

A STUDY OF THE LONGEVITY FACTORS OF MID-CAREER
WHITE FEMALE TEACHERS IN SUBURBAN TITLE ONE
PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
with a Major in School Improvement
May 2022

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DEDICATION

To my wife Margine and daughter Grace. You have inspired me along this journey knowing the struggles you both have faced to get to where you are today.

Tomorrow is yours, and I am here for you both.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my supportive and patient chair, Dr. Pat Guerra. The knowledge she has in her field of study was valuable as a guide during my research and writing. Her no-nonsense approach was what I needed to complete a quality dissertation. I would also like to acknowledge my committee, whose expertise has guided me in this journey. Dr. Joellen Coryell's class set the stage for writing this dissertation. Dr. Stephen Gordon's many classes gave me a foundational perspective on school supervision and evaluation. Dr. Bergeron Harris provided classes when I was working on my principal's certification, and the lessons learned there have been part of my leadership development.

I would also like to recognize family and friends that have helped along the way. I want to acknowledge my parents Marvin and Linda Self for their ongoing support and inspiration. To my wife Margine and daughter Grace, thank you for your patience and encouragement. I would also like to thank Dr. Shannon Luis and Lizette Ridgeway, classmates that have helped me along the way. Thank you, Dr. Denise Collier, for providing insight on the writing and content during the proposal stage and beyond. Dr. Shannon Giroir, thank you for your help with writing and editing. Dr. Monica Ruiz-Mills provided editing and was a great thought partner. Acknowledgement to my friend Mike Adams, who provided a practitioner's perspective and would ask me how it is going. Lastly, I am thankful for Dr. Joyce Chapa, who would check in and motivate me to keep going when the process would stall as we were both on the journey to finish. I am thankful for all of you and the ongoing support you all have provided.

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ABSTRACT

Educator shortages have become a reality in public education, and, while research has documented reasons teachers leave the profession, there has been limited research into why teachers choose to stay. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that keep teachers who serve in Title I schools in the profession to their mid-career (10-15 years). This study was conducted with 10 White female teachers working in suburban Texas elementary schools using a qualitative grounded theory approach. The data were collected through demographic surveys, and semi-structured remote interviews with the participants. Findings of the study indicated that there were personal, professional, and interrelated factors that contributed to teachers choosing to stay in their roles as classroom teachers. All findings were supported in the literature as factors why teachers remain in the profession with exception of deficit thinking. This finding led to the development of the emergent theory where teacher autonomy and unchallenged deficit thinking were novel factors identified with participants in this study. The findings indicate several implications for practice, such as additional trainings in leadership preparation programs that include research-based strands for the supervision of teachers. Additionally, the findings indicate that teachers need training on developing relationships with stakeholders and developing cultural responsiveness. Based on the findings, recommendations for policy and future research are also provided.

I. INTRODUCTION

In casual conversations, it is common to discuss both professional and personal experiences to find commonalities with others. When I tell others I work in public education and that it has been my career for the last 18 years, it often strikes a chord. Almost everyone in the United States has some tie to public education. Many either attended public schools themselves or have children or relatives that currently attend public schools. Others' personal experiences contribute to their strong opinions about the public education system, a political entity funded most often by tax dollars. Those that have been teachers in the past are often willing to share their experiences with me and why they subsequently chose to leave the profession. These are the conversations that always pique my interest, the ones I lean into with the desire to know more.

Time and again, teachers leave the profession, and principals do not always have a clear understanding of various reasons for their departure. Typically, exiting teachers complete an electronic form that allows them to identify reasons for their decision among many pre-determined items to check. However, there may or may not be an opportunity for a face-to-face exit interview. Further, in my experience, when teachers to participate in an exit interview with a human resources staff member, the data gathered is not shared with campus administrators. Consequently, there is no feedback loop in which data is shared with the campus administrators for the goal of addressing the factors that lead to teacher attrition.

The factors that former teachers share as reasons for leaving the profession are important because the public education system currently has a shortage of quality teachers (Calvecchio, 2018). As an educational leader, I want to understand why teachers

leave the profession. However, exploring the reasons teachers leave the profession involves a summative data analysis. In other words, it is an autopsy that occurs after the fact and, thus, without a chance to preserve what could have been a teacher's long career impacting hundreds to thousands of lives. Instead, examining the factors that keep teachers practicing in the profession could shed some critical light on the problem and lead to some important implications for teacher retention.

This study sought to collect the information on factors that lead teachers to continue classroom teaching to their career mid-point. The information obtained from this study can serve as a springboard for further analysis and to identify practices and systems that currently support the retention of mid-career teachers so that they can be augmented and used to support teacher retention. Most importantly, keeping effective teachers in the classroom in our most high-needs schools is vital to student success (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). For this study, high-needs campuses were determined by their Title 1 designation—a determination made by the local school district based on the percentage of students that qualify for free or reduced lunch under the National School Lunch Program.¹

Statement of the Problem

Teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate for various reasons. This attrition has resulted in significant turnover, as novice teachers continue to enter the profession and then exit within the first five years (Jones-Carey, 2016; Perda, 2013).

¹ Free and reduced lunch status is determined by the total number of people that live in a household and the total income of the household. Currently households that earn below 130% the Federal Poverty Level qualify for free lunch, and households that earn below 185% the Federal Poverty Level qualify for reduced lunch and currently cannot be charged more than \$0.40 per lunch (The National School Lunch Program [NSLP] Fact Sheet [n.d.]).

Research on this problem has primarily examined the reasons why teachers leave the profession (Ingersoll, 2004). While this research is of value, it does not explore these reasons in depth. Much of the research is conducted by analysis of national or exit surveys, and the studies do not always identify and/or address the root causes of teacher attrition. Due to the nature of the surveys, there is often a lack of context available to better understand the brief responses teachers provide, such as “poor leadership” or “inadequate support from colleagues.” Yet, for each teacher who leaves the profession permanently, another weathers the storm and perseveres in the face of many obstacles (Cancio & Conderman, 2008; Hofstetter, 2014; Yonezawa, Jones, & Singer 2011). There has been little research investigating the factors that have kept mid-career teachers in the classroom in urban/suburban Title I campuses. These high-needs campuses have a much higher turnover, up to three times more than non-high-needs campuses (Sutcher et.al., 2016); thus, understanding the factors responsible for retention and evaluating what can be done in support and promotion of these factors is key to keeping teachers in the profession.

Ingersoll (2004) identified working conditions, low salaries, and lack of teacher autonomy as salient reasons teachers leave, just to name a few. Yet, despite many of these obstacles, many teachers do persevere and educate hundreds to thousands of students over their career. The loss of teachers with less than five years of experience and the loss of highly-experienced teachers before retirement has resulted in a “greening” of the teaching profession, disproportionately affecting students in the highest needs schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand and describe characteristics, perceptions, and circumstances that have resulted in teacher longevity among White, female mid-career teachers. For this study, “mid-career” teachers were defined as those in their tenth to their fifteenth year of teaching and who have chosen to remain in a designated Title I school. The rationale for this tenure selection is that most teachers at this juncture in their career have established themselves in the profession and usually have many more years ahead of them in the profession; thus, imminent retirement is not a factor keeping them in a job they would otherwise leave. The findings from this study add to the knowledge base on teacher attrition and retention and serve to inform leaders in school districts, as well as faculty in teacher preparation programs, on how to better support teachers’ longevity in the profession.

Research Questions

The following primary research question guided this study:

What are the factors leading to mid-career White female teachers remaining in Title I schools?

The secondary questions listed below also supported the research efforts:

1. What are the personal factors leading to mid-career White female teachers remaining in Title I schools?
2. What are the professional factors leading to mid-career White female teachers remaining in Title I schools?
3. What are the interrelated factors (personal and professional) leading to mid-career White female teachers remaining in Title I schools?

This qualitative study used a constructivist approach to examine the experiences teachers have (Creswell, 2013). Berger and Luckman (1967) posited that there is a social construction of reality that is foundational to an individual's social interactions with others. This study used constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006), which provided opportunities for the researcher to conduct research in an inductive way by focusing on three main areas—the *who*, *what*, and *how*. Charmaz (2014) outlined the five stages this research as follows. First, data collection and analysis happen simultaneously. Second, actions and processes are analyzed. Next, comparison of new data collected is constantly compared to previously collected and analyzed data. The data that has previously been analyzed are used to construct new concepts and categories. Finally, abstract analytic categories are developed. Memo writing is used to reflect on each individual interview, and coding is used to further explore the data being collected before moving on to the next interview and transcription analysis.

In traditional grounded theory research, there is the perception that, “the researcher must set aside extant theory” (Urquhart & Fernández, 2013, p. 3). Some researchers argue there is a place for both a phased review of literature and a “theoretical perspective” (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Urquhart & Fernández, 2013). Urquhart and Fernández (2013) support the use of a theoretical perspective in grounded theory research to provide theoretical sensitivity (context) for the researcher. These scholars contend that the use of a theoretical perspective, as well as a phased review of the literature, provide direction for the researcher. The importance of the researcher acquiring theoretical sensitivity is so that the researcher is cognizant of the meaning of the data collected within the grand scope of the literature review. Theoretical sensitivity serves to enable

quicker identification of existing theories as they emerge in the data and later contribute to theory development (Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019).

Importance of the Study

Ingersoll, Merrill, and Stuckey (2014) characterize the changing landscape of teaching by describing the “graying” and the “greening” of the profession. In other words, there is a large percentage of older teachers retiring from the profession, and there is a near equal rise in the number of teachers who are entering the profession as beginners. These authors also noted that only 14% of the teacher attrition that occurs each year is due to retirement; thus, there is a need to focus on retaining new teachers and maintaining teachers in the middle of their teaching career. With the influx of new teachers and the exit of retiring teachers, there are more teachers in the first 5-10 years of their career than there are teachers with 10 or more years of service. Sustaining experienced classroom teachers through retirement is a current challenge.

Scope of the Study

Participants in this study were limited to White female suburban elementary public-school teachers in Texas who work in a designated Title I school at which 75% or more of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Simon and Johnson (2015) found that “When they [White female teachers] leave, these teachers usually either exit the profession or transfer to schools that have better academic records and serve Whiter, wealthier students” (p. 3). Compared with White teachers, Black and Latino teachers are more likely to stay in schools that serve students with similar racial and socioeconomic backgrounds (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010).

The participant sample was comprised of all White female teachers because (a) females represent most of the teachers in Texas at 76.2%, and (b) White teachers represent the largest ethnic group of Texas teachers at 58.4% (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Additionally, the outcomes of the Simon and Johnson (2015) analysis of research led to a recommendation that, since most teachers in public schools are White women who are more likely to leave “high needs” schools, further research on what supports are currently in place that keep White women teaching in high-needs schools would be beneficial to the students served in these schools.

Additionally, mid-career for this study is defined as 10-15 years of experience. Texas teachers operate under two main governing bodies, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the State Board of Education, and they uniformly participate in the Teacher Retirement System (TRS), which applies the same formula that dictates when teachers are vested and can retire. The retirement formula is the reason I chose teachers in the career from 10 to 15 years, as this is when they are most likely to be at the midpoint in their career and when the retirement benefits are not a longevity consideration.

Limitations

Limitations or restrictions to the study design include my positionality as a principal for 9 of years, experiences as a building administrator, and my current role at the state education agency. Although teachers employed at my former campus were not part of the participant sample, some teachers could have been apprehensive about talking with a former campus leader and expressing criticisms about the school district or their specific campus leaders. Another limitation of the study was the exclusion of possible participants who do not use social media, as this caused limited access to the recruitment

and participation process. Finally, the process of interviewing through Zoom did limit some of the interactions and observations I had with participants and may have resulted in potential participants excluding themselves from the study.

Delimitations

Delimitations of the study included the mode of participant selection I used, meaning that all participants were solicited from outside any school district oversight, via social media and emails. Consequently, participation did not require navigation of districts' permission and approval processes. For example, if I had wanted to involve participants in the district in which I currently work, I would have had to submit my study's proposal to the district's internal review process for approval prior to obtaining participants' employment information, such as years of service and other data. This internal process could have impacted overall access to resources and impact the study design, as there have been past cases in which the district asked the researcher to change the research proposal after the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Thus, I did not interview any participants that I formerly or currently supervise. The process of interviewing through Zoom limited some of the interactions and observations I had with participants, but it opened the study to state-wide participation and offered a means to recruit and interact with potential participants with whom I would normally not be able to meet and interview.

The Covid-19 pandemic also shaped the research design. The IRB required that if face-to-face interactions are part of the data collection process, they be amended to mitigate possible risk for participants, as well as for the researcher. This requirement limited me to virtual or phone interviews.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used frequently throughout this proposal and are defined for the reader below:

Leavers—Teachers that no longer teach Pre-K-12 classes (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017).

Mid-Career Teacher—Teachers that have reached the mid-point of their career. In this study, it refers to teachers with 10-15 years of experience in the field.

Movers—Teachers that leave a school to work at a different school or district as a teacher (Ingersoll, 2001).

Stayers—Teachers that stay in the classroom at the same school for more than one year (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017).

New Teachers—Teachers in their first year of teaching (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Pre-service Teachers—Individuals who are in a training program to be a teacher, including those completing their “student teaching” requirements (Calvecchio, 2018).

Social Constructionism—A theoretical perspective in which individuals make meaning based on their experience and perception (Bryant & Charmaz, 2012).

Teacher Attrition—Refers to teachers leaving the occupation of teaching (Ingersoll, 2001).

Summary

There is a public education crisis in the United States that stems from a loss of qualified teachers. Roughly, the same number of teachers retiring from the profession are also entering as new teachers; thus, it is paramount that new teachers remain to fulfill the number of highly qualified teachers needed in the profession. The goal of this study of

White female teachers in a high-needs suburban school settings in Texas was to better understand why teachers remain in the profession so that the findings could potentially inform current practice and policy. Because of my positionality as a campus administrator, there may be some apprehension among participants to be candid with me in the interviews; thus, I will not include anyone I have previously or currently supervised in the participant pool. While my insight into the profession as a campus administrator was of great value, I tempered my positionality as to not bias the research process.

Organization of the Study

The remainder of this dissertation is organized into four chapters. Chapter Two explores the literature on teaching in America today, followed by a description of the crisis of keeping qualified teachers in the classroom. The literature review outlines the factors leading to teacher attrition: inadequate funding; lack of preparation for the profession of teaching; lack of support, burnout, and stress; strained relationships with students; lack of cultural competency; and organizational working conditions. The latter section of Chapter Two examines the factors leading to teacher retention, which include: optimizing support for teachers' workplace stress; positive relationships; and opportunities for professional growth. Chapter Two concludes with a summary of the literature followed by discussion of the aspects of the development of "theoretical perspective" (Glaser & Strass, 1967) and the researcher's "theoretical sensitivity" (Urquhart & Fernández, 2013).

Chapter Three presents the study's principal research question and subsequent questions, and it details the study's methodological approach and the rationale for

designing the study as a constructivist grounded theory qualitative study. I also discuss my reasons for using both a literature review and developing a theoretical perspective early within this grounded theory research study. Site and participation selection are then discussed, along with data collection and analysis procedures, including concurrent coding and memo writing as part of the process. My approach to trustworthiness, credibility, and verification is discussed, specifically processes of member checking and triangulation. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of my researcher positionality, potential research bias, and ethical issues related to the study.

Chapter Four presents a description of the study locations, introduces the study participants, and describes the study's findings. This chapter aimed to identify and analyze the perceptions and experiences of mid-career White female teachers in high-needs suburban schools as related to the research questions through the lens of grounded theory. Finally, Chapter Five includes discussion of the major findings as related to the literature on teacher retention and attrition, the role that deficit thinking plays in teachers' longevity, the role of principals in teachers' longevity, as well as implications of potential value for teacher preparation programs and educational policy. Included in this last chapter is a connection between the findings of this study and an emergent theory. The chapter concludes with a discussion of focus areas for future research and a summary of this research study.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Teaching in America

Although teaching in the United States has changed over time, the fundamental roles of teacher and student have remained in place. The teacher is the guide and facilitator of learning, and the student is the reason for which the teacher and school exist. Teachers function as orchestra conductors, choosing which notes to play and which parts of the symphony to emphasize. Without teachers providing corrective feedback, guidance, and mentorship, students would not be able to learn at the required level. Without qualified teachers, students lose ground, and that lost time and opportunity for development can take years to regain.

In the past, teachers were expected to exhibit certain character traits. The 1906 publication of the *Journal of Education* highlighted quotes from various superintendents across the United States that emphasize valued traits, some that may seem superficial by current teacher standards. For example, superintendent A. L. Barbour from Natick, Massachusetts wrote:

Every day of the child's life should be to him a lesson in thorough work; an expression of careful thought; an experience in showing consideration for others. There should be in his teacher an ever-present example of courtesy, of cheerfulness, of strength of character, and of the power to see the good and honest things of life. (Winship, 1906, p. 1)

These characteristics are still valued today, but the expectations for teachers and schools have evolved significantly since this time (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), and the changes center around accountability and how student learning is measured. Ravitch and

Carl point out the fundamental change ushered in by the federal No Child left Behind Act (NCLB), legislation that emphasized standardized testing to measure schools. This legislation changed the landscape of education and evaluates teachers on their effectiveness based on how students perform on one standardized measure. While higher standards for teachers are important, research shows that there remains a lack of qualified teachers in U.S. schools (Ingersoll, 2004; Sutchter et al., 2016); thus, better understanding why teachers choose to stay or leave the profession is critical. There are common factors shared among teachers who choose to stay in the classroom as a career teacher; among them are *perseverance*, or the ability to continue in the classroom day after day despite challenges teachers may face (Calvecchio, 2018; Moe, 2015), and *resilience*, or the ability to recover in the face of traumatic events and continue in the teaching profession (Calvecchio, 2018; Greenfield, 2015; Moe, 2015). Factors such as these have contributed to teachers' longevity and dedication to the profession (Cancio & Conderman, 2008; Hofstetter, 2014; Yonezawa et al., 2011).

Presently, schools across the U.S. serve a diverse student population. The latest demographic data available shows how student populations have become more diverse; however, that diversity is not represented in the teacher population. Based on the most recent report of the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) National Teacher and Principal Survey (2016a), public school teacher demographics show that 80.1% are White, 8.8% are Hispanic, 6.7% are Black, 2.3% are Asian, 0.2% are Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.4% are Alaska Native, and 1.4% are two or more races. The last reporting of teacher gender by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; Goldring, Taie, & Riddles 2014) shows that 76% of teachers are female. NCES projected

that, in the 2018-2019 school year, 50.7 million students would attend public school. Of those, 24.1 million (47%) will be White, 7.8 million (15 %) Black, 14 million (28%) Hispanic, 2.6 million (5%) Asian, 0.2 million (0.39%) Pacific Islander, 0.5 million (0.98%) American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 1.6 million (0.03%) students of two or more races. The incongruity between student and teacher demographics, as shown in this data (Goldring et al., 2014; Taie & Goldring, 2017), points to the critical need for a highly qualified, diverse, well-prepared teacher workforce that values and promotes longevity.

The remaining sections of this chapter review the factors that lead to teacher attrition and retention. Documented causes of attrition include inadequate funding, challenges faced by teachers, a lack of administrative support, teacher burnout, strained relationships with students, a lack of cultural competency, and organizational working conditions. Additionally, factors in the literature identified as supporting teacher retention include mitigation of stress in the workplace, development of positive relationships with colleges and administration, and opportunities for professional growth. Each of these factors examined in this chapter.

The Crisis

There is a crisis in the United States that many educators and parents are unaware of—that is, there is a lack of qualified teachers to teach students (Ingersoll, 2004; Sutchter et al., 2016). Ingersoll (2004) describes this concern as a revolving door in which experienced teachers enter but then leave the profession well before retirement. Sutchter et al. (2016) characterized the teaching workforce as “a leaky bucket, losing hundreds of thousands of teachers each year—the majority of them before retirement age” (p. 2).

Furthermore, the induction of new teachers into the profession cannot keep pace with those who leave. NCES last reported that, between the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years, 8% of teachers moved to another school (referred to as “movers”), and 8% left the profession entirely (referred to as “leavers”) (Goldring et al., 2014).

Sutcher et al. (2016) reported that this 8% of teacher leavers is the largest contributor to the annual demand for teachers. These authors also reported that teachers with the least pre-teaching preparation leave the profession at two- to three-times the rate of teachers with more effective preservice preparation. According to Ingersoll, Merrill, and Stuckey (2014), teaching demographics have changed over time. These researchers used the latest set of data available from the National Schools and Staffing Survey, which revealed several significant trends. First, the overall number of teachers in public schools had increased 65% from 1987 to 2016, while students in public schools had a lower rate of increase, at 24%. Second, with the addition of new teachers, the modal age of the teacher work force was once at 55 (“graying”) in 2007-2008 then decreased to 30 (“greening”) in 2011-12. This represents a shift from a preponderance of mid-career teachers to a majority of mostly new and novice teachers. Third, there is a trend confirming that education is more of a female-dominated profession. From 1980 to 2016, the percentage of female public-school teachers has risen from 66.9% to 76.6%.

Many areas of teacher shortage exist in the national data, but regional data indicates that teacher leavers are higher in some areas in Texas. Sullivan et al. (2017) reported that between the school years of 2011-12 to 2015-16, teacher mobility (teachers moving between schools or leaving public education) rose from 19% to 22%, with more than half of the mobility rate representing teachers leaving Texas public schools. Sullivan

et al. (2017) also reported that teachers with more than eight but fewer than 30 years of experience tend to stay at their school longer.

From a national perspective, Jones-Carey (2016) cited data from the National Education Association that showed that 17% of teachers are leaving the classroom. “While that number (17%) is substantially higher in the first five years,” the author argues, “the dramatic increase in those leaving the profession with 8 to 12 years of experience should be sounding a siren!” (p. 65). There are noted differences in state teacher attrition data when looking at regional and national data, but in summary, the loss of teachers at any part of their career is of concern. Jones-Carey’s statement coupled with the data that the profession is “greening” indicates a shift in the teaching workforce.

