Grammar Skills, Reading Comprehension, ACT and SAT preparation. I was the first high-school student hired for this position, which I continued on college vacations and during my master's study.

Special Certifications

- Trained Facilitator for Classroom Organization and Management Program (2007)
- Trained to Teach Princeton Review Smart Start and PSAT Preparatory (2005)
- Trained Facilitator for New Teacher Academy (Columbia University) (2005)

Presenter/ Facilitator

- Presenter/ Facilitator "Teacher Leadership" for a Professional Learning Unit for district's employees with administrative certification (Winter, Spring, and Summer 2010)
- Presenter/ Facilitator "Where Do I Begin?" district's New teacher induction (Fall 2009)
- Presenter of "Discovering your child's genius" at National Conference of Parent Involvement (Fall 2008)
- Presenter of "Discovering your child's genius" at District's Family Involvement Parent Workshop (Fall 2008)
- Speaker on a panel discussion about Leading for Change for the state convention of Alabama Staff Development Council (Fall 2007)
- Facilitator of School Professional Development Workshop for the Faculty and Administrators of Appleville High School on Professional Learning Communities and Organizational Learning (Fall 2007)

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- Facilitator for Appleville High's workshop on Quality Teaching Standards (Spring 2007)
- Presenter of "A Look at Research on What Constitutes Quality Mentoring in Chicago's Public Schools" for district's Director of Mathematics and Mathematics department chairs (Spring 2007)
- Facilitator of "A Look at Accomplished Teaching" for New Teacher Workshop (Spring 2007)
- Presenter "Inclusion in the Mathematics Classroom" for Forrester City Schools' Best Practices Conference (Fall 2006)
- Facilitator of School Professional Development Workshop for the Faculty and Administrators of Appleville High School on Building Based Student Support Team (Fall 2006)
- Presenter at Curriculum Board Meeting on Smart Start and Princeton Review at the request of district's Area Superintendent (Spring 2006)
- Presenter of "Designing and Implementing a Graphing Unit for the Algebra Classroom" for district's High School Mathematics Teachers (Fall 2005)
- Presenter of "Successful Strategies for Teaching Mathematics to Special Needs Students" for district's Special Education Program Specialists and Special Education Teachers. (Fall 2005)
- Presenter at Curriculum Board Meeting on "Successful Strategies for the Mathematics Classroom" at the request of district's Director of Mathematics (Fall 2005)
- Presenter at Luncheon for National Board Candidates (Fall 2004)
- Presenter of "Methods of Assessment" at Saturday Professional Development for district's Director of Mathematics and High School Mathematics Teachers. (Spring 2004)
- Facilitator of School Professional Development Workshop for the Faculty and Administrators of Orange Slice High School on Building Based Student Support Team (2004)
- Presenter of "Techniques for Factoring" at Beginning of School Professional Development for district's Director of Mathematics and High School Mathematics Teachers. (Fall 2003)

Mentor/ Facilitator

- Mentor for National Board Candidates in Science, Mathematics, Special Education, English, and History (2004- present)
- Classroom Organization and Management Program (Fall 2008; Fall 2009)
- Facilitator for New Teacher Academy in Forrester City Schools (2005-2006)
- Facilitator of Table Discussion at The New Teacher Academy Grant and Poster Presentations (May 2005)
- School-Based New Teacher Mentor (2000-01; 2004-05; 2006-07; 2009-2010)

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Forrester City Schools Publications

- Lead Writer and Associate Editor for district's National Board Candidates' Handbook (2004)
- Writer and Producer for district's National Board Accomplished Teaching Video (2005)
- Lead Writer and Information Compiler for school's Parent Handbook Committee (2004)

Teaching Honors

- Recipient of Forrester City Schools Teacher Recognition Award May 2003 and May 2005
- Selected for Who's Who Among American Teachers 2005
- Featured on Fox 6 News "What's Right with our Schools" (January 2008)

Education Honors

- Most Outstanding Master's Student in Secondary Education- May 1999- UAB
- Department of Mathematics Fellow (Tutoring) - Denison University
- Dean's List- 4 semesters- Denison University
- Heritage Scholar (Half-Tuition Scholarship)- Denison University
- Kappa Alpha Theta Founder's Scholar 1996- Denison University

Committees and Affiliations

- Co-Facilitator of Appleville's school accreditation team (2009-2010)
- School Improvement Team, Appleville High School (2006-present)
- School Professional Development Team (2007- present)
- Active Member of National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1999- present)
- Advisory Board for district's National Board Candidate Support Program (2007- 2008)
- Facilitator of Building Based Student Support Team (2003- 2008)
- FCS National Board Candidate Support Program Summer Curriculum Team (2005; 2007)
- Recruiter for Forrester City Schools' Human Resources Department (Spring 2006)
- Site-based 504 coordinator (Fall 2006- Spring 2007)
- Planning committee for 1st annual Best Practices Conference (Fall 2006)
- Participant in Executive Director of Professional Development's grant committee for "Increasing Student Enrollment in College" (December 2005)

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- Team member for Freshmen COMP, a program designed by the principal to pair members of the community with freshmen to help guide them in career decisions. (2004- 2005)

National and Regional Conferences

- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics- attended at least one regional or national conference each year of teaching. (Fall of 1999- present)
- National Staff Development Council: Dallas, TX (December 2007)
- Alabama Staff Development Council: Birmingham, AL (October 2007)
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards: Washington, D.C. (July 2007)
- National Urban Alliance: Birmingham, AL (April 2007)
- New Teacher Center: San Jose, CA (February 2007)
- Association for Career and Technical Education: Atlanta, GA (November 2006)
- High Schools that Work: Orlando, FL (July 2006)
- Sustaining Leadership in Professional Development for Mathematics and Science: Boston, MA (May 2006)
- New Teacher Academy Trainer Camp: Mobile, AL (June 2005)