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A qualitative study on factors that influence African-American teacher retention: implications for the principal pipeline

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The United States is dealing with an unprecedented teacher shortage; especially in the area of minority teachers and particularly with African Americans. The purpose of this study was to examine and explore the “point of view” of knowledgeable and experienced African-American teachers and discover the factors that have effected their decisions to remain in the profession. The questions that directed this study were: What are African-American teachers’ beliefs about why they remain in the teaching profession? What are African-American teachers’ perceptions and views about what lead them to become teachers? The study involved two sets of focus group interviews as well as individual interviews. Participants interviewed for the study were asked questions concerning their perceptions about the teaching profession. Information obtained from the review of literature and results from the focus group were used to develop a
structured, open-ended, teacher interview protocol for a second set of individual interviews. Interviews were conducted with eleven African-American teachers with five of more years of teaching experience. Data from the teacher interviews were analyzed and transcribed in order to identify categories and themes. The findings indicated that several factors contributed to African-American teacher retention in this district, which might enlighten educational leaders as they look to recruit and retain African-American teachers.

- African-American teachers who show an “ethic of care” deliver culturally-relevant instruction and act as professionals in their teaching. These teachers support and encourage their students to learn and demonstrate their dedication to meeting their students’ needs.

- African-American teachers who express a sense of personal responsibility feel committed to their work as teachers. These teachers understand their students and are committed to helping children become successful in school and in life.

- No matter the importance of teachers’ personal commitment and care for their students, administrators and educational leaders can exercise work-related factors that encourage the recruitment and retention of African-American teachers.

- This study is meant for those in the education community to learn about the motivations and inspirations of African-American teachers specifically, and other teachers in general, involving teacher retention issues.
A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE
AFRICAN-AMERICAN TEACHER RETENTION:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRINCIPAL PIPELINE

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY
DAWN MONIQUE TURNER

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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CHAPTER I

THE INTRODUCTION

The essential profession that makes all other professions possible is teaching. Without well-qualified, committed, and caring teachers our children will not be prepared for the challenges and opportunities in America's third century. Now more than ever before in our history, education will make the difference between those who will be successful and prosper in our economy and those who will be left behind. Teaching is the profession that is shaping this education and America's future. The teaching profession molds the skills of our future workforce so that it lays the foundation for good citizenship and full participation in civic and community life.

As we begin this new century, education is vital to a vibrant and prosperous America searching to maximize the contributions of all its citizens and embracing the possibilities that our nation's diverse society offers. In order to achieve this, educators must set high standards for all students and attempt to develop their potential through organized effort, caring, commitment, high expectations, and talented teachers in every classroom. However, as fundamental as these goals may sound, America is faced with challenges in trying to reach them (Haselkorn, 1997).

The changes in society are putting new pressures on teachers and schools. Classrooms in America are serving more students, especially more diverse students—
racially, culturally, and linguistically - than ever before. Research has stated the overall
diversity of professionals working in K-12 schools has decreased from 12% in the 1960s
to a current 5%. The implications of the decline in the number of teachers of color are far
reaching, especially in a nation where diversity and the understanding of individual
differences stand at the core of our nation's ideals (Futrell, 1999).

While the number of minority (individuals not of Caucasian descent) students is
projected to increase rapidly throughout the next decade, the number of minority teachers
continues to decline. It has been estimated by the year 2020, minority children will
account for 39% of the nation's school population (Johnson, 1991), but only five percent
of the nation's teachers will be minority (Latham, Gitomer, & Ziomek, 1999). As these
trends continue, the student population will become increasingly linguistically and
ethnically diverse, while the teaching population will remain predominately European
American, mostly female, and monolingual (Ducharme & Ducharme, 1995).

The change in demographics, of an increasing number of minority children, has
given momentum to the importance of a culturally diverse educational environment and
its importance in the education of children. Research has shown the importance of
pursuing both a culturally informed and diverse teaching population (Dillard, 1994).
They maintain that minority teachers embrace multiculturalism, partake in culturally
relevant pedagogy, and divulge students to a wider worldview. Witty (1982) has
suggested that minority teachers are important because the teaching force should reflect
America's cultural pluralism.
Witty stated:

The absence of a representative number of minority teachers and administrators in a pluralistic society is damaging because it distorts social reality for children. Schools are intended to help children develop their fullest potential, including the potential to relate to all other human beings in a manner which is free and constructive. (p. 2)