Teacher attrition not only leads to vacancies in school districts, but also a general lack of qualified teachers negatively impacts students because teachers with knowledge of the curriculum, classroom management strategies, and effective instruction are not consistently available (Sutcher et al., 2016). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) argue that a teacher’s highest effectiveness level is achieved between their eighth and 23rd years. However, reaching the eight-year mark has been problematic. Perda (2013) finds that more than 41% of teachers leave within their first five years of entering the profession, and rates of attrition have been increasing since the 1980s. The 41% is misleading in that there is a disproportionate reshuffling of teachers due to “leavers” and “movers” from high-poverty to lower-poverty schools, as well as from schools with higher percentages of students of color.

There are also discrepancies seen when comparing urban and suburban school systems. Ingersoll and May (2012) presented data from various school settings and

showed that high-poverty schools lose, on average, one-fifth of their faculty each year. The inability to secure qualified teachers is more evident in schools that serve the poorest of students (Ingersoll, 2004; Sutchter et al., 2016). Sutchter et al. (2016) showed that the inequities were more pronounced in cities, stating, “Students in high-poverty, high-minority schools in cities were nearly three times as likely to be taught by inexperienced teachers and by individuals who were not ‘highly qualified’ by the federal law’s definition” (pp. 13-14). The problem is not isolated to public schools, as a U.S. Department of Education (2009) study reported that private school leavers were at 15.9%, and movers were at 4.9%. Yet, for public schools, the number of movers remains higher than private, at 7.6% (Sutchter et. al, 2016). This same study, however, did not include information about where movers went.

Some studies have shown regional differences in number of movers and leavers. Using the U.S. Department of Education data, Sutchter et al. (2016) reported a higher turnover rate (movers and leavers) in the U.S. south. Across all regions, however, a higher turnover rate is reported for urban schools in comparison to suburban and rural schools. Billingsley (2004) argues that, “Attrition plays a part in the teacher shortage problem, and efforts to improve retention must be informed by an understanding of the factors that contribute to attrition” (p. 39). The causes of teacher attrition are numerous and can be complicated. With each teacher who permanently leaves the profession, there are teachers who weather the storm and persevere in the face of many obstacles to educate hundreds to thousands of students over their career.

Factors Contributing to Teacher Attrition

Although new teachers are currently completing programs in adequate numbers, the attrition problem must be overcome. Shakrani (2008) argues that, “Contrary to popular belief, teacher preparation programs at America’s colleges and universities produce sufficient numbers of teachers to meet the demand of the nation’s schools. However, too many of these teachers leave the teaching profession for other occupations” (p. 1). Work conditions, such as salaries and benefits, along with the impact of teacher accountability standards are areas of concern for teachers. Examining the impact of work conditions on a larger scale through a theoretical perspective of organizational theory and the sociology of organizations, occupations, and work, Ingersoll (2004) used data collected from the USDOE’s National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Study. His study found that teachers move or leave the profession in rural high-poverty school settings because they are dissatisfied with low salaries, student discipline problems, lack of teacher autonomy, and large class sizes. Ingersoll also found that rural teachers’ urban counterparts reported the need for better salaries, smaller class sizes, better student behavior, more parental involvement, and more faculty involvement. There are commonalities seen in the reasons teachers move or leave schools, regardless of the public-school setting in which they work. These issues create stress on teachers, leading to significant physical and emotional effects.

Ingersoll (2004) adapted a theoretical perspective of “organizational theory and the sociology of organizations, occupations, and work” (p. 4) to develop a survey to explore these issues in greater depth. The survey was administered to 53,000 teachers and 12,000 principals across 4,500 districts. The study also includes data from the Teacher

Follow-up Survey (TFS), which involved surveying 7,000 teachers in part about why they left the profession. Results of the study indicate multiple reasons teachers had for leaving the profession, including family or personal reasons, school staffing actions (teacher moved involuntarily or fired), teacher dissatisfaction, pursuit of another job, and retirement. Among these reasons, Ingersoll reported that, “About 40 percent of all departures reported as a reason either job dissatisfaction or a desire to pursue a better job, another career, or to improve career opportunities in or out of education” (p. 11). When teachers that leave were asked what could be done to better promote teacher retention, higher salaries and class-size reduction were stated as factors. Ingersoll (2004) found that the demands for teachers has risen, but the teacher turnover has left many districts with unfilled positions.

Reasons teachers leave the profession are examined in many studies and data-collection efforts. Hofstetter's (2014) dissertation compared data collected through a teacher feedback survey of 15 novice and 8 veteran teachers in an urban school in southern New Jersey; the study also compared the comments the same teachers made in interviews. Hofstetter described several factors that contributed to novice teacher attrition, including discontent with teaching, factors characterized as “unpleasant, unstable, unsettled work conditions,” student discipline issues, lack of administrative support, burn-out related to stress, and a lack of teacher preparation (p. 107). As the Ingersoll and Hofstetter studies show, there are several factors that contribute to teacher attrition, and the following sections will explore these different factors in more depth.

Inadequate Funding for Education

Several current events specifically tied to teachers and their working conditions inform our understanding of the state of education in America today. By example, a recent editorial perspective by Darling-Hammond (2018) discussed nationwide teacher discontent. She argues that what often starts as discussions surrounding teacher pay and overall school funding result in teacher strikes and protesting, as in the cases of both Arizona and Colorado. Darling-Hammond points out that, based on a U.S. Department of Education (2016b) report, spending on correctional facilities far outpace expenditures on education. The concerns about lack of school funding for both teacher salaries and operational costs (which fund items like textbooks, facilities, and overall upkeep of buildings) can be traced back to the start of the last recession. Many schools have never recovered from that recession and continue to receive less funding than they did in 2008 (Leachman, Masterson, & Figueroa, 2018). Leachman et. al. (2018) study reported that 12 states cut their funding formula below the 2008 level, leading to grave concerns about how public education is financed.

According to U.S. Department of Education (2019), 80% of a school's budget is dedicated to salary and benefits for personnel. With such a large burden placed on school systems, these costs often become the areas that must be cut to impact savings significantly. Issues have been building for some time, and public displays of discontent are symptoms of significant underlying issues involving public schools and teachers. Confounding the finance issue is the cost of facilities and operations of infrastructure. In a 2014 NCES report, Alexander and Lewis (2014) analyzed survey data from 1,800 PK – 12 public schools across the nation. Overall, the poorest condition ratings were given to

schools' windows, plumbing, heating, and air conditioning systems, leading to the conclusion that 53% of public schools need to spend an average of \$4.5 million per school to achieve a rating of "good overall condition." Filardo and Vincent (2017) magnify the impact of facility conditions, emphasizing that 50 million children and 6 million adults are in public school buildings daily. Maxwell (2016) argues that it is essential to keep buildings in good condition as an essential component to education for all children, further pointing out that "The percentage of minority students (African American or Black and non-White Hispanic) and those eligible for free and reduced priced meals was positively correlated with poor school building condition" (p. 214). Studies such as these emphasize the inequities teachers and students face in accessing high-quality learning environments.

Building conditions and school climate. The deterioration of buildings leads to health and safety issues that impact student and teacher overall health (Filardo & Vincent, 2017). The health of students is a focus of the literature (Maxwell, 2016; Filardo & Vincent, 2017; Fisk, Paulson, Kolbe, & Barnett, 2016). Fisk and colleagues (2016) describe school building issues and assert that by fixing inadequate building ventilation there could be a decrease in absences due to illness of 7% to 10%. Maxwell (2016) examined the physical environment and its negative effects on student absenteeism, overall student performance, student behavior, and student's perception of themselves and school social environment. A decrease in student performance impacts the overall school climate. Buckley, Schneider, and Shang's (2005) qualitative study of New York schools suggests that the overall money spent on improving school facilities outweighs the benefits of a teacher pay increase on teacher retention because the improvements are

in place for years to come, unlike a teacher pay increase which is confined to the year it is given. While the research discusses the impact facility conditions have on students' success, there is consideration for how these conditions impact teachers, one of the numerous factors that can lead to teacher attrition. Buckley et al. (2005) argued that this is an area of much needed research but found a correlation with working conditions and teacher attrition factors.

The cost of lost human capital. While the cost to the student of losing qualified teachers may be difficult to quantify, the financial burden on a system is more easily evaluated and is, in fact, substantial for many school districts. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) analyzes cost data associated with teacher turnover. Using this data, Barnes, Crowe, and Schaefer (2007) compared five districts using the same formula and were able to assess the typical cost of teacher attrition. The smallest cost, based on training and other invested resources, was found in a rural school in New Mexico with a turnover cost of \$4,366 per teacher. However, the larger urban system of Chicago bore a significantly higher cost, at \$17,872 per teacher. An analysis of the impact of these costs on the overall budgets of each of these districts was not provided but would have afforded further understanding of the financial implications. With school systems funded by tax dollars, the cost of teacher attrition becomes a significant concern for all and is not often accounted for as an ongoing expense.

Lack of Preparation for the Profession of Teaching

A lack of appropriate preparation for novice teachers entering the teaching profession is another factor that leads to teacher attrition (Calvecchio, 2018; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Hofstetter 2014; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll et al.,

2014; Moe, 2015). The significance of this and its impact on career teachers can be seen in a lack of pre-requisite skills during teacher preparation programs; when teachers enter the profession, they are often unable to effectively navigate the systems in which they work and be responsive to the students and communities in which they serve. As Clement (2017) points out, beginning, mid-career, and veteran teachers encounter different struggles:

A beginning teacher worries over re-employment and survival in the job, asking if he/she has chosen the right profession. A mid-career teacher may be experiencing difficulty with work/life balance, juggling a family and aging parents. Veteran teachers feel the stress of ever-changing curriculum and accountability, questioning the validity of yet another innovation or standardized test. (p. 1)

There are several stages that a teacher experiences in his or her career. It is important to realize that if a teacher does not make it through the formative years of teaching and develop certain skills at that time, it is less likely that teacher will successfully become a mid-career or veteran teacher.

Calvecchio (2018) describes a lack of teacher preparation in cultural competency as leading to the failure of many teachers, especially those entering a high-needs urban setting. Deficits in cultural competency can lead to separation between the teacher and her students. “Cultural competence includes factors such as knowledge of school communities in diverse settings and the personal involvement of staff in these settings” (Calvecchio, 2018, p. 2). This can be exemplified in classroom rules and expectations that are contrary to the student’s individual cultural background. One example of this would be a teacher asking a student to remove a hijab because it is contrary to the

classroom or campus hat policy without understanding the religious and cultural context of this specific clothing item. More specifically, Ladson-Billings (2000) discusses inadequate preparation of teachers to teach African American students. She promotes teachers' use of autobiography (for teachers to identify their own identity), restructured field experiences in which student teachers gain teaching experience in an urban environment, and the use of situated pedagogies (culturally specific pedagogies), which she defines as "teachers' attempts to make the school and home experiences of diverse learners more congruent" (p. 210).

Ingersoll et al. (2014) analyzed data from the SASS study and the Teacher Follow-up Study (TFS) to examine teacher preparation and the rate of teacher attrition, with a specific focus on math and science teachers. Findings showed that math and science teachers entered the teaching profession after leaving another career outside of education. Math and science teachers were less likely to enter the profession directly as a teacher, and overall, they had less instructional training as a teacher before entering the profession. In other words, they typically leave a non-teaching profession and become an educator through an alternative certification route, thus do not have the student teaching experience and depth of training usually provided by traditional teacher training programs. Ingersoll et al. (2014) found a relationship among teachers' pre-service training, student teaching experience, and attrition; not having the training and experience resulted in an increased rate of attrition.

Alternative certification. Understanding the type and quality of the pre-service training new teachers receive provides context to the problem of teacher attrition. The increased demand for teachers in the highest need schools has contributed to the influx of

teachers from non-traditional pathways, such as alternative certification (AC) programs, that depend upon on-the-job learning to develop highly-qualified, certified teachers (Consuegra, Engels, & Struyven, 2014). Most alternative certification programs nationwide target a common applicant profile:

[AC programs] are directed toward mid-and post-career changers who typically have two to three years of successful work experience. Candidates must have a BA and a minimum GPA of 2.50; a few states require 2.75 or 3.0 although this may be waived depending on a basic skills assessment. (Lewis-Spector, 2016, p. 8)

Lewis-Spector (2016) concluded that alternatively certified (AC) teachers start their career as not much more than the teacher-of-record with little preparation, especially when it comes to literacy instruction. Another study by Redding and Smith (2016) scrutinized Traditionally Certified teachers (TC), New York City Teaching Fellows (NYCTF), and Teach for America (TFA) applicants and found that, by the end of their fifth year of teaching, 31% of TC, 49% of NYCTF, and 84% of TFA had left the profession. Redding and Smith hypothesize that, “Without a strong feeling of efficacy regarding their ability to manage classroom behavior or meet their students’ learning needs, AC teachers may be more likely to leave the teaching profession” (2016, p. 1091). While there may be a supply of teachers to fill positions by name alone, the ability to teach has additional complexities. The lack of adequate preparation is a contributing factor to teacher attrition.

Lack of Support, Burnout, and Stress

Inconsistent policies and procedures, along with the principal's leadership style, can contribute to teacher dissatisfaction with the profession, ultimately leading to teachers moving schools or leaving the profession all together. Bitsadze and Japaridze (2014) found correlations between leadership style and burnout rates. Their study used three instruments: The Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators (MBI-ES), The Rotter Control Locus Scale, and Wayne Hoy's Organization Climate Description for Middle Schools. The quantitative instruments were administered to 373 teachers. The study indicated that principals who had a "directive style and restrictive behavior" (p. 13) were directly connected to teacher burnout rates. Bitsadze and Japaridze (2014) argued that the MBI-ES is still the best instrument to assess burnout because it measures factors such as, "Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Personal Accomplishment (PA) and Depersonalization (DP)" (p. 9).

Specific findings showed a relationship between teacher burnout and whether a teacher had an internal or external *locus of control*. According to Bitsadze and Japaridze, teachers with an external locus of control, or those that believe that internal behavior does not impact one's life outcomes, are more likely to burnout than those with an internal locus of control, or those who believe that people's actions determine the rewards they obtain in life. Leadership that is characterized as micromanaging does not allow for teacher discretion; thus, professional autonomy is decreased. In examining the locus of control and how it contributes to burnout, Bitsadze and Japaridze (2014) argue that a loss of locus of control is an obstacle to teacher empowerment—a factor which Ingersoll (2004) argued has a positive outcome and keeps teachers in the profession. When leaders

allow for teacher autonomy and professional discretion in how lessons are taught and classes are structured, there is an increase in teacher self-efficacy as well as their locus of control, thus leading to increased job satisfaction.

In addition to the effects of leadership style on teachers' feelings of burnout, educators are also faced with the challenge of handling the stress that is associated with classroom teaching. Paquette and Rieg (2016) conducted a mixed methods study using an initial teacher survey and follow-up interviews with early childhood and special education pre-service teachers completing their student teaching. Some of the stressors that were indicated included time management, teaching workload, observations from a university supervisor, and assisting students with emotional and behavioral problems. Participants identified these stressors and shared what supports they needed from the university to best cope with the stressor. The authors concluded that:

In order for pre-service teachers to be successful in their field experiences and enjoy long and rewarding teaching careers, they must be educated in the area of teacher stress and be armed with the tools necessary to relieve work-related stress. (Paquette & Rieg, 2016, p. 57)

The discussion of stress is dominant in the literature on new-to-the-profession teachers. Stress and burnout are generated through a culmination of factors that ultimately lead to teacher attrition. Fives, Hamman, and Olivarez (2007) remark that burnout takes place over time. Often it is not perceived that even student-teachers experience this phenomenon; however, being new to the profession, they may not have the adaptive skills needed to handle the stresses of the job. Fernet, Lavigne, Vallerand, and Austin (2014) stated, "Burnout may be exacerbated not only by a lack of job

autonomy but more importantly because when valuable resources are lacking, employees tend to channel their energy unproductively” (p. 283-284). The authors also mention that the perceived or actual loss of resources, such as teacher autonomy, can result in teachers responding by working harder and longer, as opposed to adopting defensive or self-protective strategies.

Gu and Day (2013) conducted a four-year study of teachers in England in various stages of their careers. The focus of the phenomenological study was to assess how teachers interpret their experiences and construct meaning, as well as to better understand teachers’ resilience. Resilience was defined in this study as teachers’ “capacity to manage the unavoidable uncertainties inherent in the realities of teaching” (p. 39). Half of the sample group were primary teachers of students from ages 7 and 11, and secondary English and Math teachers of 14-year-old students. Twice-a-year interviews were conducted with 300 teachers, and the findings showed that teachers’ resilience fluctuated depending on interactions with individuals in various contexts, both personal and professional. The study found that achieving resilience is much more than the ability to bounce back after facing adversity, and Gu furthermore supports the assertion that it may not necessarily be the personal characteristics of the teacher that most relates to stress and burnout, but that pre-service teachers need to be prepared for the internal and external factors they will face as they enter the education profession.

According to Clement (2017), teachers face a variety of stressors in different stages of their career. The new teacher survives and evaluates his or her career choice as a teacher. There are certain components of the job for which teacher preparation programs cannot prepare new teachers, such as how to manage paperwork and angry

parents. The mid-career teacher addresses the balance of work and life. Mid-career teachers often take on more responsibilities, such as serving as team leads and writing curriculum, responsibilities that take more time away from family and personal life. The veteran teacher deals with changes to the profession and many of the new accountability standards. The accountability system continues to evolve, and a veteran teacher may have experienced several iterations, making it difficult to adapt to the complexity of the changes. Clement (2017) also found differences between male and female teachers. Female teachers experienced emotional exhaustion as a precursor to burnout, whereas males experienced depersonalization, feeling that their service as a teacher was not valued. Males also experienced less of a sense of personal achievement, having negative perceptions of themselves and their work.

Solomonson and Retallick (2018) studied 18 mid-career (6-15 years) agricultural teachers in Iowa using mixed methods, consisting of an initial on-line survey followed by semi-structured interviews. The study found that the balance of personal and professional life is an attrition factor among mid-career teachers. Further, the teachers reported that their compensation was adequate for the job if they did not have to commit to work at a level that was detrimental to their personal life. For the participants in this study, time was held at a higher value than compensation. There are many variables that contribute to teacher attrition that can be categorized as leadership deficits, burnout, and stressors encountered throughout the many phases of a teacher's career.

Strained Relationships with Students and Cultural Competency Deficits

Student behavior. Classroom management is a challenge for many new teachers that can lead to self-doubt and powerlessness (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017), and it is also

a factor that leads to teacher attrition (Greenlee & Brown, 2009; Ingersoll, 2001, 2004). In a qualitative study conducted in Texas, Gonzales, Brown, and Slate (2008) completed face-to-face interviews using snowball sampling and criterion selection of eight participants who left the teaching profession after their first year. A common theme that emerged among the participants was that issues related to student discipline influenced their decision to leave the profession. According to the authors, “Students come with so many problems and issues that it is overwhelming to the teachers” (p. 7). These feelings were not isolated, as the authors’ description of one participant’s account revealed:

The year she taught, one of her students committed suicide, and several others suffered the loss of a parent or loved one. Also, many of her students (9th graders) became pregnant. These issues made teaching nearly impossible. She was always worrying about her students and found herself losing sleep at night over the stress and worry (p. 7).

Kokka (2016) presented similar findings in her study. Using qualitative thematic analysis, Kokka used semi-structured interviews to highlight reasons for teacher satisfaction and retention in an urban school setting, primarily among teachers of color teaching math and science. Selected findings around student discipline showed that a lack of administrative support for discipline as well as classroom management were significant impediments to teaching. This finding was widespread, as 12 of the 16 participants that were interviewed mentioned their desire for administrative help with school safety and classroom management (Kokka, 2016).

Lack of cultural competency. As noted earlier, teacher demographics look very different overall when compared to the students that they serve, and inadequate teacher

preparation in developing cultural competency is identified as a contributor to teacher attrition. Calvecchio (2018) examined teachers' level of cultural competency, defined as their ability to operate effectively in an environment where various cultural beliefs, needs, and behaviors are presented by others, and found it to be one of three factors of longevity in an urban school district in Pennsylvania. Using a survey that was analyzed quantitatively, Calvecchio found a relationship between job satisfaction and cultural competency.

Calvecchio also examined the relationship among grit (perseverance), job satisfaction (the level of positive cognitive experience teachers get from their job), and cultural competency and how that relationship contributes to teachers' length of service. No statistically significant relationship between grit scores and teacher longevity was found, but the study revealed "that teachers who scored at a higher level in their Personal Involvement [a subscale of cultural competency] in urban communities are more likely to persevere in an urban school district, thus safeguarding against attrition" (p. 135).

Calvecchio (2018) further argues that it is important to understand differences in urban education versus suburban education when determining why teachers who lack cultural competence leave the urban setting. Nelson and Guerra (2014) connect negative educator beliefs about diverse students and families with a lack of cultural awareness resulting in lower expectations from teachers for the student's performance. Further, negative beliefs lead educators to blame culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students and their families for achievement gaps.

Gonzales, Brown, and Slate's (2008) study of novice teachers found similar negative perceptions of students; for example, the authors stated, "Common complaints

from the interviewees are that students are rude, lazy, use drugs, and have no discipline or self-control” (p. 7). Statements like this play into the importance of an individual’s biases in contributing to deficit thinking. Implicit bias can also pertain to preferences given to one group over the others, such as giving females preferential treatment. Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne, and Sibley (2016) examined teacher bias regarding students’ ethnicity and found that some teachers’ implicit prejudices were based on ethnic bias, and if a teacher favored one ethnic group, this group of students benefitted academically due to this favoritism.

Timmermans, Kuyper, and Werf (2015) examined teacher bias related to students’ socio-economic status and gender. Their study found that if prior student performance is not known, teacher expectations were lower for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and with knowledge of parents having a limited education level. This lowering of expectations was solely based on student demographics. The study also connected these lower expectations to teacher recommendations for secondary educational track, such as recommending students for Advanced Placement courses or dual credit where students can receive college credit, recommendations that greatly impact students’ academic opportunities. The level of bias was found to be somewhat variable from teacher to teacher; yet these biases had a profound impact that could lead to students being denied opportunities based on teacher perceptions. Valenzuela’s (1999) study showed how implicit bias can lead to teachers’ varied application of school rules, which results in pushback from students when they feel that they are unfairly treated. This dynamic creates an environment where the teachers feel that they have lost control. Valenzuela (1999) demonstrated how teachers tend to blame student behaviors and their

underachievement on the students' dress, demeanor, and friendship choices; yet, little is done by the staff to critically examine the power imbalance and oppression of the system in which the students operate. The consistent challenge presented by educators' inadequacy in cultural competency often leads to an environment that contributes to teacher attrition (Calvecchio 2018). These environmental factors ultimately impact students and overall school success by undermining the potential of certain groups of students, leading to a decline of school climate and culture. This decline puts additional pressure on teachers to close widening achievement gaps, and it fosters increased levels of stress and loss of teachers' locus of control. Because cultural competency is related to job satisfaction (Calvecchio 2018), it is a factor that must be considered as part of teacher efficacy and disposition toward students.

Organizational Working Conditions

Salaries and benefits. Salary is a factor that is mentioned throughout the literature on teacher attrition (Calvecchio 2018; Gonzalez et al., 2008; Taie & Goldring, 2017). In the Gonzales and colleagues' (2008) qualitative study, seven of the eight participants who were all former certified teachers that left after one year of teaching. Two interviews were conducted face-to-face at the choice location of the participants. Narrative analysis was then conducted after each interview using a grounded theory approach in which concept codes are developed as well as analysis of field notes and observations was completed. Participants felt that the salary they received was low compared to the number of hours worked. Another aspect addressed in the same study involved the desire for teachers to obtain a higher degree; however, because the higher degree would only result in a \$500 to \$1,000 stipend yearly, teachers in the study did not

believe that the cost and effort it would take to get an advanced degree would be offset by the annual stipend. Hoffstetter's (2014) study of novice teachers indicated that compensation was important, but that it only played part of the factors that kept the teachers in a particular position. One participant specifically reported they were willing to take a reduction in pay and benefits if they were able to work in an environment without drama with colleagues.

Teacher pensions as a reason for teachers staying in the profession is rarely discussed. Koedel and Xiang (2017) investigated the effect of back-loading pensions through benefit-formula enhancements. Back-loading pensions means that, with the adjustment of the formula, teachers would receive an additional financial benefit upon retirement. The researchers performed a data analysis of teachers' pensions from the St. Louis Public School Retirement System in 1999. Enactment of a benefit change resulted in a 60% improvement in pension wealth for members of the pension. However, the desired outcome of retaining teachers was not accomplished, even with the extreme increase in cost (approximately \$166 million) of the pension program. The authors concluded by stating:

We do not find strong evidence, however, to suggest that these differences translated into differences in retention behavior, with the exception of retirement-eligible teachers who were more likely to delay their retirements for one year in response to a short-term change to their incentives. (Koedel & Xiang, 2017, p. 543)

Hofstetter (2014) also showed that for veteran teachers, health plans and the pension plan are considerations in remaining at a specific school and in a specific teaching field.

Teacher accountability. Clement (2017) argues “As teacher accountability has become a huge issue in schools the approach and methods of administrators towards teacher evaluation can create or lessen stress” (p. 137). Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2016) used SASS and the Teacher Follow-up Study (TFS) data to look at mitigating factors of the accountability system implemented after the authorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB, and more recently the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), are federal mandates that in part direct states to develop assessments and accountability of students from all demographic groups evaluated with a state-developed assessment. The study found that there are some aspects of school accountability that were linked to teacher turnover, specifically the loss of teacher autonomy (Ingersoll et al., 2016). Ingersoll et al. (2016) further defined that the punitive nature of school performance assessment and subsequent sanctions for low performance does have an impact on instructional practices as well as teacher retention. The researchers put forth that schools that are successful on accountability measures have higher teacher retention rates, regardless of whether performance incentives are offered. In lower-performing schools that receive sanctions, an already low retention pattern is made worse. The lower retention is in part due to the decrease in teachers’ self-efficacy, which results from teachers feeling that they are not able to help students learn.

The approach administrators take in the evaluation of teachers can increase the internal stress a teacher feels (Klein, 2017). If there is a punitive approach, teacher efficacy and morale can be negatively impacted. To further complicate the issue, student performance on testing is added as a measure used to evaluate teachers. Klein (2017) analyzed morale and why middle school English teachers stayed in teaching. Klein

interviewed three teachers twice and had a follow-up meeting which allowed the researcher to conduct member checking. All three of the teachers had more than 10 years of service, and all were from different middle schools in the same district. Accountability was brought up directly and indirectly from participants in interviews, as Klein (2017) described:

There are multiple factors that influence a student's performance in school that teachers have no control over, yet the reality was that these teachers were being held accountable for the students' performance on the standardized tests regardless of any outside factors. (p. 92)

A 35-year veteran teacher shared that early in her career it was the performance of her students on teacher-developed tests that determined her worth and not a test developed by strangers who do not know her students. While the perspective of this veteran teacher is valuable, one may question if three participants were enough for the study.

Factors Leading to Teacher Retention

Optimizing Support to Mitigate Teachers' Workplace Stress

Stress has been previously substantiated as a factor contributing to teacher attrition. Research on stress in the context of teaching has been mostly focused on causation (Beltman, Mansfield, & Harris, 2016; Clement, 2017; Greenfield 2015). Clement (2017) asserts, "Teacher stress may only be lowered when everyone involved in the education process recognizes the difficulties and works to relieve some of the pressures placed on teachers" (p. 2). He recommends several approaches to mitigate the stresses of teaching. The first is building networks of support that include colleagues,

mentors, and friends who are supportive of the teacher. This involves a network in which the teacher has a positive relationship with colleagues who can provide immediate assistance in solving problems when needed.

Second, leaders should engage teachers in an activity of listing their stressors and the times they occur, and collaboratively identifying a solution that the teacher plans to implement, even if challenging. Clement recommends this as a starting process. This process is successful when an authentic discussion about stressors can take place, stressors can be written down, and viable solutions can be explored. The author gives an example of a teacher who was having a lot of anxiety about one of her students (elementary age) who was late every day to school. She had contacted the parents to share her concerns with the student missing instruction and even got an administrator involved. The teacher would take time from other instructional areas to try and get the student caught up. In doing so, she was putting off other tasks that were needed. During the discussions with her colleagues, the teacher was able to list what was in her locus of control (what happened at school) and what was not (what happened outside of school). The teacher focused on the relationship with the student, and eventually, the student pressured the parent to be on time so that the student did not miss instructional time.

As a third strategy, leaders should create a supportive workplace to minimize conflict that is often a source of stress. This includes providing teachers support with classroom management and helping to make campus changes manageable, such as new curriculum implementation. Fourth, leaders should establish Professional Learning Communities (PLC) in which teachers study problems of teaching and determine solutions. PLCs are important because the PLC process fosters an environment of

collegiality, which is beneficial in problem solving as well as providing learning opportunities. Positive outcomes of PLCs can include capacity-building to develop teacher leaders and improve teacher efficacy. Lastly, leaders should provide mentors for teachers in their early part of their career, a type of support that serves two purposes. A mentor to a new teacher helps them navigate the system and make it through the crucial first few years of teaching. This type of support also provides the experienced teacher that is serving as a mentor a sense of value to the organization.

Moe (2015) interviewed 22 teachers, ranging in experience from two teachers with more than five-years of experience to three with over 30 years of teaching in an urban school setting (all teachers across one school district). In this study, 12 teachers indicated that their colleagues were most important in mitigating stress because they were able to talk with them and process stressful factors. Seven teachers reported that spouses were particularly helpful in reducing stress, while six mentioned familial support, which was not specifically defined in the study. A smaller number indicated that church and church members, as well as friends, were helpful, and one participant stated that an administrator was beneficial. In summary, many of these 22 veteran teachers stressed the importance of pre-service teachers being educated about teacher stress and why it is important for new teachers to be given tools to be better at mitigating work-related stress. This is important for existing teachers who may serve as mentors to student teachers in pre-service training or mentors to first year teachers, so that the experiences in managing specific stressors related to the profession of teaching can be shared. Only two of the 22 teachers felt that they were adequately prepared to enter teaching in an urban setting. According to Moe (2015), the theme of lack of preparation is viewed as a significant

contributor to teacher attrition early on in a teacher's career, and the teachers interviewed reported seeing many other teachers leave the profession, especially in urban environments, due to a lack of preparation.

Promoting teacher resilience. Teacher resilience in the face of many stressors is discussed in the literature on teacher retention. Specifically, studies examine how the mental fitness of teachers results in better coping mechanisms in stressful situations from a personal and professional perspective (Greenfield 2015; Mansfield, Beltman, Price, & McConney 2012; Paquette & Rieg, 2016). Greenfield (2015) defines teacher resilience as the "collection of dynamic interactions between four broad constructs: thoughts, relationships, actions and challenges" (p. 1). Greenfield conducted a meta-ethnography in which he examined ways in which teacher resilience could be promoted and protected. Similar to previous studies focused on stress management, he found that positive relationships with stakeholders is important for developing a network of support. Activities such as training in and engaging in problem-solving strategies, reflection, and, once problems are identified, reframing the issues helped to relieve stress.

Clarà (2017) studied teachers that had experienced a significant event or situation, such as in dealing with a student that got angry and hit a wall, and internalized blame, seeing themselves as the cause of student response. Clarà (2017) further clarified that it may not be just one incident but daily incidents that place teachers in an overall state of despair, causing both emotional and psychological distress. Eighteen teachers from four different school districts were interviewed to identify significant changes and emotional transformations in the context of their work. Semiotic analysis (an analysis of meaning) and coding were conducted to identify the processes that resulted in teachers returning to

a stable state emotionally and psychologically (resilience process) after an adverse situation. Of the 18 teachers interviewed, five were found to return to this stable state. Two cases were further analyzed, and it was determined that an event that resulted in the teachers experiencing resilience processes were student misbehaviors. Findings indicated that purposeful assistance by administrators, colleagues, or instructional coaches with teachers' reappraisal of a stressful situation is beneficial in promoting teacher resilience and overall mental wellness.

In another study, Mansfield et al. (2012) sampled 259 graduating and early-career teachers through a survey about resilience, which netted 200 completed surveys examining teacher efficacy, teachers' motivational goals, and their overall satisfaction with their teacher preparation program. There was one open-ended survey question: *How would you describe a resilient teacher?* The data from that one question were analyzed in this study by four researchers, which distilled 23 different descriptors of resilience that were categorized into a four-dimensional framework. The dimensions were: profession-related, emotional, motivational, and social dimensions. Themes of resilience were most related to the emotional dimension, "such as not taking things personally, enjoying teaching and managing emotions" (p. 360). The researchers summarized that this finding was consistent with other research, as emotional resilience is associated with factors of teacher resilience. The researchers also found that resilience is defined differently as the teacher progresses through his or her career.

Once administrators and leaders of teacher preparation programs understand the roles the various forms resilience play in teachers staying in the profession, it is important they take deliberate steps to cultivate teacher resilience. This includes offering targeted

and specific professional development, not only on stress management, but also on the profession-related, emotional, motivational, and social dimensions. It is resilience that allows a teacher to adapt to adverse conditions, such as challenging classroom management issues, and be able to navigate the everchanging environment of teaching.

Positive Relationships

Positive relationships with campus administrators. Ingersoll and May (2012) contend that working conditions, as well as the role of the leader, are significant indicators of the impact of teacher turnover. Examining math and science teachers, this study's findings indicate that school organization and leadership matter. Aspects of working conditions, such as a district's salary structure, played a role, but additional findings indicated that leaders who foster an effective organization as well as a professionalized workplace, such as allowing for individual teacher autonomy, had a significant impact on math and science teacher retention. Positive relationships with administrators include a sense of "shared power" in which teachers feel a sense of control in their jobs. The concept of administrative support is a common thread in Ingersoll's (2007) work, in which he discusses the importance of a shared power structure that allows teachers to exercise a degree of control in the schools in which they operate. Educators and leaders sharing power is echoed in Trace's (2016) work, which found that support and trust are foundational and are part of shared power and decision-making. Ingersoll (2004) also describes a correlation between guided teacher autonomy and job satisfaction, as well as teachers' perceptions of a positive climate. These components synergistically contribute to a positive working environment by empowering teachers and

affording them a locus of control in the work they do daily. Sutchter et al. (2016) affirmed:

Administrative support is the factor most consistently associated with teachers' decisions to stay in or leave a school. Authors' analysis found that teachers who find their administrators to be unsupportive are more than twice as likely to leave as those who feel well-supported. (p. 4)

The ability to foster positive relationships is one of the qualities of good leaders. Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) findings add to the importance of leaders in developing positive relationships, as they showed that "more than three-quarters of teachers who demonstrated sustained commitment said that good leadership helped them sustain their commitment over time" (p. 60). Characteristics such as having a clear vision, developing a trustful environment, and being approachable were significant factors in maintaining teachers' commitment to teaching in their current environment. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), 58% of teachers who reported their commitment was waning shared that poor leadership was a contributor to their lack of motivation and commitment. Hogan (2007) argues that certain negative personality traits of a leader are detrimental factors to the overall climate, direction, and growth of the organization. Tschannen-Moran (2013) stated that, "The absence of trust impedes effectiveness and progress" (p. 40), and the author emphasized the importance of trust in the role of a leader among the five constituencies of school (administrators, teachers, students, parents and the general public). Tschannen-Moran further noted that "If trust breaks down among any constituency, it can spread like cancer by eroding academic performance and ultimately undermining the tenure of the instructional leader" (p. 40).

In discussing the role of administrative support, Clement (2017) argues that:

Without prying into personal lives, and certainly following all the laws governing employee confidentiality, administrators need to build trusting relationships with teachers to understand when they are going through tough times. School leaders set the tone, modeling positive interactions and civility in all communications. (p. 137)

Finally, the impact of certain leadership behaviors, such as micromanaging the day-to-day activities of subordinates, further undermines trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). This characteristic of micromanagement, also described by Bitsadze and Japaridze (2014), was correlated to teacher burnout rates. Given the significant role that leaders play in teachers' overall job satisfaction, their role in teacher retention cannot be discounted.

Positive relationships with colleagues. Greenfield's (2015) meta-ethnography survey of the literature found that support from colleagues and constructive teacher relationships lead to a positive support structure for teachers. Kurtz's (2015) study surveyed 425 teachers with a 38% response rate from four school districts in Wisconsin to explore the variables that promoted retention in teaching. The results of his study reinforce Greenfield's (2015) findings that the type of relationships teachers develop in the work environment are important to the perception of support that teachers feel. Kurtz (2015) showed that collegial relationships were rated as more important for elementary teachers than for high school teachers. He hypothesized that elementary education promotes an environment that is conducive to collaboration and thus fosters stronger relationships. Collegial friendships, respect, and cooperation with peers were also found to be influential factors in teachers' decisions to stay. He reported that, to support positive

relationships, administrators used relationship-building techniques, provided opportunities for staff collaboration, and facilitated social activities.

Positive relationships with students. Relationships with students are emotional investments in which the teacher has a genuine interest in the student and his or her home-life while honoring the professional boundaries that are required in teaching. As Chang (2009) reports, “Teaching offers opportunities to feel closeness and intimacy in student and colleague relationships which in turn offers opportunities for many pleasant emotional experiences such as passion, excitement, joy, pride, and hope” (p. 203). Klein (2017) conducted a qualitative study of three middle school English teachers, each having ten years or more experience and have persisted in the face of many educational reforms. Although the findings of this study are limited because of the small number of participants, it is noteworthy that one of the teachers, a 35-year veteran to the profession, described the positive relationships with students as the major reason she remained in the field.

Kurtz (2015) concluded that positive student relationships are linked to campus administrators providing appropriate support, professional development, and positive feedback to teachers, and that positive leadership is a trickle-down process to students. Shaw and Newton (2014) implemented a quasi-experimental study examining the level of perceived servant leadership in school principals, job satisfaction of the teachers, and the intended retention rate in 63 of the largest high schools in the state. The research survey questions consisted of two sections: a demographic section and a second that assessed the teacher’s perception of the principal as a servant leader and the intentions of the teachers to remain at their school. Upon analyzing the 234 surveys that were returned by the

participants, Shaw and Newton concluded that when a principal embraced servant leadership, it had a positive correlation with teacher job satisfaction and retention. Servant leaders in their study exhibited the following characteristics: altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. Two hundred of the 234 survey respondents indicated that they intended to stay at their current school and had high scores for servant leadership perception (4.7) and job satisfaction (5.1). Participants who reported that they did not intend to stay in their school had much lower scores in both servant leadership perception (3.6) and job satisfaction (3.9).

Opportunities for Professional Growth

A sense of professionalism. Teacher professionalism and efficacy, or the teacher's overall effectiveness in their role as teacher, go hand in hand. Torres and Weiner (2018) studied professionalism in charter schools and found that characteristics that "fostered teacher autonomy, professional accountability, and collaboration" created a feeling of professionalism and a positive view of the charter school among educators (p. 4). Tschannen-Moran (2009) studied teacher professionalism and the circumstances supporting it and described the dynamic that best supported the sense of professionalism as:

Principals must trust that teachers will act with the best interests of students in mind, and teachers must trust in the leadership of their schools. In turn, it seems likely that a school leader's professional orientation plays a significant role in supporting and sustaining trustworthy behavior. (p. 231)

Based on survey input from 2,355 teachers across 80 middle schools, Tschannen-Moran (2009) also found that teachers demonstrate greater professionalism when leaders

adopt a professional orientation and trust is established in the organization. To clarify this, the leadership fostered implicit trust in the teachers to do their job and, in turn, the bureaucratic structure was not a top down application of expectations. It is necessary to have a two-way flow of communication and input. Sutchter et al. (2016) found in their analysis of teacher attrition data that factors associated with teachers' decision to stay included the quality of school leadership, professional learning opportunities, instructional leadership, time for collaboration and planning, collegial relationships, and opportunities to provide input in decision-making. Thus, we can conclude from this data analysis that, if these features are in place, attrition is less likely, and teachers will remain in the profession. Tschannen-Moran (2009) further noted that the model of a professional learning community (PLC) fosters an increase in teacher professionalism. PLCs empower teachers to take ownership in their day-to-day teaching practices and develop an interdependence among colleagues for support. This promotion of professionalism can contribute to teacher efficacy and, ultimately, contribute to teachers staying in a role or organization.

Teacher mentorship and support. Support and mentorship are purposeful steps taken by veteran teachers, the school team, or the district to assist teachers new to the profession in gaining foundational understanding of processes and procedures needed to develop teaching expertise. The importance of mentorship is prevalent in the literature (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Dias-Lacy and Guirguis (2017) used grounded theory to analyze diary entries from a first-year Spanish high school teacher. The data collected shows that a continuum of support was provided extrinsically, meaning from school staff; further,

support was sought intrinsically, meaning the teacher recognized she needed support and sought it out. The following is one of the researcher's observations:

With the participant in this study, we observed the constant 'reaching out' to immediate co-workers and superiors for guidance and feedback. When she was not able to receive the help she was asking for, she reached out to teachers outside of her school (p. 269).

The researchers documented the various stressors for teacher, such as behavior or academic issues with students, as well as the coping strategies teacher used, such as seeking administrative support or outside support. They discovered a change in this first-year teacher's stress level as well as her outlook on teaching when she received the support she was seeking. The scope of this study was limited to one teacher so there were not any comparative cases of any other participants in similar circumstances.

New or novice teacher supports and mentorship efforts are often collectively referred to as new teacher induction programs. Induction programs vary, as demonstrated in a study by Ingersoll and Strong (2011). They reviewed the research on the induction process and found after examining 15 empirical studies that the research overwhelmingly supports the need for teacher mentor and induction programs and there were three positive outcomes from such programs, "teacher commitment and retention, teacher classroom instructional practices, and student achievement" (p. 201). Although the study did not specify exactly the processes involved in mentor and induction programs, a variety of supports were reported as effective, including (a) facetime with administrators and mentors, (b) beginner's seminars, (c) collaboration with colleagues and teacher aides, and (d) reduced course load. Ingersoll (2012) found that these induction activities can

support teacher retention and improve their instruction. However, because forms and amount of support vary, they emphasize that research “suggests that content intensity, and duration are important” (p. 51). Some induction programs may involve a meeting at the beginning, middle, and end of the year but do not provide the ongoing support that is needed. Ingersoll (2012) concluded that it was not usually one support but a package of supports that proved the most effective in induction programs.

The key to the effectiveness of an induction or mentor program is the quality of the program itself (Ingersoll & Strong 2011). What does the program provide in the way of supports (i.e. a mentor; face-to-face meetings with an administrator or instructional coach), how long are the supports available, and what are the outcomes of the supports provided? Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) also demonstrated the importance of teacher induction in their study. They analyzed the SASS data set along with the TFS and the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Survey (BTLS) and found that a first-year teacher induction program not only positively impacted teachers but had effects lasting into their second year. Moreover, the impact extended over five years, which prevented teachers from migrating to another campus or school district or leaving the profession. Although teacher induction programs are shown to have a positive impact on teacher retention, the literature is still unclear on the specific practices and activities contributing to a sustainable, cost-effective program.

Opportunities for collaboration and reflection. Collaboration is imperative to the continued success and improvement of schools, as collaboration promotes a shared mission, a collaborative culture, collective inquiry, action-oriented practice, and a commitment to improvement (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker 2008). Furthermore, team

collaboration and collegiality are crucial to creating a positive climate and culture in schools as it results in teachers effectively learning together through discussion and problem-solving, and it promotes teacher leaders (Clement, 2017). Kelly and Cherkowski (2015) explain:

Taking what we know from adult learning theory, we can assume that transformative learning happens when adult learners have opportunities to interact with other learners, have time to talk, are able to reflect and make sense of their learning in relation to their prior experiences, and can connect the learning to their own contexts, purposes, and needs. (p.22)

Kelly and Cherkowski (2015) investigated the role PLCs play in the improvement of teaching because of teachers' ability to collaborate and reflect with peers. The study included fourteen classroom teachers and six interventionists, eight of which kept a reflective journal and participated in follow-up interviews after a year of participating in PLCs. The findings suggest that PLCs provide a sense of teacher efficacy as well as a mechanism to share and see how other professionals with like problems approach the challenges of teaching. Findings also showed that the PLC played a role in promoting professional learning and collaboration for some participants, but there still needs to be more research on how to sustain PLC activities so that they are meaningful. Given the connection between a sense of professionalism and teachers staying in the field, the PLC framework is a promising approach to addressing this area of need.