Su (1996) has explored the role of leadership that minority teachers bring to the classroom. Diversity in the teacher profession, he argued, “allows all students to understand people who come from different backgrounds from their own and to see persons of different cultures in leadership positions” (p. 118). When it comes to discussing the role minority teachers portray in helping to influence the importance of learning, Foster (1990) has suggested that African-American teachers are able to communicate with African-American students “about the personal value, the collective power and the political consequences of choosing academic achievement” (p. 15). Communication processes between African-American teachers and students include African-American teachers’ ability to include and involve students in exchanges, which help students to become empowered and involved in their own education (Foster, 1990). Dilworth in 1990 suggested that African-American teachers (individuals of African descent) may be advantaged in the classroom by virtue of their “ability to know and communicate in more than one culture” (p. 57). This ability allows African-American teachers to act as “cultural translators,” as “conduits through which culturally
The shortage of African-American teachers in the nation’s public schools is a serious problem too large to ignore and dismiss. The number of African-American teachers who remain in the teacher profession cannot meet the demands because the number of African-American students is steadily increasing. This drastic reduction has even had a direct impact on the field of administration due to the fact that administrators are usually teachers who have advanced professionally in the field (Futrell, 1989) and because there is a lack of teachers who wish to fill leadership positions.

Today the average age of a school administrator is 47.7, with about 37.0% being over age 50, 53.6% being between the ages of 40 and 49, and 9.5% age 39 or under (NCES 1993-1994 Schools and Staffing Survey). Currently, school administrators deal with increased job stress, new curriculum standards, balancing school management with instructional leadership, inadequate school funding, involved with responsibility that once belonged at home or in the community, facing possible termination if their schools do not show instant results, increased responsibility without incentives, and educating an increasingly diverse student population. There is a lack of ongoing professional development programs for school administrators that focus on instructional leadership and school-wide reform and not enough school districts that have structured recruitment programs that systemically seek out the best administrator candidates, or create and implement programs to recruit future leaders. Nor are there enough school districts which make efforts to encourage minorities and women to apply for leadership positions.
Several teachers who have already gone to the trouble of obtaining an administrative credential choose to remain in the classroom rather than assume a leadership position. Teachers are deterred by the long hours required by leadership positions, the hassle of obtaining administrative certification, the lack of compensation not being sufficient for the demands of the job, and because of the administrative activities and duties leadership positions require (Doud & Keller, 1998).

If teachers remain reluctant to move into leadership positions, then where will our schools find new leaders? Where will our schools find new leaders who are African American or from other minority backgrounds? As the nation’s student population becomes more ethnically diverse, its administrator population must do the same. Currently, 16% of all principals are minorities. Only 12% of principals at the secondary level are minorities. Both women and minority principals are more prevalent in large districts in either central cities or urban areas (Educational Research Service, 1998). Minority students desperately need minority role models for development of self-esteem and identity. All students need the presence of both minority teachers and minority administrators in order to learn to respect minorities in roles of authority and to see them as examples of competent professionals (Cole, 1986). Minority administrators are needed now more than ever because the community needs their leadership. That leadership is essential in the continuing struggle to make sure America gives African American and other minority students the educational opportunities they need to survive and succeed in society. If the amount of African-American teachers continues to decline then this will have a direct impact on African Americans in administrative positions (Futrell, 1989).
Purpose of the Study

As minorities represent a growing percentage of the United States population, it is vital for the minority workforce to be an educated and competent one. In 1986, The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy suggested that in order to provide quality education for the continuous growing number of minorities in schools, the American teaching force must consist and be composed of well-prepared individuals who reflect and represent the diversity of the United States urban population (Power, 1988).

There are several ways that minority teachers can have a strong, positive influence on all school children. First, minority teachers act as role models for minority students. Studies have simply shown that young minority children who have minority teachers have increased self-esteem (Irvine, 1991). Black males, especially, need to see black men as professionals and persons who can demonstrate a high degree of knowledge and skills in the schools (Power, 1988).

Regrettably, it is possible in the present situation for large numbers of minority students to go without ever having been instructed by a minority teacher from kindergarten to twelfth grade. Minority teachers allow minority and nonminority students to develop and create an appreciation of diversity and cultural difference. As all children develop their own ideas concerning which individuals can hold roles of authority and influence, minority teachers are necessary role models. When there is not enough exposure to minority teachers throughout a child’s education, both minority and nonminority students come to characterize the teaching profession, and the academic enterprise in general, as better suited for nonminorities (Loehr, 1988). Furthermore,
students from low-income backgrounds might not have out-of-school opportunities to meet professionals of their own race or ethnicity.