Summary of the Literature

The literature reviewed in this section examines the factors leading to teacher attrition, as well as those associated with teachers' longevity in the classroom. While

there are adequate numbers of teachers entering the profession to meet the increasing demand, a significant loss of teachers leaving the profession or taking early retirement is occurring. There are several factors that can lead to teachers' dissatisfaction with the profession and, ultimately, to their decision to leave the profession. Those explored in this chapter include inadequate resources for teacher and students, lack of high-quality preparation for the profession of teaching, lack of leadership support, and teacher burnout and stress. Teachers' strained relationships with colleagues and students can also lead to overall dissatisfaction with the profession. Making all these factors more challenging is an accountability system that, depending on how it is used by leaders, can add to the pressure of teaching.

Factors that promote teacher retention include supporting teachers in managing workplace stress, fostering positive relationships with peers, students, campus leadership, and providing opportunities for professional growth. Emphasized in the literature are the unique challenges for new teachers entering the profession in making it through the crucial, formative years. Currently, a gap exists in the literature in relation to addressing the retention of teachers into their mid-career. The factors affecting retention are somewhat interrelated, but there are several instances where the campus principal influences these retention factors and subsequently teacher retention rates. Supporting teacher in the relational aspects of teaching, such as collegiality, principal-to-teacher relationships, and teacher autonomy, are promising approaches that are noted in the literature.

III. METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology that was used to answer the specific research questions of this study, and it outlines the study's methodological approach, and research design. As noted in the literature review, a teacher's choice to stay in the classroom into his or her mid-career can be a result of professional factors (external), personal factors (internal), or interrelated factors of the two areas. Given that there is a crisis of obtaining and keeping qualified teachers (Ingersoll, 2004; Sutchter et al., 2016), it is important to better understand the factors that have led veteran teachers to choose to remain in the classroom into their mid-career.

Research Questions

The primary research question that guiding this inquiry was: What are the factors leading to mid-career White female teachers remaining in Title I schools?

The secondary questions listed below also supported the research efforts:

1. What are the personal factors leading to mid-career White female teachers remaining in Title I schools?
2. What are the professional factors leading to mid-career White female teachers remaining in Title I schools?
3. What are the interrelated factors (personal and professional) leading to mid-career White female teachers remaining in Title I schools?

Methodological Approach

In deciding between quantitative or qualitative approaches, the researcher must consider several factors, such as the type of research question being asked. Quantitative research is interested in seeing how much or how many of something occurs, with the

data presented in a numerical form; whereas, qualitative research is interested in the “how” (Merriam, 2009). Rudestam and Newton (2014) further defined quantitative research as looking at patterns and relationships and expressing the findings in a numerical way. In contrast, qualitative studies attempt to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of its participants. The experiences of teachers in the classroom represents a human problem that is important to capture. Therefore, the decision to use a qualitative approach in this study, as opposed to a quantitative one, was informed by the type of data I aimed to seek. A qualitative approach for this study was necessary to capture the emic perspectives of the participants, those from an inside point of view, rather than those from an outsider collecting observations (Merriam, 2009). Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that qualitative research is not linear but is a dynamic process that involves human interactions.

Analytical Paradigm

This study was conducted under a constructivist epistemology. As Crotty (2015) stated, “what constructionism claims is that meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (p. 43). Creswell (2013) provided an additional perspective, stating “Participants develop subjective meanings of their experiences—meanings directed toward certain objects or things” (p. 24). Guba and Lincoln (1994) asserted that realities are based on the constructs of the individual who is experiencing the events leading to individual constructions. Teachers in public schools have similar relatable experiences, bound by common systems such as federal and state laws, curricular standards, and state and federal assessment requirements. The nuances are defined by the relationships teachers hold (both personal and professional), and

especially important are the relationships they have with school leaders and the impact that the leader has on the work that teachers do (Bitsadze & Japaridze, 2014).

Berger and Luckmann (1967) first introduced the concept of the social construction of reality. They argued that knowledge is not something that an individual can hold to himself or herself alone, and that validating knowledge depends on a person's social interactions. In other words, "reality is socially defined" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 134). These authors further clarified that, "the definitions are always embodied, that is, concrete individuals and groups of individuals serve as definers of reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 134). Related to constructionism, Crotty (2015) asserted that social phenomena are brought into existence and are subject to a cycle of interpretation and reinterpretation by individuals. In the context of this study, teachers construct their reality, and the relationships in which they engage define this reality. Creswell (2013) put forth a similar perspective, claiming that social constructivism involves people seeking to find meaning and understanding of their personal and professional lives. Social constructionism also emphasizes interrelatedness and the dynamic nature of interactions an individual has with people in his or her day-to-day contacts (Galbin, 2014). Social construction is contextualized in this study in that specific attention is given to the interaction's teachers have in their work environment and their interpretation of them. Specifically, social constructionism was used to better understand the personal, professional, and interrelated factors of mid-career teachers and how these factors have supported their longevity in the classroom.

Theoretical Perspective and Theoretical Sensitivity

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the literature review in a grounded theory study develops the researcher's "theoretical perspective," or lens which aids in identifying significant categories in the data. In turn, developing this theoretical perspective supports the researcher's "theoretical sensitivity." This sensitivity helps the researcher identify problems in the research and fine-tune the methodology (Urquhart & Fernández, 2013). It also aids in the data coding and analysis process (Tie et al., 2019). It is not the intent of theoretical perspective and sensitivity to bias the researcher or create a myopic perspective of the data, but to aid in identifying novel observations found in the data. As Tie and colleagues (2019) state, "theoretical sensitivity throughout the research process allows the analytical focus to be directed towards theory development" (p. 6). Theoretical perspective and theoretical sensitivity comprise the lens through which the researcher examines the data to find emergent theories. This process ultimately leads to theory development (Tie et al., 2019).

To understand the reasons teachers stay in the classroom, it was important to obtain their perspectives and conduct an analysis of the factors that have led to their longevity. These factors were identified by using the theoretical perspective obtained from the literature review and the developed theoretical sensitivity of the researcher. These perspectives are grounded in teachers' social construction of reality, as "the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality" (Berger & Luckman, 1967, p. 15). By analyzing how teachers have interpreted their personal and professional experiences, insight into specific factors that have led to their longevity were gained.

Research Design

This study used grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory involves systematically collecting and analyzing data, offering flexibility to the researcher for building theories based on the data collected (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2008) asserted that a grounded theory methodology helps to answer the *why* that is often left unanswered in qualitative research studies. As she points out, “Grounded theory method has had a long history of engaging both the why questions and the what and how questions” (p. 397). Grounded theory provides an “inductive” way to bring in the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The process of looking at the three areas, the *who*, *what* and *how*, is used to develop “mid-range” theories from the research. There are subtle differences between grounded theory and what Charmaz (2008) characterizes as constructivist grounded theory. She views constructivist grounded theory as focusing on the *what* and *how* questions, with prompts focused on social structures and situations. According to Charmaz (2008), constructivist grounded theory provides opportunities that are often not addressed in traditional grounded theory methods.

In short, when social constructionists combine their attention to context, action, and interpretation with grounded theory analytic strategies, they can produce dense analyses with explanatory power, as well as conceptual understanding.

Simultaneously, their analyses attest to how furthering the social constructionist elements in grounded theory strengthen the method. (pp. 409-409)

The author did differentiate between constructivist grounded theory, which will be used in this study, and objectivist grounded theory as defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998),

with the latter seeking answers separated from a specific area and site that is being researched in an objective way.

Charmaz (2014) outlined five strategies that are evident in a grounded theory study. First, the researcher conducts data collection and analysis at the same time. This means that there is an ongoing analysis of the interview transcriptions, with the researcher reflecting on the data collected before moving on to additional data sets. Second, the researcher analyzes actions and processes instead of looking at themes and structures. Third, the researcher uses comparative methods in which existing data are compared to new data that is collected. Then, the researcher draws on the data in the construction of new concepts and categories. Finally, the researcher uses the analysis to develop “abstract analytic” categories. This is a deeper analysis of the data and goes beyond what is initially extracted from the data. Charmaz notes that this process represents a systematic approach, yet it offers flexibility in the collection and analysis of data from which the researcher can generate theories that are grounded in the data.

The review of literature debate. Grounded theory can be wrought with controversy over whether the researcher should develop a review of literature before entering the field for research (Thornberg, 2012). Although some perspectives support the delay of a literature review, Thornberg (2012) points to six factors that are problematic with delaying the development of the literature review. First, if the researcher delays completing the literature review until the near completion of the grounded theory, it becomes problematic for researchers to conduct a study in his or her field of expertise. Second, the delay of the literature review in grounded theory studies can be used as an excuse for lazy ignorance of the literature (Silverman, 2013; Suddaby,

2006; Thornberg, 2012). Third, Thornberg argues that by limiting the areas that a researcher can pursue based on his or her prior knowledge would limit the ability of a researcher to pursue additional research in the same field or branch out into areas where there is significant prior knowledge. Fourth, the researcher needs to be able to develop a proposal prior to beginning his or her research for ethical review, and this often requires a review of literature as part of the institutional review process. Fifth, ignoring current theories and research could lead to mistakes or rumination of previously conceived ideas being presented as novel. Lastly, Thornberg (2012) contends there is not a way to conduct research observations free from theoretical influence. Because of these six reasons, I developed a literature review prior to entering the field for research.

The use of a theoretical perspective. Urquhart and Fernández (2013) point to the need for a theoretical perspective prior to a researcher moving forward with grounded theory methodology. According to these scholars, a theoretical perspective helps center the researcher on the general theories presented in the literature, gives direction for inquiry, and provides a theoretical sensitivity for the researcher. Urquhart and Fernández (2013) believe that the researcher is more in tune with what other studies have found in a “theoretical context” (p. 7). Additionally, the researcher can use the theoretical perspective derived from the literature as a general direction for examination, although not a final destination unless there is data to support such findings. Following Urquhart and Fernández views, I will use a theoretical perspective as a lens to better identify in the data collected areas that can be used to categorize why teachers remain in the classroom.

Site and Participant Selection

Site Selection

The state of Texas was selected as the site of the proposed study because of several factors. First, all of the 1,274 public school districts in the state operate under the same rules and guidelines, with some exceptions for open-enrollment charters and juvenile justice districts, which are not part of this study (Texas Education Agency, 2014). Another consideration was the high quantity of schools in Texas, as compared to the national average, which allows for a more concentrated sample in each area when compared to other states. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2019), for 2015-2016, there were 9,385 elementary and secondary schools in Texas, compared to the U.S. average per state of 1,966. There were also a larger number of elementary and secondary teachers, compared to the U.S. average. Texas has 347,328 teachers to the U.S. average per state of 61,794. The choice of Texas as the research site provided an opportunity to access many teachers that meet the study criteria: White female participants that teach in Texas public schools and are currently in their 10th to 15th year (mid-career) of teaching.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to ensure that the participants selected by the researcher met specific criteria of the study, and it provided further assurances that the researcher was “purposefully informed an understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). The sample criteria specifically included mid-career White female teachers from elementary schools that are currently serving in a Title I school in a suburban setting that is part of a larger

metropolitan area that have at least 75% or higher economically disadvantaged students. The reason for this criterion was so that at least three-fourths of the school had a high concentration of students with economic needs in a suburban setting. A metropolitan area is defined by the Texas Department of State Health and Human Services as a central urban area consisting of at least 50,000 people with a regional population of 100,000. I chose to recruit teachers from Title I schools because they often face the most challenges and obstacles in serving students that are economically disadvantaged. The teachers that choose to stay and work in these schools must balance many different factors.

As mentioned previously, there is also a significantly higher attrition rate for Title I schools. The U.S. Department of Education website outlines the criteria for a Title I school. Title I schools are determined by the local education agency or referred to as such by school districts in Texas. These schools receive Title I designations based on specific percentages of students served that are in poverty. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2018):

Schools in which children from low-income families make up at least 40 percent of enrollment are eligible to use Title I funds to operate schoolwide programs that serve all children in the school in order to raise the achievement of the lowest-achieving students.

This percentage is calculated mostly by the overall percentage of students that qualify for free or reduced lunch based on household size and income. The purpose of the additional funding is to provide resources for schools to use in addition to regular funding sources such as state and local funds.

In planning on the total number of participants to interview, Merriam (2009) argues that there is not a defined number of participants to include in a study. Yet, Patton (1990) asserts that “qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases (n=1) selected purposefully” (p. 169). Patton (1990) states sample size is dependent upon what the researcher wants to know and what would be feasible in terms of time and resource availability. For grounded theory studies, there is not a specific sample size for a given study because there are several mitigating factors to consider, such as the context of the study and the participants. Aldiabat and Navenec (2018) discussed the possibility of data saturation, meaning that there is no new data identified in data collection from participants. They also emphasized the importance of moving beyond the point when the first “theory emergence” occurs (Suddaby, 2006, p. 634), when data saturation is determined, to ensure that there is not anything new to add to the initial identification.

For this study, I was able to secure 10 participants. Three participants were screened that did not meet the criteria, resulting in more recruitment to obtain the 10 total participants. Participants were initially solicited via social media platforms (see Appendix A) and email (see Appendix B). I also reached out to colleagues who helped identify potential contacts. As interest was shown, I arranged to have a phone call or Zoom meeting with the potential participant to explain the study and provide the communication and review it with the potential participant. An example of this email communication is in the Appendix (see Appendix B). Social media and email communication described the purpose of the study and criteria for participants, and included my contact information (i.e., my Texas State University email and additional

contact information). Participants were able to contact me about any questions or technical issues they had and inform me of their decision to participate in the study.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview protocol is characterized by a mix of more and less structured interview questions; there is not a predetermined order of the questions, but there is specific information being sought from all respondents (Merriam, 2009). From a social constructivism perspective, it was recommended to have broad and open-ended type questions to elicit discussions and interactions with the participants (Creswell, 2014). While the questions were open and broad in nature, they were related to the research questions of the study, invited detailed discussion of the topic, and encouraged exploration of the participants' experiences (Charmaz, 2006). The initial questions stemmed from various themes outlined in the review of literature, and then were distilled to an area of focus (i.e., balance factors). These factors included professional, personal, and interrelated factors that have influenced the participants to remain in the field.

The interview protocol was piloted to ensure validity and reliability and collect feedback on the questions proposed. For validity, the instrument was administered to two female elementary teachers to ensure that terminology used is clear. Face validity determined if what the questions are asking is pertinent to the research questions. While data from these pilot administrations was not included in the analysis, the feedback provided about the protocol ensured that it was aligned to the research questions. Appropriate wording changes were made based on suggestions (See Appendix G for the interview protocol).

Once participants were identified, an email was sent including links to complete the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix E), and participants' completion of the questionnaire served as the implied consent form as the first question (see Appendix D). Online interviews were conducted via Zoom, using a Dell laptop with a webcam connected to high-speed internet at my home, using the semi-structured interview protocol (Charmaz, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Due to social distancing protocols involving Covid-19 requirements, in-person interviews were not possible. Verbal consent was obtained prior to both interviews, which included consent to audio and video-record the interview (see Appendix F). Initial interviews lasted 45-60 minutes (see Appendix G), then an email was sent to notify participants of the date and time of a second, shorter interview, with a link to Zoom (see Appendix H). This second interview was guided by a protocol of follow-up prompts (see Appendix I).

The follow-up interview served as an opportunity to clarify any questions that arose during the first interview, and it allowed participants to review concepts that were identified from the first interview. Additionally, it provided an opportunity to expand on the first interview and allowed for elaboration on categories (Charmaz, 2006). It was vital that the reality of the participants and their perspectives were captured to better identify the factors contributing to longevity in the profession of teaching. I also made post-transcription memos for consideration during data analysis.

Identities of the participants were safeguarded using pseudonyms during recordings. All electronic files that do not contain participant identification were secured on a personal laptop that incorporates Texas State University Information Security Office guidelines. These actions included:

- Updating software and operating system regularly (at least monthly)
 - Enabling whole-disk encryption using features built into the operating system (Bitlocker on Windows devices / FileVault 2 on macOS devices)
 - Installing, running, and regularly updating antivirus software
 - Setting the screen to lock after a short period of inactivity (e.g., 5 minutes) and requiring a password to resume access
 - Requiring a strong, unique password to log on to the computer
- (J.D. Moore, personal communication, June 12, 2020)

Data including identifiable information was stored in Canvas in my Texas State account. Audio recordings were destroyed after they were transcribed and verified. Once the research was completed, all digital documents, notes, and other research materials were secured on a Texas State University computer, on Canvas, and will remain for the duration of 3 years from completion of the study.

Data Analysis

Analysis Procedures

After each interview, all interview data were transcribed by the researcher. This was achieved by using manual entry as well as speech-to-text software, after which I checked for accuracy. Data were studied early, as soon as the interviews were transcribed, allowing a synthesis of the data so that the qualitative coding could begin. Phases of coding included initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2014). In the initial coding phase, line-by-line coding allowed me to study the data in detail and begin the synthesis of ideas used in developing concepts. The use of the theoretical perspective and theoretical sensitivity I gained from conducting the literature

review gave direction to initial coding, as I identified personal, professional, and interrelated areas as beginning categories, allowing for codes to emerge. During the second phase of coding, I aimed to identify codes of significance and high frequency. Next, I sorted and begin analysis of the codes (Charmaz, 2014). This process advanced the “theoretical direction” of the research, and decisions were made during coding as to what made the most sense for analysis (p. 138).

The final phase of coding was theoretical coding, as “Theoretical codes underlie your substantive codes and show relationships between them” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 150). This coding gave context to the focused codes and gave direction to the theory extracted from the data (Charmaz, 2014). I conducted this stage of coding in Atlas.ti so that the codes could be easily indexed and searched if needed. The categories emerged as the data was transcribed and coded. This coding, along with the analytical memos, was used to interpret the data and draw conclusions from the data collected. There is a reciprocation of sorts as the data are transcribed coded and analyzed. Charmaz (2006) discussed this process as theoretical sampling. This involves the process of defining and continually refining theoretical categories that have previously been identified. Following the analysis, the themes were placed in a matrix using a spreadsheet (See Appendix J).

Analytic memos. Once transcription and coding of each interview was completed, analytical memos were written that capture data comparisons between the coding and categories, as well as ideas I had about the data, including new concepts (Charmaz, 2014). The use of memo writing assisted in identifying emergent codes. Memo writing is a method that engages the researcher with the research and the findings;

further, the development of ideas can be used immediately or can be captured for use later (Charmaz, 2014).

Trustworthiness, Credibility, and Verification

According to Merriam (2009), trustworthiness in the context of qualitative research is guaranteeing that ethics are to the forefront of the researchers' practice for the sake of reliability and validity of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also assert that to build trustworthiness in the research, there must be enough rigor placed in the methods so that the reader is confident with the findings and that future research can be built upon them and add to them. Trustworthiness is established through credibility of the methods of the research process. Charmaz (2006) provides guiding questions for establishing credibility in research, ones that I applied and addressed during and after the research process:

- Has your research achieved intimate familiarity with the setting or topic?
- Are the data sufficient to merit your claims? Consider the range, number, and depth of observations contained in the data.
- Have you made systematic comparisons between observations and between categories? Do the categories cover a wide range of empirical observations?
- Are there strong logical links between the gathered data and your argument and analysis?
- Has your research provided enough evidence for your claims to allow the reader to form an independent assessment and *agree* with your claims? (p. 197)

The data must support the assertions made by the researcher and be evident in the eyes of a third party by explicit steps that are taken to ensure verification of the data and research processes. The term verification poses a different challenge in qualitative

constructivist research. As Charmaz (2006) explains, it is not a method of verification in a traditional sense:

A constructivist approach does not adhere to positivist notions of variable analysis or of finding a single basic process or core category in the studied phenomenon.

The constructivist view assumes an obdurate, yet ever-changing world but recognizes diverse local worlds and multiple realities, and addresses how people's actions affect their local and larger worlds. (p. 132)

According to Charmaz (2006), verification of the data collected and the findings are very difficult to obtain, but by adhering to the tenets for credibility and trustworthiness, verification of the data collected can be strengthened. Creswell (2013) also shares Charmaz' view of verification but prefers the term "validation" as a more accurate representation used in qualitative research. Charmaz (2006) reports using practices such as peer review and debriefing, as well as negative case analysis, meaning that cases are sought that do not support or that can contradict the data that is emerging from the analysis. Charmaz also suggests clarification of research bias, in which the researcher identifies his or her own biases to account for them and minimize the impact on research. The purpose of all the aforementioned practices was to ensure accuracy of the collected data. When I analyzed and interpreted the data and findings, I had to remain conscious of my positionality (described on page 67) so as not to bias the analysis of data and interpretation of findings. I elicited feedback from participants on the developed themes through the member-checking process, and I used of analytical memos after coding to assist with bias mitigation. Most importantly, as the researcher I understood I

had to be reflexive my practice so that my own interpretations and assumptions did not become part of the data interpretation.

Member checking. Merriam (2009) asserts that the use of member checking is a way to ensure internal validity and credibility. Member-checking for this study involved the participant reviewing the previous interview questions with two to three takeaways of themes about what the participants said during the first interview. Participants were asked to look at these takeaways and revise or add to them as needed. Charmaz (2006) emphasized that member checking is not only a process for getting confirmation of study ideas from the participants, but it also allows the researcher to gather additional material to add to categories.

The participants were given an opportunity to add and or clarify any of the summary statements as a form of member checking. Charmaz (2006) identified member checking as a way of getting confirmation of study ideas from participants, but the process also allows for the researcher to add additional material to the categories. Saldaña (2013) asserted that consultation with the study participants during the analysis is a way of “validating the findings thus far” (p.35). All but one of the participants indicated that the summary statements were accurate and reflected what they noted in the initial interview. The one participant wanted to clarify where she felt she was with her current teaching ability. During the initial interview, the participant divulged that she was struggling with the new demands of teaching in a hybrid situation. Still, in two weeks, she felt better about her teaching using the hybrid platform and thought she was better adapted to the latest teaching methods implemented due to Covid-19.