Minority teachers provide an important cultural perspective for both minorities and nonminorities. Minority students, most importantly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, need the counseling and support of those who have similar cultural backgrounds to affirm their belief in themselves and their traditions. Minority teachers are also more likely to understand and have insights into the special problems and issues which minority students may face in school as well as into developing lesson plans or choosing curricula that take cultural differences into consideration (Taylor, 1990).

With minority school enrollments continuing to rise and an alarming shortage of African-American teachers in the classroom, there is a definite concern with providing diversity in the classroom. Increasing the percentage of African-American teachers so that it more closely reflects the percentage of minorities in the student population and increases cultural understanding among all students should be a major concern and priority.

The purpose of this study is to determine African-American teachers' perceptions about factors that influence their decisions to remain in teaching. Teachers will be interviewed in order to hear their point of views concerning their teaching profession. The results of this study will hopefully help educators to better understand how to retain the minority teachers they do employ.
Background of the Problem

Research on teacher retention has shown the complexity of factors related to teachers' career decisions and the quality of the teaching force. Studies on teacher retention have shown a need to understand factors that contribute to making teaching a more attractive profession while increasing its stability and reducing the rate at which teachers leave for other professions (Platt & Olsen, 1990).

Results from investigations have shown there are several factors which have determined whether or not teachers remain or leave the profession. This is a cause for concern about the quality of the teaching force. When there are high rates of teacher turnover it causes the disruption of program continuity, impedes student learning, and increases school districts' expenditures on recruiting and hiring procedures. To add to the problem, research into teachers' career patterns suggest those who decide to leave the profession usually do so before five years of service. Nearly one in every five teachers who began in the public schools during the 1993-1994 school year had left the classroom within three years. Even more disturbing, the young teachers who left the classroom were often the best and brightest contenders (Olson, 2000). Those teachers who are uncertain about their chosen profession emerge almost immediately after they enter teaching (Vileme & Hall, 1983). As young teachers leave the teaching profession, the number of minority students, especially Hispanics, is steeply rising while the teaching profession remains almost exclusively white. The consequence of this is that minority students in urban school districts are increasingly being taught by teachers who are not people of
color. Therefore, minority students are not seeing other minorities leading the class or as role models.

The importance of retaining qualified teachers becomes apparent when examining projected shortages in the teaching profession. Research indicates the projected demand for teachers might outpace the supply. In 1997, The National Center for Education Statistics indicated the number of elementary and secondary teachers has increased about 17% since 1988. By the year 2008, the number of elementary and secondary teachers is projected to increase by 1.1% annually to a total of 3.46 million. Elementary school teachers will increase to 2.05 and secondary school teachers will increase to 1.9 million by 2008. During the same time period elementary and secondary student enrollments are projected to increase to 54.27 million. In order for school districts to keep up the pace with the rising student enrollments and teacher retirements, school districts will have to hire about 200,000 teachers annually over the next decade (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999).

Several factors are attributed to the predicted teacher shortages. First, due to significant increases in birth rates and immigration, student enrollment is expected to be higher than at any other time in the nation’s history. Second, more than 33% of the current teaching force is 50 years or older and likely to retire within the next decade (Merrow, 1999). Retiring teachers take with them years of accumulated knowledge and experience. Third, regulations requiring reduced class size will require more teachers for smaller classes. Finally, beginning and experienced teachers are leaving the teaching profession (Delgado, 1999). Teacher retention and recruitment has not been made any easier with the booming economy and corporate America fighting over talent. “It’s an
incredibly hot job market, and for bright, talented young people, there are lots of opportunities, and the same is true for minorities" (p. 12) stated Lynn Olson, project editor for “Quality Counts 2000,” an annual look at the nation’s schools done by Editorial Projects in Education (Olson, 2000).

Secondary and elementary school teachers do not earn as much as professionals with similar educational backgrounds. Teachers aged 22 to 28 made an average of almost $8,000 less than did other college graduates of the same age in 1998. The gap between the salaries is even worse for older, more experienced teachers. Those teachers between ages 44 to 50 were paid $23,655 less than their peers in other professions.

Another factor contributing to the teacher shortage is gender. The majority of teachers are women. In the past, teaching was one of the few professions open to women, but today women enjoy more opportunities and options than ever before. Therefore, teaching is no longer high on the agenda. However, the salary gap and broader opportunities for women are only part of the problem. For many, teaching has always been a passion, not just a profession. Other factors cited by those leaving the teaching profession Olson points out are “poor working conditions, student discipline problems, and lack of support” (Olson, 2000).