Triangulation. Triangulation involves using data from various sources and methods to add credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss the importance of validating data collected with at least one other piece of information. This perspective is echoed by Merriam (2009), who explained that triangulation can involve interviewing participants from different locations with varied perspectives and using the data collected from the follow-up interviews to corroborate findings. The findings of this study involved triangulation by using and comparing the data collected from a first and second interview additions or clarifications, and memos written after transcription and coding. Further assurance of triangulation will involve participant selection.

Positionality and researcher bias. Maxwell (2012) states “separating your research from other aspects of your life cuts you off from a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks” (p. 45). It will be important to bring prior experiences into the research but be cognizant of the possible limitations this may create. My positionality included having personal experience as a campus administrator and already having a conceptual understanding of why teachers remain in the classroom. I was not able to negate the twenty years of experience I have had in the education field, but I had to be aware and reflective through the process of memo writing during and after coding to explore my assumptions and address any subconscious thoughts that I bring to the research study. My conscious assumptions were that teachers that have been able to remain into their mid-career developed an operational functionality that addresses their individual needs on both the personal and professional level.

I occupied the positionality of a campus principal at the time of the research, and I was a teacher supervisor. Even though I did not supervise the teachers that I interviewed

as part of the study, I was careful not to impress my thoughts and experiences gained from working as an administrator upon the participants, nor guide their responses in any way. In thinking that there is a strong link between campus leadership and the teachers choosing to stay at a particular campus for an extended time, I had to be cognizant of some participants' apprehension in acknowledging the role of the leader in their decision to stay, and I ensured that I am not leading them to that conclusion. Charmaz (2006) accounts for the perspective of the researcher and differentiates the constructivist grounded theory approach with traditional grounded theory by discussing that, with constructivist grounded theory, there is an ever-changing world and varied perspectives including how people interpret similar experiences and the complex nature in which they live.

The other concern I needed to address was the potential assumption on my part that I would know what the participants meant when they shared their perspective. My past experiences are important in that I have had experiences as a teacher before being a campus administrator. I have observed teachers struggle and subsequently leave the teaching profession. I have also observed the longevity of teachers who have no desire to leave the classroom and wish to remain in the classroom until they retire. It is crucial to understand what perspective the participants are bringing to the table that address the research question; thus, it was important in the interview not to lead the participants or make assumptions about what they mean. I sought to clarify participants' responses when necessary and kept an open mind.

Ethical issues. Creswell (2013) notes that it is important to examine ethical issues at each part of the research process, from the beginning to the end of the study, and even

later during the publication of the study. Merriam (2009) wrote that ethical dilemmas are often seen in the collection of data as well as when the findings are shared. Ethical issues reside with the researcher and his or her “own sensitivity and values” (p. 230). Ethical issues will be addressed by complying with the approved IRB processes. Upon approval of my proposal, the IRB application will be submitted with consideration and input from my chair and will include the most recent CITI renewal certification I completed in October 2019. The ethical lens used with the IRB process will involve honoring what was stated in institutional submitted documents and only making changes in the parameters of the IRB proposal for which they are allowed.

Ethical considerations include disclosure and informed consent (see Appendix D) to participate in the study and allowing participants to discontinue study participation at any time. Participants were given pseudonyms in the written data, and these were used in the transcripts and ultimately used in the final publication of results. The pseudonyms’ connections with the participants’ identities were only known to the researcher and kept in a secure location, and digital documents were encrypted and secured under password. The strategies used for trustworthiness also ensured that the research is conducted and the results are presented ethically. Due to my positionality, it was not appropriate for me to interview any current subordinate or to use any data that I do not have permission to use.

Summary

This chapter described the methodology that was used to answer the specific research questions of this study, and it outlined the study’s methodological approach, research design, data collection, and data analysis. For this study, I drew on the epistemology of constructionism and the analytical paradigm of social construction, as

outlined by Berger and Luckman (1967), to further frame and provide context to the lived worlds of participants. Further, this study utilizes Charmaz's (2006; 2014) perspectives and methods as a guide to constructing grounded theory, which is a variant to traditional objective grounded theory as first proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The methods of constructivists grounded theory have flexibility that are not seen in traditional grounded theory research. This flexibility informed my approach of using a semi-structured interview protocol, establishing purposeful criteria for participant selection, and using memo writing as a reflective and a reflexive practice. Trustworthiness, credibility, and ethical measures were taken to ensure that the research conducted is sound, safe for participants, and could be replicated in the future by a future researcher.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents a description of the study locations, introduces the study participants, and describes the study's findings. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that contributed to the longevity of mid-career (10-15 years), White female elementary teachers who work in a suburban Title I school (75% or greater "economically disadvantaged" student population). All study participants served in schools with a predominantly Hispanic student population.²

Previous studies on teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2001; Sullivan et al., 2017; Sutchter et al., 2016) focus on why teachers leave the field, yet little research is available as to why they stay into their mid-career and longer; thus, this study provided a lens through which to identify the factors of teacher longevity. Guided by the research questions listed below, a grounded theory approach was used to identify and examine factors that led to longevity for mid-career teachers in high-needs schools (i.e., Title I):

What are the factors leading to mid-career White female teachers remaining in Title I schools?

- What are the personal factors leading to mid-career White female teachers remaining in Title I schools?
- What are the professional factors leading to mid-career White female teachers remaining in Title I schools?
- What are the interrelated factors (personal and professional) leading to mid-career White female teachers remaining in Title I schools?

² Specific percentages surrounding student demographics are not provided to protect the anonymity of the participants and their schools.

The Sites

There were two criteria related to the research sites: (a) participants needed to serve in a suburban high-needs school (Title I) and (b) participants needed to serve in a school district located adjacent to a large urban district.³ “High needs” was defined by the percentage of students who qualify for the National School Lunch Program. The term “high needs school” is a legal term under 20 USC § 6631(b)(2), and it is legally defined as a “...public elementary school or secondary school that is located in an area in which the percentage of students from families with incomes below the poverty line is 30 percent or more” (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). While many schools receive Title I designations, this study sought participants that taught at schools of no less than 75% of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch.

Participants

The ten participants served across seven schools in four different school districts (see Table 2). All of the participants were White females, representing the majority of Texas teachers at the time of the study, which was 58% White (Texas Education Agency, 2019). White female teachers are the group of teachers with the highest rate of leaving high-needs schools (Achinstein et al., 2010). In contrast, Achinstein et al. (2010) found that Black and Latino teachers were more likely to stay with students who had similar backgrounds as their own. All participants were mid-career teachers in their 10th to 15th year of teaching. This length of tenure is the average mid-point for most teachers with a 30-year career. Participants in this experience range are far enough into their teaching

³ A metropolitan area is defined by the Texas Department of State Health and Human Services (n.d.) as a central urban area consisting of 50,000 people with a regional population of 100,000.

career that leaving for another career might not appear easy or feasible, but they are also not close enough to retirement that they could easily exit an unfavorable environment without consequences to their benefits.

Participants were solicited through social media, and I reached out to contacts of fellow colleagues in education who were able to identify potential contacts using purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013). Snowball sampling (Creswell, 2013) was used and involved participants recommending other participants that met the criteria for the study. This process was marginally successful in that participants were able to recommend a few colleagues, but the recommended participants often did not fully meet the criteria. Using this process took longer than anticipated.

The initial IRB-approved social media post (see Appendix A) was sent to potential participants. Once email communication was established, the IRB-approved Recruitment Email Following Social Media Recruitment (Appendix B) was sent to possible participants to confirm they met the criteria. When possible, participants indicated willingness to participate, then a demographic questionnaire was provided through Qualtrics (See Appendix E), which included the consent for participation (Appendix C). After the participants provided informed consent, they participated in a total of two interviews, both an initial and a follow-up interview via Zoom. In the second interview, participants were provided a summary of takeaways from the transcriptions of their first interview. This supported trustworthiness of the data collected and provided an opportunity for participants to clarify and add to anything they had previously contributed. It also allowed the interviewer to ask follow-up questions for additional clarification as needed.

Participant Profiles

The participant profiles in the following sections provide an overview of each study participant and include relevant personal and professional background information. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to protect their identity.

Anna. At the time of this study, Anna was in her 11th year of teaching, currently serving as a third-grade math and science teacher. Prior to this assignment, Anna taught English as part of a dual language team for the four years. Anna had served for seven years at her current school. Before that, she taught fifth grade in a neighboring district for 3 years (self-contained; all subjects). At her current school, Anna taught for 3 years in a fourth-grade, self-contained classroom, 1 year in a third-grade, self-contained classroom, and 3 years in a third-grade Math and Science classroom (and was currently). Anna is a monolingual English-speaker who had been team-teaching with a bilingual teacher; Anna taught Math and Science in English, and her team-teacher taught Spanish Language Arts and Social Studies. Anna took an 11-year break after her first 3 years of teaching to care for her three children, but she affirmed that she always planned to return to education after the extended break. Anna lives in the district/community where she teaches. Based on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) accountability and achievement standards for the 2018-19 school year, Anna's school received a "D" rating.

Carly. Carly was a music teacher for all students in kindergarten through fifth grade at the time of the study. She was in her seventh year at her current school and had taught for 12 years overall (three different schools in two separate districts before her current assignment). After her fifth year of teaching, Carly took an 18-year break in service to care for her first child and explore other jobs. Carly took two non-teaching jobs

after she initially left teaching. She took a position in the corporate world but reported not to like it, and another in which the position was not sustained, prompting her to reenter the teaching profession. Carly lives in the district/community in which she works. Based on STAAR accountability and achievement standards for the 2018-19 school year, Carly's school received a "C" rating.

Lisa. Lisa had completed her 12th year of teaching at the time of the study and served as a third-grade teacher. She had continuously served at the same campus for her entire career in multiple positions: as a pre-K, first grade, and second-grade teacher, a reading interventionist. She grew up in and lives in the district/community where she currently teaches. Based on STAAR accountability and achievement standards for the 2018-19 school year, Lisa's school received a "C" rating.

Kimberly. At the time of this study, Kimberly was a pre-K teacher who had been in her current role for 13.5 of her 14 total years teaching. Kimberly had been in continuous service since she started teaching. She had experience in early childhood education at one other campus outside of her current district and had previously worked as a teaching assistant in a preschool program for children with disabilities in her current school, where she currently serves as a teacher. Kimberly does not live in the district/community in which she works and commutes daily. Based on STAAR accountability and achievement standards for the 2018-19 school year, Kimberly's school received a "C" rating.

Sara. Sara was in her 15th year as an educator, working at the same school for 15 years of continuous service. In the first five years of her teaching career, she taught third and fourth grade. At the time of the study, she was a technology teacher that served all

students (kindergarten – fifth grade). Sara lived in a community near her current school district/community and commuted into work. Sara’s daughter went to the elementary where she was teaching and continued to middle school in the same school district. Based on STAAR accountability and achievement standards for the 2018-19 school year, Sara’s school received an “F” rating.

Jessica. Jessica was also in her 15th year of continuous service in education. At the time of the interview, she was in her first year of teaching gifted and talented students. She did not live in the district/community where she worked, but her daughter did attend school in the district as a transfer student. Jessica had worked in two different schools teaching kindergarten at her first school for nine years, then teaching second grade for four years, and then most recently teaching gifted and talented students. Jessica’s school received a “D” rating based on STAAR accountability and achievement standards for the 2018-19 school year.

Donna. Donna was in her 12th year of continuous service in teaching and had taught various levels and held multiple positions in other districts prior. She had previously taught kindergarten, first, and fourth grades and had served as an instructional specialist at three different schools in two different districts. At the time of the study, Donna was a second-year kindergarten teacher in her current school. Donna looked at teaching as her “third career,” having spent time as an administrative assistant in a corporate setting and an administrator at a private school before becoming a teacher. Donna resided in the district/community where she works. Donna’s school received a “D” rating based on STAAR accountability and achievement standards for the 2018-19 school year.

Vanessa. Vanessa was in her 15th year of continuous service, and she served as a gifted and talented teacher for the past six years. Before her position at the time of the study, Vanessa had taught first grade for nine years. Her entire career has been in one school in one district. She did not live in the district/community where the school was located and commuted 25 minutes every day. Her goal was to become a reading interventionist. Vanessa's school received an "F" rating based on STAAR accountability and achievement standards for the 2018-19 school year.

Amber. Amber was in her 15th year of continuous service. She had previous experience as a first-grade teacher and most recently served as a third-grade teacher. Amber had worked in three different schools in three other school districts. She lived in the same district/community where the school was located and disclosed that she wanted to give back to the community through teaching. Amber's school received a "C" rating based on STAAR accountability and achievement standards for the 2018-19 school year.

Kacey. Kacey was in her 15th year of continuous service. She was in her fourth year as a Special Education teacher but had previously served as a PE teacher at the same elementary campus for three years. Kacey had seven years prior experience at two middle schools and one year at a private school. Kacey served at a total of three schools in two districts and one private school. Kacey did not live in the district/community where she was working. Based on STAAR accountability and achievement standards for the 2018-19 school year, Kacey's school received a "C" rating.

Table 1 below provides an overview of the participants' demographic information, including: assigned pseudonym; years of service at the time of the study; level of continuous service; total number of schools and districts worked; whether the

participant resides in the district she works; current role; and the school's overall rating when last assigned in 2019 by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Campus ratings are a result of the higher of two grades between student achievement or school progress.⁴

⁴ For elementary campuses, these scores come solely from the STAAR exam. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) information indicated that the higher of the two scores between the school's performance on student achievement and school progress is used to calculate the overall score weighted as 70% of the final grade. The other 30% comes from the school's performance on closing the gaps, which is based on the performance between different student demographic groups, with the smaller the gap in performance, the better the score. The scores range from A = scaled score 90-100, B= scaled score 80-89, C= scaled score 70-79, D= scaled score 60-69, and F=scaled score ≤ 59 .

Table 1***Overview of Participants: Length of Service, Districts/Schools Worked, and Current Roles***

Teacher Name	Years of Service	Years of Continuous Service	Number of Schools & Districts worked	Lives within District/Community?	Current Role	Current School Rating (2019)
Anna	11	3 and 8 continuous (11-year break after 3rd year)	Two schools in two districts	Yes	Grade 3 Math and Science Teacher	D
Carly	12	5 and 7 continuous (18-year break after 5 th year)	Four schools in two districts	Yes	Music Teacher	C
Lisa	12	12 continuous	One school in one district	Yes	Grade 3 Teacher	C
Kimberly	14	14 continuous	Two schools in two districts	No	Pre-Kindergarten Teacher	C
Sara	15	15 continuous	One school in one district	No	Technology Teacher	F
Jessica	15	15 continuous	Two schools in one district	No	Gifted and Talented Teacher	D
Donna	12	12 continuous (third career choice)	Three schools in two districts	Yes	Kindergarten Teacher	D
Vanessa	15	15 continuous	One school in one district	No	Gifted and Talented Teacher	F
Amber	15	15 continuous	Three schools in three districts	Yes	Grade 3 Teacher	C
Kacey	15	15 continuous	Three schools in two districts & one private school	No	Special Education Teacher	C

Participant Summary

The participants had an overall average of 13.6 years of service and had served at an average of 2.1 schools in their careers thus far. Two of the participants had breaks in service where they left teaching and then returned. One participant had two careers before becoming a teacher. Half of the participants lived in the district/community where they work. Some of the participants worked in the same school and/or district as other study participants, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Shared Work Locations Across Participants

Participant	School	District
Anna	School A	District A
Carly	School B	District B
Lisa	School B	District B
Jessica	School C	District C
Donna	School C	District C
Sara	School D	District C
Vanessa	School D	District C
Amber	School E	District C
Kimberly	School F	District D
Kacey	School G	District D

Overall, the participants had above average years' experience when compared to the school and state average for years of experience in all schools where they currently served. For the seven schools in general, the average years teachers' experience at each of the schools was below the state average. As publicized by the Texas Education Agency (2019), almost all the schools had principals with years' experience below the state average. Data reflects the general trend that high-needs schools overall have less experienced staff than the average. Table 3 shows participants years of experience, compared to school and state averages.

Table 3***Teacher and Principal Experience***

Participant	Years' Experience	School	School Average Years Teacher Experience	State Average Years Teacher Experience	Principal Average Years' Experience	State Principal Average Years' Experience
Anna	11	School A	10.1	11.2	5	6.2
Carly	12	School B	10.5	11.2	11	6.2
Lisa	12	School B	10.5	11.2	11	6.2
Jessica	14	School C	8.1	11.2	2	6.2
Donna	15	School C	8.1	11.2	2	6.2
Sara	15	School D	7.6	11.2	6	6.2
Vanessa	12	School D	7.6	11.2	6	6.2
Amber	15	School E	6.2	11.2	4	6.2
Kimberly	15	School F	7.2	11.2	2	6.2
Kacey	15	School G	4.3	11.2	2	6.2

Finally, the participants' grade distribution and subjects taught was a point of interest to the study. Five participants taught non-core subjects (i.e., not ELA/SLA, math, science, or social studies). Three of the ten teachers instructed in subjects in which students are required to take the STAAR exam. In elementary schools, third-grade students take the STAAR in Math and Reading exams; fourth-grade students take Math, Reading, and Writing exams; and fifth-grade students take Math, Reading, and Science exams. This grade distribution is of interest because none of the participants taught in the fourth and fifth grades. Only three of the participating teachers taught in grades assessed by the state exam at the mid-point in their career. While not a focus of this study, grades and subject-areas taught have an influence on teachers' level of stress and satisfaction in their career, due to pressures associated with testing accountability (i.e., ongoing data analysis and a public-facing score assigned to the school), which was a factor identified by Klein's (2017) dissertation on teacher retention. Among the participants' current schools, the lowest rated school received an F in 2019 from the Texas Education Agency, and the highest rated schools received a C. There were no school ratings assigned in 2020 or 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Themes

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine the factors that have led White female teachers to remain in high-needs schools until the mid-point of their career. The literature is replete with information as to why teachers leave schools early in their careers. However, more information is needed as to why teachers stay in the profession, particularly at high-needs campuses. Using Charmaz's (2014) approach to a grounded theory study, the data analysis for this study happened very close to the data collection

time. That means the researcher reflected on the data after the first interview for each participant, but prior to collecting a subsequent data set. This initial data coding involved analytical memos that included researcher reflections on the coding and ideas about the data collected. Additionally, the researcher conducted an analysis evaluating themes and structures. The existing data were then compared to new data as they were collected. New concepts and categories were then developed, followed by the development of even deeper categories. These deeper categories were composed of participants' perspectives as they answered interview questions, with the researcher also noting what was absent from the participants' answers. As new categories developed, there were two additional coding and recoding processes, based on the new concepts and categories.

Following these stages of the analysis, the themes were placed in a matrix using a spreadsheet (see Appendix J) that included the participants listed on one side and their respective quotes across rows to identify patterns in the data. Each theme had an individually labeled sheet. The purpose of the matrix was to help me identify patterns in the data for individual participants and across all participants. The specific quotations were taken from the coding generated using Atlas.ti qualitative coding software. After the individual sheets were populated with quotes that support the identified theme, I was able to move across the row of the individual participants to find patterns and identify salience of the theme on a participant-by-participant basis. I was also able to move vertically on each sheet to find common perspectives among the participants. As a result of this analysis, seven themes were identified and categorized related to the research question. The themes related to Personal Factors were (a) stress management, (b) deficit thinking, and (c) savior perspective; the theme related to Professional Factors was (d) administrator

support, trust and teacher autonomy; and the themes related to Interrelated Factors were (e) student relationships, (f) coworker relationships, and (g) parent-teacher relationships. These themes were then grouped to answer the research questions and supported by literature.

Personal Factors

Personal factors found in this study are defined in the literature with different terms, including “attitudes, perceptions and beliefs” (Taylor & Wasicsko, 2000, p. 2). Taylor and Wasicsko (2000) referred to personal factors as “dispositions” and explained, “Dispositions are often defined as personal qualities or characteristics that are possessed by individuals, including attitudes, beliefs, interests, appreciations, values and modes of adjustment” (p. 2). For this study, dispositions (i.e., personal factors) encompassed the personal perspectives and attitudes these ten mid-career teachers brought to their work and led to them remaining in Title I schools. Three themes—stress management, savior perspective, and deficit thinking—were identified under personal factors.

Stress Management

It is important to note that the well-being of employees is a crucial factor in an organization’s performance and success (Kun & Gadanecz, 2019). The same applies to the school system. It is necessary to understand the different components of the participants’ stress as a means to further understand their beliefs about teaching. Paquette and Rieg (2016) found that stressors teachers face within their jobs relate to their workload, time management, and student behavior. Stress management in this study was identified as the personal approaches that teachers took to cope with stress and remain in their teaching positions. The activities and structures that participants applied were used

to maintain work-life balance to reduce stress levels. All participants gave examples of negative stress in their job, which included end-of-term deadlines and work-life balance (i.e., boundaries; not taking work home). Although some participants shared similar stresses, their techniques for mitigating negative stressors varied, as illustrated in the following data.

Carly explained how her students were often a source of positivity when she felt stressed, reporting:

I think I probably have the best relationship with my students. That's who I look forward to seeing when I walk into the school. If I'm having a bad day, my students are the ones that can turn it around for me.

Carly alluded to her personal connection with students as a way to uplift her positivity in dealing with the stressors of the workplace. She felt that her students provided meaning and purpose as she navigated through situations.

Lisa reported that she talked to her teammates when she was stressed because she felt that she could be “heard” by her team. Lisa also took breaks when stressed, explaining:

You get to that point at the end of the nine weeks where grades are due, and you know benchmarks are due, and everything needs to be caught up right away and just start feeling super overwhelmed. “I’ll just leave the teaching back at school, and you know what? Tomorrow, I can deal with that. Today I need a minute.” I think being able to take little breaks makes a big difference for sure.

For Lisa, compartmentalizing the work to keep it from carrying over to her home life gave her the space to take breaks and achieve work-life balance.

Like Lisa, Vanessa limited the times she took work home. Vanessa valued time with her family as part of her self-care plan, but as she pointed out,

It's one of those things where you know in the evening if it's something that has to be done, I will take it home, but if it's something that can wait, it stays here at school, just because I have to have that balance between my home life and spending time with my family.

Kacey disclosed how she dealt with stress and created time for herself as a means to decompress and not think about the daily tasks at work; this was Kasey's way of creating "separation" between work and pleasure. During her interview, she described the stress of having a conversation earlier that day with administration about scheduling, "after the stress of talking about scheduling, I'm not doing any more work tonight." Kacey's outlet from work and stresses associated with being a teacher was to unplug from work and take time to do something she enjoyed, such as watch football. As she put it, "I just think that a key is *separation*."

Amber described two unique strategies she used to achieve work-life balance and create boundaries to mitigate job stress. First, she purposefully takes her laptop home without the charger and works until the battery dies. Second, she commits to attending her son's baseball practices, which start early two days a week. Both strategies help her to maintain balance and have "made me stop [working]." She explained, "I got to get him to practice on time, so that has helped."

Similar to workload and time management stressors that Paquette and Rieg (2016) identified in their work, teachers in this study emphasized end-of-term deadlines and work-life balance. As exemplified in the previous data, participants reported using a

variety of stress-mitigation techniques, which included setting boundaries between work and personal life and discussing issues with colleagues to obtain mitigation strategies. Most of the participants described at least one stress-mitigation strategy they employed. Participants' perspectives and actions surrounding stress management were consistent with the findings reported in the literature. The mitigation strategies identified by Clements (2017) also surfaced as techniques utilized by the participants in this study. One strategy used was identifying which stressors were within the teacher's control and which were not. This identification strategy helped teachers understand and cope with the stress. Another strategy entailed seeking support from colleagues and discussing strategies to manage stressors. Solomonson and Retallick (2018) reported it is essential that mid-career teachers establish a personal and professional life balance to avoid the stress and burnout that leads to teacher attrition. Based on these findings, stress mitigation in this study was identified as an instrumental factor for teacher longevity.

Deficit Thinking

Valencia (1997) posited that, "Deficit thinking is tantamount to the process of 'blaming the victim.' It is a model founded on imputation, not documentation" (p. X). Nelson and Guerra (2014) defined deficit thinking as, "negative beliefs and stereotypes about certain groups of people, namely people of color living in poverty" (p. 70). All of the ten teachers expressed deficit beliefs about students and/or parents in the schools in which they worked.

One participant, Anna, demonstrated many instances of deficit thinking that spanned other multiple themes (e.g., student relationships, parent relationships, and savior perspective). In fact, she expressed significantly more deficit perspectives when

compared to other participants. Anna expressed deficit beliefs about students' behavior and parents' lack of involvement in school, blaming both groups for students' behavioral and academic difficulties at school. She explained, "Students have real struggles in their lives that they bring to school, and that manifests in lots of behavioral problems, absent parents..." Anna also added:

There's always kids that need more than you can give, but I think that knowing that you can't, you are unable to give or get the kids everything that they need that you can only do what you can do; you can't control their parents.

Students from working class families were not the only target of Anna's deficit thinking; she also included affluent families when she mentioned that, in affluent schools, she felt she addressed more problems with parents than with students.

Anna's deficit beliefs appeared to be grounded in assumptions about families' socioeconomic backgrounds, characteristics of their home life, and lack of parental structure and attention without "examining the links between school practices and student outcomes" (García & Guerra, 2007, p. 151) or considering the influence of culture on students' and parents' behavior and expectations. Rather than considering the impact of an educational system that fails to provide culturally responsive teaching and instructional resources, long-term dual-language and biliteracy programs, culturally responsive assessment practices, and interpreters for parent meetings on students and parents of color, Anna appeared to blame students and parents—the victims (Valencia, 1997).

Sarah felt like her students came from highly diverse cultural backgrounds. She explained, "[I] learned to adapt to different cultures just because I see everyone, and I've

also experienced quite a few culture interactions [because] I'm married to a Black man."

Despite what appeared to be a self-proclaimed understanding of culture, Sarah's choice of language to describe the student population of her school also revealed a deficit perspective. "So sometimes we get people moving out of [a nearby urban city] and [a nearby suburban city] we end up getting those kids, you know...we are a Title I school."

Describing why she chose to teach in a high-needs school, Sarah explained:

Because [they] need the most attention and ... they need more role-modeling than pretty much anyone else, I think. And I'm seeing it more now, having to talk to parents on the phone with the devices and the struggles that they're having.

Sarah's statements appeared to indicate that she attributes students' lack of achievement and learning to their cultural backgrounds. In other words, students from certain cultural and/or economic groups lack the ability to achieve in school. Moreover, her wording of "those kids" seemed to imply psychological separation or distance between herself and the students she teaches, leaving one wondering how she develops authentic relationships with her students and a sense of belongingness for them in her classroom.

Sarah also believed that parents of the students she taught should be more involved with their children, giving them more attention. She stated, "they [the students] need role-modeling," apparently assuming parents are not able to serve in this role and, therefore, it is important for her to serve in that role.

Donna pointed out what she considers unique about working in a high-needs school. Donna explained:

Well, [a "high needs" school] offers some challenges for sure. Parent participation can be challenging. Parent involvement with their child's education can be

challenging at times. A lot of times the parents don't understand what is expected of them or what their roles are, so we have to do a lot of community [outreach] to try and get the community involved especially [since] we have a high Hispanic population and there can be language barriers there for sure.

Donna's comments seem to reflect two deficit beliefs. First, she has decided the parents of her students are not involved in their children's education due to their lack of understanding about their role and expectations. Second, although Donna views parents' lack of English skills as a barrier or deficit rather than a difference, she does not appear to hold the same judgments about her lack of Spanish language skills. Moreover, missing from the discussion of the "language barriers" between Donna and the parents was how she had attempted to overcome them.

Vanessa also disclosed several perspectives of parents and their role in her school:

It's kind of challenging [in] understanding, I guess where they're [parents are] coming from and trying to relate to that. I know sometimes just trying to get parents involved with their child's education is challenging because I think they're just overwhelmed, and I think at times they're just trying to make ends meet.

...they [parents] see the school and teachers as this is your responsibility you figure it out. You know not only are we here for the academics but it's like we're kind of raising the kids too if that makes sense.

From Vanessa's comments, it appears that she views the parents of her students as uninvolved and that parents expect teachers to fill the role of raising the students. This deficit belief implies parents do very little to be involved in their child's education and

suggests that teachers hold assumptions about the roles of parents and perceive parents as unavailable and uninvolved.

Colorblind theory and undervaluing funds of knowledge. Three of the ten participants shared comments that reflected colorblind theory and the undervaluing of students' funds of knowledge. Jessica did not consider the backgrounds of her students and what they brought to school. She reported, "I look at a child for what they need. I don't look at them based on their race or even their gender." Jessica's response is problematic as she unknowingly references what is referred to as "colorblind theory" in which one claims to not discriminate and to treat all students equally (Petts, 2020). In other words, Jessica seemed to discount each student's funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992) or cultural assets, which are instrumental for effective instruction and learning.

Amber indicated that she does reach out to other classroom teachers in lower grade levels to seek advice in addressing academic needs for her students because "they [students] are not on a level playing field family wise, financial wise, academic wise." This generalization, which is deficit in nature, is often made about schools with high percentages of students in poverty. Amber's efforts to seek advice were of good intent. However, the fact that she feels her students are not able to perform to the level of their peers can impact students' academic outcomes. This deficit thinking can lead to the belief that if students are not successful in school, factors such as lack of parental support and role modeling, domestic issues, poverty, and family background are the causes, instead of acknowledging the role of teachers' inadequate instructional practices (García & Guerra, 2007; Reed, 2020). Consequently, believing students are incapable of learning leads

teachers to lower their expectations for their students (Reed, 2020) and the cycle of blaming the victim and underachievement are perpetuated.

Hands-off parents vs. hands-on parents. Three of the ten participants reported that a benefit of working at their Title I campus was parents did not question their curriculum decisions or instructional practices. The participants believed this was a desirable factor for them to remain at their school. Anna acknowledged that she could go to the “other side of town and teach in an affluent school with less diversity with much more parent support,” but she chose her current school. Anna’s conscious choice was symptomatic of teacher bias on a broader scale and assumptions about parents with children in high-needs schools.

Anna described the unique professional factors associated with teaching in a Title I school, compared to an affluent school:

I feel like, at an affluent school, you trade your student problems for parent problems, in a lot of respects. I'm going to spend more time dealing with parents, then it'll take my focus away from the students, and I'm in it for the students. I'm not in it for the parents. I mean I want to work with parents. I want to be allies with parents, but they can't be my focus. The students absolutely have to be my focus, so working in a high-needs Title I school is where I feel like I have the most impact on our future as a nation, like community, a nation, a world.

Although not about her current situation, Carly divulged a similar perspective about a prior campus that was highly affluent:

[Previously] I was thrown into dealing with upper-end income parents that were very supportive, but very, kind of, know-it-all about my teaching job—my new teaching job.

Kimberly acknowledged how she felt working with the population of students she currently serves at her high-needs campus:

I am so comfortable in...with this population. I think if ... [I]went to the other side of the spectrum ... it would be so new to me to have whatever parents calling and asking about curriculum or asking about report cards. I mean, I don't get those kinds of questions from my parents.

Kimberly viewed this “hands-off” approach by the parents in her current school as positive. For her, not having constant parent inquiries and calls was perceived as a benefit.

Deficit thinking was expressed by all ten participants about parents, parent involvement, parenting, and/or students’ language and cultures. These views were expressed by all participants in this study and aligned with what has been found in the research (Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Reed, 2020; Valencia, 1997). According to Reed (2020), the implications of deficit thinking often lead to detrimental outcomes for students, as “educators may subconsciously absolve all responsibility in providing sufficient academic and/or behavioral support to historically marginalized groups of students by attributing the problem to internal factors such as poverty and home life” (p. 13). Gadowski (2019) asserts the importance of teachers of “at risk” students, emphasizing that students “need a strong caring teacher who understands their cultural diversity align with their social and emotional needs” (p. 8). Dominant themes that

emerged as related to deficit thinking are the high value placed on minimal parent involvement in the teaching decisions of the participants and the perceived “deficiencies” that students attending Title I schools bring with them. Consequently, teachers in this sample did not report valuing students’ funds of knowledge (Moll et al.,1992), such as their different cultural backgrounds, linguistic differences, and bodies of knowledge, nor report incorporating them into instruction. In contrast, Gay (2000) emphasizes:

the need for educators to redirect their orientation to teaching students of color who are not doing well in school away from the "don't have, can't do" orientation toward a "do have, can do" mindset. Translating this mindset into instructional action begins with accepting the cultural knowledge and skills of ethnically diverse students as valuable teaching—learning resources and using them as scaffolds or bridges to academic achievement. (p. 181)

Rather than viewing differences as deficits, Gay makes a strong case for viewing them as assets that should be incorporated into culturally responsive instruction. This principal is important and relates to this study because deficit beliefs result in inequitable instruction.

Savior Perspective

Along with the deficit perspectives discussed in the previous section, three teachers also expressed beliefs about their roles in the students and parents’ lives. Their beliefs, grounded in a deficit perspective, manifested as a savior complex, and their actions were intent on filling the perceived void for their students and families.

The savior perspective or savior complex—more specifically referred to as White savior complex—is defined as “White people of privilege working in underserved communities...entering the space with a conscious or subconscious mentality that they

will rescue or save the underserved communities, just by being there” (Reed, 2018, p. 5). According to Reed (2018), the savior perspective can become problematic because, in some forms, it reinforces the notion that the teacher is the hero, saving students from inherent flaws that only the teacher can address and fix.

Three of the ten participants demonstrated this perspective in relationship to the various communities they engaged with. These three participants, Jessica, Anna, and Amber shared their reasons for their professional decision to remain in their current schools in which they worked. They expressed how serving a “high needs” campus was their “mission work” or their “gift,” and teaching was a “service” in a religious context. Jessica came to teaching after becoming a mother and could not keep up with the demands of her corporate job, which involved travel and commitments on the weekends. She disclosed she was drawn to and stayed in teaching because, as “a religious person,” she explained, “I feel like that this is my gift and this is my service.” Similarly, Anna stated:

I see it as kind of my mission work. That I wouldn't have the time to do any mission work outside of school during the school year, so I've got to kind of count this as that. So, it makes me feel better about, you know, giving a little bit more than I would.

Anna went on to explain, "These kids need it, and it's my way of reaching them...I mean, I see it as like personally part of my mission work." Anna then went on to explain:

These kids need me more than kids on the other side of town. I feel like I'm making a much greater impact on these kids' actual total lives, as opposed to

being a nice teacher that taught them some math, if that makes sense. I feel like I can impact their lives and hopefully their parents' lives.

Anna identified herself as playing a key role in the lives of her students and even extended her view to having an "impact" on the lives of the students' parents.

Amber explained that she chose a high-needs school because she felt that "working in low income socioeconomically [school] ... gives me an opportunity to make a difference, so I feel blessed to be where I am and able to connect and show love and make a difference with these kids."

While not evidenced in data from remaining seven participants, these three participants expressed perspectives that reflected the savior complex. Jessica grounded her service in a religious perspective. As she expressed, Jessica stayed in her position to fulfill a personal need that was grounded in her religious calling. Jessica's perspective is one of self-sacrifice, as she perceived her current role as settling for a less desirable position than she would have obtained elsewhere. Anna saw it as her mission to be in her position. She had a charge to serve and there were sacrifices being made to serve in her role at a high-needs campus that could not be fulfilled at a more affluent campus. Amber's mindset whether intentional or unintentional, can be interpreted as self-serving, as she remained at the Title I campus to "save" the students and help them from what she believed are unfortunate circumstances.

These three teachers appeared to believe it was their calling to "rescue or save" the students in the underserved schools in which they worked. These perspectives stemmed from beliefs that students are not able to get what they need due to the circumstances they were in. Anna extended this perspective to the parents needing her

help as well, reasoning that the parents were not capable of helping themselves because of their economic circumstances. These views appear noble at face value but are problematic. As Gadomski (2019) contended, “Savior Perspective leads to pity, which leads to a deficit in teaching and a subtractive model of teaching” (p. 25). A teacher’s job is to teach, not to pity and save children or their parents. The way to impact children is to have high expectations for their learning and give them the best education possible.

The concept of teachers filling their role as a “savior” is not new. McKenzie (2001) found the savior perspective in one of the teachers she interviewed for her study on White teacher’s perceptions of their own racial identity and their views of students of color. McKenzie (2001) reported that the savior perspective is a broader, deficit perspective, and the findings of from her study align with those from Gadomski (2019). In the study of nine teachers who preferred to work in diverse schools, Gadomski discussed the role that the savior complex plays in the discussion of what “Whiteness” is. She posited, “One common story is that students of color need to be saved, which led teachers to believe that they must approach teaching as the savior” (p. 25). With regard to the savior complex, Reed (2018) found participants fell along a continuum of understanding their Whiteness. This continuum was defined by Hardiman (1982) as 5 stages:

- (1) No Social Consciousness, which is characterized by a lack of awareness of racial differences and racism;
- (2) Acceptance, which is characterized by the acceptance of White racist beliefs and behaviors and the unconscious identification with Whiteness;
- (3) Resistance, which is characterized by the rejection of internalized racist beliefs and messages and a rejection of Whiteness;

(4) Redefinition, which is characterized by the development of a new White identity that transcends racism; (5) Internalization, which is characterized by the integration of the new White identity into all other aspects of the identity, and into consciousness and behavior. (p. viii)

Analysis of interview data from Jessica, Anna, and Amber shows they fall in the first stage of Hardiman's continuum. Furthermore, these three participants lacked cultural awareness and an understanding of their own deficit perspectives, and this unawareness contributed to their beliefs about the dichotomy between students' socioeconomic status and education. This dichotomy created a tension for the teachers, due to their unconscious identification with Whiteness as Hardiman (1982) outlined, which in turn led to and reinforced deficit thinking. As a result, teachers made concessions and lowered expectations and standards as their way of "supporting" students, rather than maintaining rigorous standards of culturally responsive instruction and curriculum.

In summary, of the three major themes and sub-themes presented in this section, stress management was found to be a beneficial factor for teachers in this study. Participants employed a variety of stress-mitigation techniques, including setting boundaries between work and personal life, managing stress such as end of term deadlines, and discussing issues with colleagues to obtain support for stressors. Participants expressed various deficit-thinking perspectives about students and parents, using expressions such as "absent parents," "*those* kids," and "I don't look at race or gender." These perspectives were based on their beliefs about the roles parents should fill, their perceived lack of parental involvement, their discounting of students' funds of knowledge, culture and experiences, and some teachers' calling to save their students.

Professional Factors

For this study, themes categorized as professional factors were identified as areas that teachers cannot control and are related to organizational features. Professional factors are defined by Ingersoll (2001) as organizational factors. Research by Boden-McGill and Sedivy-Benton (2012) characterized professional factors as environmental. All three terms (professional factors, organizational features, environmental factors) encompass areas such as salary, administrative leadership styles, and expected arrival and departure times for employees. The professional factors related to teacher longevity in this study were rooted in the themes of administrator support, trust, and autonomy. Administrator support was a precursor to teacher trust and teacher autonomy. Tschannen-Moran (2009) associates leaders' roles in management with teacher outcomes and posited:

A bureaucratic orientation embodies an implicit distrust of teachers and the contributions they have to offer, whereas a professional orientation is grounded in trust—specifically, that teachers have the knowledge and ethical orientations to be granted greater autonomy and discretion in the conduct of their work. (p. 220)

A professional orientation is demonstrated by administrators treating teachers as professionals and providing guided autonomy; in contrast, a bureaucratic position is often demonstrated by administrators becoming micro-managers. In education, administrators oversee teachers and hold expectations of their behavior as an employee of the district. The level of trust and autonomy and the continued employment of a teacher is under the administrator's direct control.

Administrator Support, Trust, and Teacher Autonomy

Six of the participants mentioned a supportive administration at the time of the interview. Administrator support was defined as sharing power with teachers (Ingersoll, 2003), coaching teachers to develop their instructional skills, and collaborating with them to share professional knowledge (Tschannen-Moran, 2004), actions that ultimately strengthen trust between faculty and administration (Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

Anna's school was designated as "Improvement Required" (IR) due to the campus earning an unsatisfactory rating based on the overall State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores. Anna valued the conversations with her administration on how to address the required improvements for the campus. Anna described how this challenge required authentic conversations and collaboration between teachers and administrators:

So being an IR campus, I think, really causes you to come together and work harder, work smarter. We have those really frank conversations that you're not allowed to ignore when you've been an improvement required campus. I think it makes us a little bit more real about students and teaching. So, I've probably had conversations with administrators that you wouldn't normally have the opportunity to if everybody is just kind of skating by.

Anna appreciated the feedback and candor her administrator provided. She believed the conversations helped identify the areas of growth for teachers to meet the needs of all the learners.

Kimberly highlighted the importance of administrative support. "I've always felt very supported," she explained, "I really haven't butted heads or anything with any admin

and, to be honest, I haven't really needed them." Kimberly described how anytime administration conducted observations of her class, their comments were "positive," and administration considered her a "leader on the campus." Kimberly did not receive much corrective feedback, nor had she "needed" additional support. Her administrators' acknowledgement of her teacher leadership skills contributed to her positive view of the relationships with her administration.

Donna valued the support she received through communication with administrators, describing how she had "really strong supportive admin staff" and "they're easy to talk ... always open." She felt as if "you can walk in their office anytime." She went on to explain, "If there's problems there, they always want to hear what's going on, and [they] really do try to help to resolve any issues or lend support, when they're needed." As she stated, "I just feel supported here. Honestly, it is one of the main reasons that I stay." Donna's positive relationship with administration was more than effective communication; they were always available to problem solve and provide support. Consequently, Donna felt valued, heard, and supported.

Vanessa echoed Donna's sentiments regarding her campus administration. Vanessa reported feeling supported by the administration, especially when she needed it to become successful in her job. She explained, "You get support when you need it. If you need help, help is readily available."

Teachers across the schools reported that administrators gave candid feedback aimed at helping them grow, recognized teachers' skills, were easy to communicate with, had an open-door policy, wanted to be kept abreast of problems, and helped problem-

solve and/or provided support. These findings were aligned with what Tschannen-Moran (2009,2014) and Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) found as factors in their research.

Eight of the ten participants discussed the importance of trust and/or teacher autonomy as essential in staying at their current schools. Trust was defined in the context of school leadership as a willingness to be vulnerable to another person based on confidence that the person is honest, open, benevolent, reliable, and competent (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Tschannen-Moran (2013) posited that trust between administrators and teachers was foundational and had an impact on many components of the school, such as climate and, ultimately, teacher performance.

Amber explained that, although her school leaders wanted to control every aspect of the school and took a "micromanaging" approach at first, once trust was established, they trusted teachers "to make the best decisions for our classroom. They trust[ed] us to plan. I feel like some of the micromanaging that we had at the beginning has been lifted, so I feel trust[ed]." Similar to Amber, Lisa described her sense of autonomy provided by the leadership of her school:

The two principals I've worked under have been very good about allowing teachers, a certain amount of flexibility. You know they're checking in and they're making sure we're doing the important things, but I don't...I've never worked under a principal who is very, who micromanages the classroom. And so, I don't have that as a comparison, but I like knowing that my principal trusts me to be doing my job. She doesn't feel like she has to come in and check every tiny little thing to make sure that all the boxes are done.

At the time of the interview, Amber and Lisa did not characterize their administrators as micromanagers. Lisa felt that campus administrators were more trusting, but they continued to verify that certain tasks were completed. Lisa added how teachers' trust in their administrators was important too:

... there's a lot of things in schools that aren't obvious. The things that happen, and, you know, there's always [things that happen] between the classroom and the office and administration. There's definitely a lot of things that happen that you don't get to directly be a part of or get to see all of it. So, it [trusting the principal] is valuable. It is good to know that my principal has my best interests at heart.

Amber explained, "I feel like there's this mutual trust now where they [administration] trust us to make the best decisions for our classroom, they trust us to plan." Kacey added that trust leads to autonomy and concluded, "Once she [the principal] trusts you, she's going to let you do your job." When discussing trust, Kimberly stated:

That's a huge part of why I think I've wanted to stay at the schools for the autonomy...I think that it would be a huge challenge if someone said this is a week that you're reading this book and doing this lesson, so I definitely feel like I've had autonomy the whole time. Lots of freedom to, you know, to teach what I want when I want. I guess as long as I'm, you know, meeting the pre-K guidelines.

Lisa, Amber, and Kimberly all mentioned the level of trust that they have had from their administrators in the past, which led to their autonomy and to their longevity as teachers. Teachers who felt entrusted to teach the students and make decisions felt empowered and supported enough to remain in their professional position.

These findings on administrator support, trust and teacher autonomy are consistent with Tschannen-Moran's (2009) work, that is, administrative support precedes administrative trust. From the participants' perspectives in this study, when principals provided support, such as authentic conversations, collaboration, constructive feedback, acknowledgement of teacher leadership skills, open two-way communication, and problem-resolution support, teachers felt they had the autonomy to fulfill their job responsibilities. Teachers who were granted autonomy and not "micromanaged" reported autonomy as a significant factor in their longevity as teachers.

Interrelated Factors

The overlap of factors that involved teachers' locus of control (what teachers can directly control) and professional influences such as teachers' professional obligations related to their role as a teacher were classified as interrelated. The convergence of the expectations related to the teachers' job and their level of caring is a product of both personality and effort. More specifically, Maazouzi (2019) found that teachers' personality shapes their behavior and impacts student learning outcomes. Maazouzi (2019) also found that the way in teachers present themselves impacts not only students but also colleagues and parents. Teachers are required to interact with parents and other stakeholders; however, teachers' personal perspectives (personalities) and professional roles determined the level of engagement. Subsequently, the convergence of the personal and professional aspects of teachers' relationships with stakeholders lead to the three areas identified as interrelated factors: student, coworker, and parent relationships.

Student Relationships

Positive relationships with students appeared as a critical factor in the participants' perceptions of the value of their role in Title I schools. All participants spoke to aspects of positive student relationships. Positive student relationships involved the efforts teachers made to build relationships with their students in order to impact student learning outcomes. Teachers reported building relationships with students through a variety of actions, including building trust, helping students feel safe, instilling a love for learning, looping up with students (where teachers move with their class as a cohort to the next grade), and communication through letters and home visits.

Anna perceived her primary role as a trust-builder. She disclosed, "It's very difficult to learn when you don't feel safe, so my number one job is to try to build trust." Kimberly shared a similar sentiment when she proclaimed, "Maybe my strongest suit ... I mean my whole goal is to get the kids comfortable feeling safe and really just like love learning and love school." Both Anna and Kimberly prioritized making the students feel safe. Kimberly's emphasis on safety stemmed from experiences with one student who displayed aggressive behavior in the classroom. She explained, "I can't teach because someone [a student] is knocking chairs over and I was concerned about the children's safety every minute of every day." Anna spoke more generally and stated that some students "immigrated under really scary circumstances or they're just not safe at home."

Lisa described how she feels when former students come back to visit and gave insight into the positive relationships she developed:

I am a strict teacher. I have high expectations, and I expect things to be followed through, but, you know, I've had kids come back, and they're like, "you are strict,

but you do it because you want better, because you care. So, I feel like that's the message that I want to get across for them...I care about them.

Lisa was the only participant that mentioned that students valued her "strictness" as contributing to the positive relationships they had with her.

Vanessa explained how working with the same students from year to year was beneficial:

I feel like I have really positive relationships with my kids. One thing that's really neat with the GT [Gifted and Talented] program is I have the same kids every year, so we can just build on that. ...Like my fourth graders that I had this year, and I've had them since kindergarten. So, it's just been really neat to see them grow, and you just really get to know them.

Vanessa had the benefit of years with the same students, and that time and continuity allowed her to develop "positive relationships" with her students as they progressed through the grade levels.

Amber's positive relationships with her students came from making personal connections through home visits and communicating through letters:

I put a lot of effort into building relationships. I mail things home, letters before we start. I try to. It's definitely been more difficult this year [with] technology issues. We've not been able to connect with all of them, but we were able to go visit their homes at the beginning of the year and drop supplies off, so I feel like it was good for us to see them.

Amber was the only participant that mentioned reaching out to families to provide supplies as an additional way to begin developing trust and creating opportunities for developing partnerships between the families and the teacher.

Building positive relationships with students was an area that participants spoke about fondly. These relationships seemed to fuel many of the teachers in their day-to-day work. Teacher participants cited student relationships as an interrelated factor that helped keep them in their positions. Teachers employed several strategies to establish, build, and maintain relationships with their students, which included conducting home visits, writing personal letters [to students/parents] before school started, looping up with students (i.e., staying with the same group of students from one year to the next), and setting high expectations. These opportunities for fostering student relationships are aligned with Greenfield (2015), who found that teachers' forming a positive relationship with students positively affected the learning environment and reduced disruptive behavior. Further, Klein (2017) reported that positive relationships with students was a reason a 35-year veteran teacher remained in the field for so long. This concept was also found in Arroyo's (2020) multiple case study with seven teachers in Title I schools. The study analyzed the association between teacher identity and retention and found that a strong student-to-teacher relationship was a significant part in teacher retention among participants.

Coworker Relationships

Coworker relationships were defined as the collegial relationships that teachers established with their coworkers which could be, at times, personal and key to promoting teachers' wellbeing (Greenfield, 2015). Most participants in this study reported having a

great relationship with their coworkers, not only interacting with them in a work setting, but also spending time together outside of work. Relationships developed from a number of factors, such as supporting each other at work by providing assistance with students, sharing the same expectations for students, working with each other for several years, compatible personalities, seeking advice from each other, and socializing together. (Greenfield, 2015; Kurtz, 2015).

Kimberly admitted that, even though she has a different teaching style than her coworker, some good outcomes resulted from them working together. She explained:

[My coworker] is very supportive...especially this last year when I've had [student] behavior issues, [the coworker said] 'let me take this kid for rest time [student nap time] or, she would send her TA [teaching assistant] over to help me sometimes. I definitely felt support in that way.

Kimberly valued the support and effort from her coworkers in how they supported the work she undertook.

Sarah spoke about the strong relationship she had with her kindergarten team because they were united by the same expectations they held for students, and they got along with each other:

We all had high expectations for our students, so we would set the standard for them, and they performed really well. And my specials [e.g. Music, Art, P.E.] group—currently, I've been with the same art teacher for 15 years. We've both been there together, and ...we just get along, and it's neat to see, like, our kinder team. They all get along great... each grade level has certain personalities that match them, and they all work well together.

Sarah's relationship with her colleagues as well as her alignment with teaching expectations and beliefs were held in high regard from her point of view. The ability of her team to get along was also mentioned as significant to relationships with her coworkers.

Jessica shared a unique perspective on her collegial relationships. As the eldest member of the team, she appreciated others seeking her advice and how they "tend to come to me and ask me questions." Jessica valued the knowledge base she was able to provide to her team.

Donna went even further to describe her team as "family" and "community." Beyond just work-related collaboration, she and her team took part in "social events" and "get-togethers." She expressed sadness about the special circumstances of distance learning (because of Covid-19), sharing that it had been "kind of hard not seeing the staff as often as we have in the past. But we have a family community of teachers here."

Amber expressed a similar sentiment, claiming "My team is the best team. We work really well together. We complement each other well." She also mentioned that she and her teaching partner had been together for eight years, for her entire tenure at the school. Donna and Amber valued their teams and expressed feelings of sadness about being separated from their teams during the early times of the Covid-19 pandemic, when in-person learning shifted to virtual instruction.

Kurtz (2015) found in his study of teacher retention factors that the collegial relationship for elementary teachers was even more pronounced than for secondary teachers due to school structures leading to a more collaborative environment. Kurtz's (2015) findings, also demonstrated in this study, indicated there could be many

components of coworker relationships spanning beyond professional interactions and moving into personal interactions outside of work. In this study, it was found that building and maintaining lasting coworker relationships was supported by a variety of factors, such as teachers aiding each other with students, sharing the same expectations for students, working with each other for several years, having compatible personalities, seeking advice from each other, and socializing together during their tenure. These findings are similar to those from Kurtz (2015) in which collegial friendships, respect, and cooperation with peers were found to be influential factors in teachers' decisions to stay.

Parent-Teacher Relationships

Santiago, Garbacz, Beattie, and Moore (2016) found that trust is a critical part of parent-teacher relationships and parents' educational involvement. Further, parent-teacher relationships correlated with positive student behavior outcomes. To build trust with parents, there must be established relationships with them, beginning with efforts from the teachers and school administrators to reach out to families. In this study, slightly more than half of the participants mentioned the importance of parent relationships. For example, Kimberly pointed to the struggle parents experienced with her school's half-day programming in Pre-K, as it involved limitations with transportation for pre-K students and did not coincide with parents' work schedules. She empathized with parents trying to make it work, often sending another family member to pick up the child or needing their child to cross a busy street because they did not have transportation from school at dismissal. In light of challenges such as these, Kimberly perceived her role as connecting

parents with resources that they may need. She described her approach to building parent-teacher relationships as “non-judgmental” and focused on providing “help.” She stated,

...when they’re looking at me, and they probably have a perception of me, thinking that I could have a perception of them. ...I’m aware of that, I guess. So, I definitely try my hardest just to be open and accepting and non-judgmental, and that I’m here for you [parents]. I can help you with any services. If I can’t help you, I can help connect you with someone who can.

Jessica’s approach to building relationships with parents was to view it as a partnership focused on supporting their child. She noted, “I tend to try to partner with their parents and build a relationship with the students first before I ever ask anything of them.” Jessica went on to share that she “felt like that respect isn’t demanded, it’s something that is earned, and it goes both ways.” This statement suggested that there was an expectation that the parents would respect her because she earned it, and the parents would have to do the same to earn her respect.

Regarding the unique situation of distance learning that occurred during this study, Donna noted the positive benefits of remote instruction, including more parent participation and opportunities to connect:

I know my parents a lot better now than I think I ever have in any other year that I’ve taught because we’re face-to-face [online] so much more. And they have to help their child log on because a five-year-old can’t do that. So, there’s a huge amount of parent participation that’s actually taking place that I’ve never had before, so...that’s been kind of different this year. [It’s been] a great “thank you.”

Donna depended on parents to play a key role in facilitating instruction during the remote instruction of students.

Vanessa had a similar perspective and wanted to partner with parents when they contacted her. “I just kind of hear them out,” she explained, “and then I try to come up with a solution. Let’s work together, kind of a deal.” Although some teachers’ emphasized relationships with parents, many did not. This is concerning because the lack of attention to parent-teacher relationships can lead to limited outcomes in other areas, such as parent trust, involvement, and negative student behavior (Santiago et al., 2016).

Santiago et al. (2016) administered a survey to 212 parents of students in kindergarten through fourth grade in the Pacific Northwest. Overall, 47% of the participants were eligible for free or reduced lunch pricing, meaning they were lower-income earners for their family size. The findings indicated that parents of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch were less trusting of teachers and the school compared to parents of students that did not qualify for free and reduce lunch. Parent trust was a critical component in the improvement of student behavior. Lastly, parents who reported a higher trust level reported that they were more involved with the school. Positive parent-teacher relationships were a factor for the teacher’s longevity in Santiago et al. (2016).

Teachers in this study shared that they valued the relationships they had with stakeholders. With students, teachers made efforts in building trust, helping students feel safe, sharing and instilling a love for learning, choosing to loop up with students, and communication through letters and home visits. With coworkers, the participants noted the importance of their relationships with colleagues, which resulted in support of each

other with students, sharing commonalities such as similar expectations for students, having compatible personalities, and socializing outside of work. Parent-teacher relationships were of importance to the participants. Teachers often connected parents with resources, built partnerships, and sought parent support with virtual learning.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to identify and analyze the perceptions and experiences of mid-career White female teachers in high-needs suburban schools as related to the research questions through the lens of grounded theory. Ten participants were interviewed for this study. Interview questions centered around reasons the participants have been able to remain in a high-needs school to the mid-point in their careers.

The results from the seven identified themes were confirmed in the literature as findings; however, the two themes of deficit perspective and savior perspective emerged, and they are not presented in previous literature as reasons teachers stay in high-needs campuses. The unexpected responses and unsolicited answers provided by the participants offered more context and revealed teachers' various levels of deficit perspectives of families and students, a finding across all ten participants. However, deficit thinking also emerged as a factor that kept teachers in their school. While stress management, student relationships, administrator trust, autonomy and support were confirmed in the literature as factors contributing to teacher longevity, deficit thinking and its manifestations (i.e., savior perspective) were also documented as factors supporting teachers' longevity in this study. An explanation of these factors and their contribution to the emergent theory is further described in Chapter V. Although there is an abundance of research on these two topics, these areas have not been previously cited

in the literature as factors connected to teacher longevity. The next chapter will provide additional details on the seven themes and recommendations for ensuring the longevity of effective teachers in Title 1 schools.

V. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to examine the factors related to teacher retention among White female teachers working in Title I schools, specifically factors related to their decisions to remain in the profession into their mid-career. This chapter includes discussion of the major findings as related to the literature on teacher retention and attrition, the role that deficit thinking plays in teachers' longevity, the role of principals in teachers' longevity, as well as implications of potential value for teacher preparation programs and educational policy. Included in this chapter is a connection between the findings of this study and an emergent theory. The chapter concludes with a discussion of focus areas for future research and a summary of this research study.

The discussion of findings, along with recommendations for Title I schools and future research, related to this study's research questions, which were:

What factors do mid-career teachers working in Title I schools exhibit?

- What are the personal factors leading to a mid-career teacher remaining in a Title I school?
- What are the professional factors leading to a mid-career teacher remaining in a Title I school?
- What are the interrelated factors (personal and professional) leading to a mid-career teacher remaining in a Title I school?

The themes identified were 1) stress management; 2) deficit thinking; 3) savior perspective; 4) administrator support, trust, and teacher autonomy; 5) student relationships; 6) coworker relationships; and 7) parent-teacher relationships. The themes were grouped according to the research questions, and thus categorized as Personal

(stress management, deficit thinking, and savior perspective), Professional (administrator support, trust, and teacher autonomy), and Interrelated (student relationships, coworker relationships, and parent-teacher relationships).

Discussion of the Findings

Findings of the overarching research question: *What factors do mid-career teachers working in Title I schools exhibit?* are discussed below.

Personal Factors

One salient personal factor related to teacher retention found in the study was stress management and how teachers deal with work-related stressors. Findings from this study indicated that job-related stress from teaching in a Title I school stemmed from the demands of the teaching workload, time management, and student behavior. Each teacher adopted their own method to address the stress they faced in their roles, such as leaving their laptop charger at school to limit the time they allowed themselves to work at home or talking with colleagues to process the stress and receive moral and support. The literature (Bitsadze & Japaridze, 2014; Clement, 2017; Fernet et.al, 2014; Fives et al., Gu & Day, 2013; Paquette & Rieg, 2016; Solomonson & Retallick, 2018) well-supports the importance of stress mitigation strategies for teachers to manage the challenges they face and remain in the profession.

A second personal factor identified in this study was deficit thinking, which also includes the savior perspective. During their interviews, all participants shared deficit perspectives about the parents and/or the students that they served. These beliefs were based on generalizations, anecdotal evidence, and assumptions about the level of support and capabilities of the parents to raise their children. A smaller subset of teachers

exhibited a savior perspective, which is rooted in a deficit perspective. The savior perspective was demonstrated through teachers' descriptions of their decisions to stay in "high needs" schools as a "calling" and of teaching as "mission" work with less fortunate children. A search of the literature produced many studies on deficit thinking (Gadomski, 2019; García & Guerra, 2007; Moll et al., 1992; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Petts, 2020; Reed, 2020; Walker, 2011; Valencia, 1997) and the savior perspective (Gadomski, 2019; McKenzie, 2001; Reed, 2018), but these perspectives have not been connected to teacher longevity in their roles.

Professional Factors

Professional factors found in this study were centered on the relationships the teachers had with school leaders. Administrator support, trust, and teacher autonomy were factors identified in this study. These factors were key to teacher job satisfaction, and teachers attributed their longevity in their roles to the level of administrative support they received, the implicit trust in them shown by their administrators, and the perceived autonomy they had to make their own teaching and classroom decisions.

Interrelated Factors

An interrelated factor found in this study was the importance of teachers' relationships with students, coworkers, and parents. The teachers shared efforts they made in initiating and encouraging these relationships, but the dynamics of the relationships, especially with the parents, were grounded in deficit perspectives.

Emergent Theory

While deficit thinking is not a new concept, the implications for it as a factor that keeps teachers in their respective schools to their mid-career is a significant finding. This

finding led to an emergent theory that suggests mid-career teachers are staying in Title I schools, not solely for the love of teaching, but in part because they are being left alone and, in turn, unchallenged to address their deficit perspectives.

Clegg and Bailey (2008) define emergent theory as:

an outcome of organization research in which theory is allowed to come to light through a systematic data collection and analysis process called grounded theory, a research approach committed to discovery, direct contact with the social phenomenon of interest, and a rejection of explicit a priori theorizing. (p. 426)

As found in this study, even though the schools in which the teachers worked continued to struggle academically (Texas Education Agency, 2019), teachers reported a level of support, trust and autonomy provided to them by their administration. Teachers valued the autonomy to make their own decisions and guide their work, and they reported to have control over their own teaching and the ability to create a learning environment with their own methods and forms of assessing student progress. However, this autonomy was not without negative consequences. Unchallenged instructional practices and deficit perspectives perpetuated teachers' deficit thinking and reinforced the savior complex, as evidenced by these schools' continuous underperformance on state accountability measures. Consequently, these findings point to a need for training on culturally and linguistically responsive approaches to teaching and developing awareness of the cultural and linguistic assets of students and their families to address teachers' deficit thinking. Teacher and administrative preparation programs need to make this learning part of any preparation or certification program. While teachers being "left alone" with unchallenged deficit thinking and instructional practices as a factor of them staying in their positions is

proposed as an emergent theory, it needs to be studied and confirmed on a broader scale for Title 1 schools statewide or nationally.

Figure 1 (below) shows how deficit perspectives informed the emergent theory of teacher longevity. The school leaders supervising teachers in this study imparted trust and unguided autonomy, which perpetuated teachers' deficit perspectives. The failure of school leaders to evaluate and address teachers' actions left problematic instructional practices unchallenged. As a result of being "left alone," mid-career teachers remained in their roles in low achieving schools, as indicated by these schools' state accountability ratings (C's, D's, and an F).

Emergent Theory of Teacher Longevity

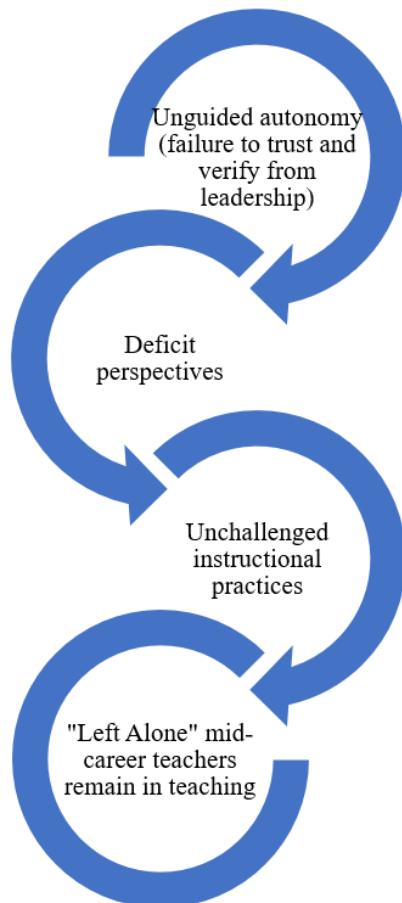


Figure 1. Emergent theory of teacher longevity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research study, there are recommendations for leadership preparation, leadership practice and policy, and future research. The suggested recommendations can have far reaching implications, as they directly impact student outcomes.

Recommendations for Leadership Preparation

Leadership preparation is a key factor in the development of future leaders. Preparation programs can vary from traditional teacher preparation programs to alternative certification programs; thus, the skills that teachers develop are highly variable, and programs can include deficits in developing teachers' cultural competence (Calvecchio, 2018). With this deficit in teacher preparation identified, it is critical that school leaders not only be competent in assessing teacher effectiveness on students' academic performance (Walker, 2011), but also be able to implement, "a process focused on the professional growth of teachers with the end goal of creating more equitable educational environments for all students" (Jacobs, 2014, p. 4).

Jacobs (2016) provides several strands for supervisors of teachers to guide leaders in the work. These strands include: 1) moral dimensions, 2) critical inquiry, and 3) culturally responsive supervision. The three strands form a supervisory social justice lens. Through the moral dimension, "supervisors support the moral community of the school not just the individual teachers, by upholding the shared beliefs and values of the school community" (Jacobs, 2016, p. 223). Jacobs further frames critical inquiry. Supervision encourages questioning the policies and practices implemented in schools and provides students agency while teachers interact with the community and have support with new

teaching practices (2016). Culturally responsive supervision involves awareness of students' cultural backgrounds and how their language and culture impact their performance as well as school practices that are inequitable (Jacobs, 2016). Leaders will need to be well versed in these areas to better support teachers and even their own development.

Recommendations for Leadership Practice

The concept of building relationships is universally known as a factor that needs to be in place for the success of the teachers and the school, yet the teacher-administrator relationship is not consciously developed by leaders at every school, and the dynamics of that relationship are sometimes ignored (Hogan, 2007) Therefore, it is important that school leaders provide training and discussion on the different types of relationships that teachers develop with the students (Arroyo 2020; Greenfield, 2015; Klein, 2017), coworkers (Greenfield, 2015; Kurtz, 2017), parents (Santiago et.al, 2016), and school leaders (Tschannen-Moran, 2013). Specifically, leaders should explore the ways these relationships could be improved to maximize the experiences for all stakeholders.

Additionally, all staff members need to have training on cultural responsiveness. Both Nelson and Guerra (2014) and Calvecchio (2018) found that a lack of teacher preparation in cultural competency can lead to teacher failure and to deficit thinking. Cultural responsiveness training would help school leaders identify their own and other educators' implicit and explicit biases and, more importantly, afford educators the skills to identify beliefs and practices within themselves that may result in a "subtractive model of teaching" (Gadomski, 2019, p. 25). For example, Helms' (1995) White racial identity development model could be used to assess where individuals are in their current state

and how individuals respond to other races. The model goes further to provide the next steps needed to move to the next level and beyond. This model provides a process for reframing deficit beliefs and challenging each person to self-evaluate their perspectives and intentions that might be leading to detrimental classroom practices (Guerra & Nelson 2007; Nelson & Guerra, 2007; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). In this process, leaders need to acknowledge “that teachers are well intentioned individuals who lack adequate cultural knowledge and skills to dispel their deficit beliefs...” (Guerra & Nelson, 2009, p. 357).

Finally, school leaders should gather and evaluate evidence as to why staff choose to work and remain in high-needs schools and ensure staff are there for the “right” reason, which is to help students learn and succeed. The service perspective is noble, as teachers put forth the effort in their work; however, in light of the findings of this study, staff need to be equipped with the skills to evaluate and reframe their deficit thinking, increase their cultural awareness, and transform their instruction. In addition to helping students, the practice of self-reflection to frame challenges that teachers face personally and professionally will bring a level of self-care to the staff (i.e., assist with stress management), as well as contribute to more meaningful relationships between all stakeholders. Thus, these findings highlight the call to action for campus leaders to champion this work in their own practice, implementing it themselves and supporting staff in doing the same.

Recommendations for Policy

The 86th Texas legislature passed House Bill 3, which supplies many supports and programs for schools, including funding (Texas Education Agency, 2021). One area that was introduced through the bill was the concept of the Teacher Incentive Allotment

(TIA). TIA uses a local designation system, or the National Board Certification, to identify teachers that meet specified criteria and increase their compensation accordingly, with funding supplied by the state of Texas (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2021).

The National Board Certification includes criteria as part of the National Board certification that are considered culturally responsive and are embedded in the Five Core Propositions (2021); however, the Texas local designation system is based on traditional observation instruments, student assessment growth measures, and other factors as determined by the district (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2021). The evaluation process set forth from TEA to evaluate local criteria to assign a teacher a designation is based on:

- The alignment between teacher observation ratings and student performance ratings.
- The alignment between student performance ratings and value-added ratings for applicable teachers.
- The data validity by appraiser/rater, by campus, across campuses in a district, and by teaching assignment.
- Comparisons of district data to state data by comparing the percentage of teachers a district puts forth for designation to overall district performance. (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2021)

A policy recommendation suggested by the findings of this study is to align the TEA validation process with the National Board Certification, which better defines the criteria to ensure that teachers have adequate knowledge in general teaching practices and, more importantly, culturally responsive teaching practices. The underpinnings of these criteria are broadly captured by an educator, Heavenly Montgomery, in her blog

post featured on the National Board's Blog page. (Montgomery, 2020). Montgomery responded to the following Twitter post by The National Board for Professional Teaching:

The National Board is an anti-racist and inclusive organization. We believe educators must help students consider their role in a diverse world, value individual differences, and- especially in times such as these – we believe in the power of the teaching profession to defend what is good and right for all people. (National Board, 2020).

Montgomery (2020) responded to this post:

I felt empowered and acknowledged when I read the words from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The National Board's Standards and Five Core Propositions are embedded with anti-racist language to inspire educators and have an impact on students. Core Proposition 1 guides teachers to reflect on the personal bias that may impair professional judgment. The correct application of the National Board Core Proposition 1 compels teachers to confront bias that can impair their ability to deliver quality instruction to all students.

The Five Core Propositions (2021) of the National Board are: (a) Teachers are committed to students and their learning, (b) Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students, (c) Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring students' learning, (d) Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience, and (e) Teachers are members of learning communities.

The National Board goes further by adding four subcomponents, (a) content knowledge, (b) differentiation in instruction, (c) teaching practices and learning

environment, and (e) effective and reflective practitioner (National Board, 2021). The National Board's Cultural Proficiency Framework is not new, as Montgomery (2020) shared:

The Cultural Proficiency framework was introduced 15 years ago. It is my sincere hope that more educators will apply the National Board Core Propositions and Cultural Proficiency to enhance the student experience. I know that educator practice will not change all of the issues with educational policy, but the guiding principles shine a ray of light in the darkness.

In sum, the National Board provides a more comprehensive approach than the local criteria and aligning state criteria with the National Board could better ensure educators are meeting high standards, particularly in cultural proficiency. Further, currently teachers' TIA designations stay with the teacher, regardless of if they change positions, so a teacher may receive designation based on their performance at an affluent school and then transfer to a Title 1 school, where the teacher's performance might not necessarily meet the criteria. When teachers transfer among districts, there should be a shorter process to ensure that they meet local criteria, and state alignment with National Board standards could facilitate a more streamlined process.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are four areas recommended for future research that would help inform our understanding of teacher longevity in high-needs schools. First, although the emergent theory of this study suggests that many mid-career teachers are staying in Title I schools in part because their deficit beliefs and ineffective instructional practices go unchallenged, more research with larger teacher samples is needed to support this as a

factor in teacher longevity. Second, more studies are needed that include a wider range of teacher participants (e.g., grades 1 through 12) and those not only serving in Title I schools, but also in high-needs schools across the country serving diverse student populations. These additional studies would determine if this phenomenon occurs at other grade levels and with other student populations (e.g., White, Black, Asian Americans, students living in poverty). Third, more research is needed to examine if deficit perspectives are also exhibited by minoritized teachers, and if present, determine if their deficit perspectives are the result of the systems that prepared them or those of which they currently work. Finally, interviewing campus leaders to identify how they define trust and autonomy provided to teachers could be of value to the field.

Conclusion

There are many factors that keep teachers in their jobs. These factors can be categorized as personal, professional, and interrelated. This study identified the seven key factors of: 1) stress management; 2) deficit thinking; 3) savior perspective; 4) administrator support, trust, and teacher autonomy; 5) student relationships; 6) coworker relationships; and 7) parent-teacher relationships.

Through this research process, which was informed by my 20 years of experience in public education as a practitioner, I was able to understand many of the factors cited by the participants. I can confirm, as shown in the literature, that the ability of teachers to manage stress is a big part in keeping them in the profession. I have been a leader in Title I schools that served 55-60% economically disadvantaged students, and I observed teachers leave because of the stresses they experienced. I also realized the importance of the concept of administrator support, trust, and autonomy. Teachers want to be treated as

professionals, supported in their decisions, and trusted. One approach that I implemented was to trust but also verify that teachers were completing specified tasks by setting non-negotiable expectations, including those mandated by the district and state. What I did not expect from this study, and what surprised me most, was the presence of deficit thinking and the concept of the savior perspective as factors related to mid-career teachers' decisions to remain in their positions. In light of this finding, it is important to remember that, like most teachers in the field, the participants of this study entered the profession with a desire to help, but they were not equipped with "adequate cultural knowledge and skills to dispel their deficit beliefs..." (Guerra & Nelson, 2009, p. 357).

In reflection, I could find some of the concepts and thoughts shared by the teachers in my own thought processes not too long ago. It was during this study that I realized I too shared thoughts and perceptions similar to those of the participants prior to this research. I knew and had experience with parents who were less likely to call administrators or teachers to ask questions about curriculum or their student's academic progress. However, I observed that parents would call if there was a problem in the classroom or conflict at home that they needed assistance in navigating. I struggled and tried many different strategies, such as providing childcare for meetings and implementing various ways for parents to become involved with the school, to improve my relationship with parents. Parents did want to be part of their child's education, but there was not always a pathway to do so. Ultimately, I was able to help alleviate time constraints and language barriers by ensuring communication was delivered in a way that parents could access. To promote engagement, I ensured interpreters were available at events if needed.

As a leader I was able to identify some deficit perspectives in teachers. I would tell teachers that, when parents do not respond to an email or phone call, they should not assume that the parents do not care. Teachers' preconceived assumptions have the potential to affect how teachers treat students. For example, teacher may not hold a student to rigorous academic standards that their peers are held to. I also observed teachers in first grade say that a student "wasn't going to make it." When I asked how that determination had been made, the rationale for retaining the student was not provided and seemed to stem from a lack of family support. I asked the teacher to review and note the practices in place to engage families and students when students are with us on campus.

As a teacher and assistant principal earlier in my career, I do not think I identified as a savior myself. At that time, I remember thinking early on that I was there after having successfully navigated the public education system myself, now ready to impart my far-reaching knowledge to students that potentially could be the first in their families to reach education beyond high school. I struggled with the thoughts that I was there to help them navigate school norms for behavior and how to operate to get ahead. I also previously believed that the reason for opportunity gaps were mostly due to students being from working class or families living in poverty, and I was not aware of cultural and linguistic dimensions of education and systems-level issues that affect students.

Before this research, I felt that I had grown in my views and perspectives. However, during the initial coding process, I had difficulty naming and seeing that the participants had biased perspectives. Teachers served in their roles misinformed, and they had perspectives that fortified their perceived deficits of students and parents which led to

lower expectations for students and increased learning gaps. Focusing on the social needs of students is important, but if academic expectations are lowered, it is challenging to close students' learning gaps, a detrimental outcome to students' future. The thought arose as well, *would the participants be willing to share their perspectives if they truly thought they had a deficit mindset?* I say no. *Would participants be willing to share what they thought or did if I was not a White male?* Again, I say no. In summary I could identify with the perspectives some of the teachers shared at some point in my career, and an outcome of this study has been my growth in my perspectives and my journey as an educational leader who will find ways to best serve teachers, students, and families.

APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A: Social Media Recruitment Message

My name is Colby Self and I am working on my Ph.D. in school improvement through Texas State University. This message is an approved request for participation in research that has been approved or declared exempt by the Texas State Institutional Review Board (IRB).

This doctoral dissertation research study seeks to identify factors that have led to teacher longevity in the classroom. In order to participate you will need to meet the following criteria you must:

- Be in your tenth – fifteenth (10-15) year of teaching
- Be a White female
- Currently teach in a suburban Elementary Title I school with 75% or greater economically disadvantaged student population.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, there will be a short initial questionnaire that will take approximately 5 minutes to complete to obtain demographic information. This will be followed by an interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. There will also be one follow-up interview lasting approximately 30-minutes. You can message me directly or email at cs1227@txstate.edu.

Thank you,

Colby Self

APPENDIX B: Recruitment Email Following Social Media Recruitment

To:

From: Colby Self

BCC:

Subject: Research Participation Invitation:

This email message is an approved request for participation in research that has been approved or declared exempt by the Texas State Institutional Review Board (IRB). This doctoral dissertation research study seeks to identify factors that have led to teacher longevity in the classroom. In order to participate you will need to meet the following criteria you must:

- Be in your tenth – fifteenth (10-15) year of teaching
- Be a White female
- Currently teach in a suburban Elementary Title I school with 75% or greater economically disadvantaged student population.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, there will be a short initial questionnaire, which takes about 5 minutes to complete, to obtain demographic information. This will be followed by an interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. You will also be asked to participate in one follow-up interview lasting approximately 30-minutes. Interviews will be conducted electronically via Zoom or phone. All interviews and data collected will be confidential and secure. Your identity will be protected, and a pseudonym will be provided. This pseudonym will be used throughout the study. Your real name will not appear on any research document. The identity of participants will be known only to the me, the researcher.

If you are interested in finding out more about research participation, please email me. Thank you for your time.

This project #7296 was approved by the Texas State IRB on July 1, 2020 This project was approved by the Texas State IRB on July 1, 2020. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB Chair, Dr. Denise Gobert 512-716-2652 – (dgobert@txstate.edu) or to Monica Gonzales, IRB Regulatory Manager 512-245-2334 - (meg201@txstate.edu).

Questions about this research should be addressed to Colby Self, (512) 461-9387, cs1227@txstate.edu

APPENDIX C: Pre-Interview Demographic Information

To:
From: Colby Self
Subject: Pre-Interview Demographic Information:

Thank you for your interest in this study. This email message is an approved request for information that has been approved or declared exempt by the Texas State Institutional Review Board (IRB).

I have linked below a demographic form for you to complete before our scheduled interview on:_____.

The first question of the survey is the consent information.

I will send out a calendar invite to you with the Zoom information you will need to log-on. Please contact me at 512-461-9387 if you need assistance setting up Zoom prior to the interview date. More information can be found at <https://zoom.us/>

The demographic form will take about 5 minutes to complete and asks some general informational questions that will provide context to the interview reducing the overall time for the interview. The link to the demographic form can be found [HERE](#). It is a secure form and all information will be kept secure and confidential. The form asks the following information: Name; What is your current role in the school where you work?; How long have you been in your current role? How long have you been teaching?; Please list the schools you have previously worked in and how long, what role you served, and indicate if they were Title I schools.

Thank you for your time,

Colby Self

Link address for demographics:
https://txstate.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bdes8xokmVqjnSd

This project #7296 was approved by the Texas State IRB on July 1, 2020 This project was approved by the Texas State IRB on July 1, 2020. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB Chair, Dr. Denise Gobert 512-716-2652 – (dgobert@txstate.edu) or to Monica Gonzales, IRB Regulatory Manager 512-245-2334 - (meg201@txstate.edu).

Questions about this research should be addressed to Colby Self, (512) 461-9387, cs1227@txstate.edu

APPENDIX D: Participant Implied Consent Form to Participate in Research

Study Title: A STUDY OF THE LONGEVITY FACTORS OF MID - CAREER WHITE FEMALE TEACHERS IN SUBURBAN TITLE ONE PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Principal Investigator: Colby Self	Co-Investigator/Faculty Advisor: Dr. Patricia Guerra
Email: cs1227@txstate.edu	Email: pat_guerra@txstate.edu
Phone: 512-461-9387	Phone: 512-245-4240

I am Colby Self a graduate student at Texas State University, and I am conducting a research study identify characteristics that have led to teacher longevity in the classroom in teachers' 10-15-year range of service. You are being asked to complete this survey because you meet the following criteria:

- Be in your tenth – fifteenth (10-15) year of teaching
- Be a White female
- Currently teach in a suburban Elementary Title I school with 75% or greater economically disadvantaged student population.

Participation is voluntary. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes or less to complete. You must be at least 18 years old to take this survey.

This study involves no foreseeable serious risks. We ask that you try to answer all questions; however, if there are any items that make you uncomfortable or that you would prefer to skip, please leave the answer blank. Your responses are confidential.

There are not any direct benefits of this study. The information that is provided will potentially benefit other educators in the retention of teachers in the classroom.

Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private and confidential. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The members of the research team, and the Texas State University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) may access the data. The ORC monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Your name will not be used in any written reports or publications which result from this research. Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is completed and then destroyed.

There is not any compensation for your participation in the study.

Questions about this research should be addressed to Colby Self, (512) 461-9387, cs1227@txstate.edu

This project #7296 was approved by the Texas State IRB on July 1, 2020. This project was approved by the Texas State IRB on July 1, 2020. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB Chair, Dr. Denise Gobert 512-716-2652 – (dgobert@txstate.edu) or to Monica Gonzales, IRB Regulatory Manager 512-245-2334 - (meg201@txstate.edu).

If you would prefer not to participate, please do not fill out a survey.

If you consent to participate, please complete the survey.

APPENDIX E: Participant Demographic Form



Default Question Block

Study Title: A STUDY OF THE LONGEVITY FACTORS OF MID -CAREER WHITE FEMALE TEACHERS IN SUBURBAN TITLE ONE PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Principal Investigator: Colby Self	Co-Investigator/Faculty Advisor: Dr. Patricia Guerra
Email: cs1227@Txstate.edu	Email: pat_guerra@txstate.edu
Phone: 512-461-9387	Phone: 512-245-4240

I am Colby Self a graduate student at Texas State University, and I am conducting a research study identify characteristics that have led to teacher longevity in the classroom in teachers' 10-15-year range of service. You are being asked to complete this survey because you meet the following criteria:

- Be in your tenth – fifteenth (10-15) year of teaching
- Be a White female
- Currently teach in a suburban Elementary Title I school with 75% or greater economically disadvantaged student population.

Participation is voluntary. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes or less to complete. You must be at least 18 years old to take this survey.

This study involves no foreseeable serious risks. We ask that you try to answer all questions; however, if there are any items that make you uncomfortable or that you would prefer to skip, please leave the answer blank. Your responses are confidential.

There are not any direct benefits of this study. The information that is provided will potentially benefit other educators in the retention of teachers in the classroom.

Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private and confidential. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The members of the research team, and the Texas State University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) may access the data. The ORC monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Your name will not be used in any written reports or publications which result from this research. Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is completed and then destroyed.

There is not any compensation for your participation in the study.

Questions about this research should be addressed to Colby Self, (512) 461-9387, cs1227@txstate.edu

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If you would prefer not to participate, please do not fill out a survey.

If you consent to participate, please complete the survey.

Name

Email

What is the current role in the school where you work?

How long have you been in your current role?

How long have you been teaching?

Please list the schools you have previously worked in and how long, what role you served, and indicate if they were Title I schools.

APPENDIX F: Verbal Consent

Study Title: A STUDY OF THE LONGEVITY FACTORS OF MID - CAREER WHITE FEMALE TEACHERS IN SUBURBAN TITLE ONE PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Principal Investigator: Colby Self	Co-Investigator/Faculty Advisor: Dr. Patricia Guerra
Email: cs1227@txstate.edu	Email: pat_guerra@txstate.edu
Phone: 512-461-9387	Phone: 512-245-4240

I am Colby Self a graduate student at Texas State University, and I am conducting a research study identify characteristics that have led to teacher longevity in the classroom in teachers' 10-15-year range of service. You are being asked to be interviewed because you meet the following criteria:

- You are in your tenth – fifteenth (10-15) year of teaching
- You are a White female
- Currently teach in a suburban Elementary Title I school with 75% or greater economically disadvantaged student population.

Participation is voluntary. The interview will be conducted via zoom or telephone and take approximately 45-60 minutes or less to complete followed by another interview in two weeks lasting 30 minutes or less. You must be at least 18 years old to take this survey.

This study involves no foreseeable serious risks. We ask that you try to answer all questions; however, if there are any items that make you uncomfortable or that you would prefer to skip, please let me know and we will skip it. Your responses are confidential.

There are not any direct benefits of this study. The information that is provided will potentially benefit other educators in the retention of teachers in the classroom.

Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private and confidential. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The members of the research team, and the Texas State University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) may access the data. The ORC monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Your name will not be used in any written reports or publications which result from this research. Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is completed and then destroyed.

There is not any compensation for your participation in the study.

Questions about this research should be addressed to Colby Self, (512) 461-9387, cs1227@txstate.edu

This project #7296 was approved by the Texas State IRB on July 1, 2020. This project was approved by the Texas State IRB on July 1, 2020. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB Chair, Dr. Denise Gobert 512-716-2652 – (dgobert@txstate.edu) or to Monica Gonzales, IRB Regulatory Manager 512-245-2334 - (meg201@txstate.edu).

Do you have any questions for me?
Do you understand what was said to you?
Do you want to be in the study?
Do you agree to being audio/video recorded?

APPENDIX G: Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. My name is Colby Self, and I am a doctoral student at Texas State University. This doctoral dissertation research study seeks to identify characteristics that have led to teacher longevity among White female teachers in the classroom in the 10-15 year range of service in high-needs schools. During the interview, you may choose not to answer any question(s) for any reason. If you do not wish to respond to a particular question, please let me know. With your permission, I would like to audio record this interview. Do I have your permission? Your identity will be protected, and a pseudonym (code name) will be used throughout the study. Your real name will not appear on any research document. All research materials, including notes and consent forms, will be stored electronically on a password-protected computer. Your response(s) will only appear with your pseudonym when presented in the final presentation of the research. Before we begin, do you have any questions?

1. Tell me about the school and community where you currently work.
 - a. Tell me about working with students from different cultural, linguistic, and/or economic backgrounds.
2. How do you feel working at your current school?
 - a. Talk to me about the relationships you have with coworkers.
 - b. What about your supervisors?
 - c. What about your students?
3. What stresses do you face on the job, and how do you deal with them?
4. Tell me about a time in your teaching career when you thrived and why. Where was this?

- a. What about a time when you did not thrive, and why? Where was this?
- 5. You are now in your ____ year. What keeps you in teaching?
 - a. Why at a “high needs” school?
- 6. Talk to me about a time when you felt you wanted to leave teaching?
 - a. Why did you stay?
- 7. What advice would you give a new teacher to help him/her make it to retirement?

APPENDIX H: Follow-up Email for Second Interview

To:
From: Colby Self
Subject: Follow-up interview email

Thank you again for participating in this study. I have scheduled your follow up interview on: _____ I will send out a calendar invite to you with the Zoom information you will need to log-on.

The second interview will take about 30 minutes of your time. Please reachout to me if you need any assistance with Zoom or have any further questions.

Thank you for your time,

Colby Self

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Questions about this research should be addressed to Colby Self, (512) 461-9387, cs1227@txstate.edu

APPENDIX I: Follow-up Interview Guide

Thank you for completing your initial interview and your willingness to be part of a follow-up interview. I have shared the questions from the previous interview with one to two takeaways from each of your answers. Please take a few minutes to review this summary. After you review, I have some follow-up questions to explore with you.

1. After reviewing the questions, are the summaries correct? Did I miss anything?
2. Are there any new thoughts since the last interview?

APPENDIX J: Theme Matrix

1		Personal (P) or Professional (Pro) Interrelated (I)	Quote 1	Quote 2	Quote 3	Quote 4	Quote 5
2	Anna						
3	Carly						
4	Lisa						
5	Kimberly						
6	Sarah						
7	Jessica						
8	Donna						
9	Vanessa						
10	Amber						
11	Kacey						
12							
13							
14							

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