These trends run into each other in urban school districts, where good teachers and stability are needed the most. Large class size, discipline problems, lack of support, and a lower pay scale are all exacerbated in urban districts (Duarte, 2000). These factors greatly impact teacher supply and demand issues.
To add to the problem, research has indicated the projected shortage of teachers, however, is unevenly distributed. In 1999, Fideler and Haselkorn projected that high-wealth suburban districts “will always have a glut of applicants, but that urban and rural districts will find it difficult to recruit and hire qualified teachers. Several researchers have found teacher shortages are limited to particular regions of the country and moreover, teachers are needed in the specific subject areas of bilingual education, chemistry, special education, physics, and mathematics” (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

Despite concerns for a more diversified teaching force, the racial and cultural disparity between teachers and their students continues to be a problem of continuing concern in public schools. The seriousness of the problem was recognized in the beginning of the 1980s and, by the mid 1980s, minority teachers were referred to as an “endangered species” and a “drastically scarce resource” (Graham, 1987).

Throughout the study the notion of role models for minority students is mentioned. Martinez (1991) contends the lack of minority teachers to provide ethnic role models in schools could “contribute to the underachievement of minority students, provide little incentive for minority students to advance in school, and negatively affect their career and life aspirations” (p. 32). There is a need for minority teachers in the learning environment to ensure the aspirations levels, achievement levels, and sense of self-worth for minority students will be advanced rather than diminished.

All students, not just minority students, benefit from a multiethnic teaching force. Smith (1989) supports the assumption that “cross-cultural exposure is deemed important
for Euro-American students' development of appropriate social and racial attitudes'' (p. 8). The Education Commission of the States notes:

Because schooling provides the earliest near daily exposure children have to life outside their homes, a diverse teaching force allows all students to understand people who come from backgrounds different from their own and to see persons of different cultures in leadership positions. Diversity in school personnel also allows different views to be heard and considered when decisions are made about instruction and curriculum. (p. 7)

Ladson-Billings' (1994) study, The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African-American Children, investigated the "culturally relevant" contributions of minority teachers. Ladson-Billings investigated the characteristics of teachers who were effective teachers of African-American students. She wrote "culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right" (p. 18).

Not only is cultural awareness important to African American and other minority teachers but also are positive roles, values and pedagogy. It has been suggested that an expanded conceptualization of the roles of African American teachers is essential "So that researchers can avoid narrowly thinking of African American and other teachers of color as teacher/leader role models only, thus effectively suppressing other possibilities" (King, 1993, p. 124).
Even though there is an abundance of information and research on the importance of diversity, the number of teachers of color remains low. Trends on the amount and supply of African American and other teachers of color reveal a gloomy picture for the future as well. In the 1988 Metropolitan Life Survey of America’s teachers, 41% of African-American teachers said they were likely to leave the teaching profession within the next five years. Many leave the profession after experiencing a feeling of overall disenchantment with teaching (AACTE, 1999). This is especially true for those who teach in urban centers. Haberman (1989) reports in urban school districts, 50% of the beginning teachers leave within three to five years.

Studies have indicated even though more minority students are attending college, fewer are pursuing teaching as a career. This contributes to the shortage of minority teachers. In 1999 the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education revealed data which indicated for the period 1989-1995, enrollment in schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDES), increased by 5.5%. The largest increases occurred among Asian/Pacific Americans (97%), and Hispanic Americans (80%). African-American enrollment increased by approximately 40% (AACTE, 1999).

If schools are going to provide quality programs, teachers—especially African-American teachers, they must not only recruit talented and skillful individuals but also keep them in the classroom. Even though the research addressing the general retention of teachers is detailed, there is still a void in the literature concerning the retention of teachers of color. With the present teacher shortages, and the limited supply of diversity
in the classroom, the factors that influence African-American teachers to stay in the teaching profession should be investigated.

Statement of the Problem

Although the number of minority students in United States schools continues to increase, the amount of ethnically diverse teachers is declining. It was predicted in 1991 that by the year 2000, minority students would consist of 33% of the school population and this percentage would increase to 39% by the year 2020 (Johnson, 1991). However, the number of minority teachers was expected to decline. It was predicted by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education that minority teachers would represent less than 5% of all U.S. teachers as of the year 2000. Teachers are the pipeline for administrator positions. The head of a national principal’s group last month expressed the scarcity of minority school administrators as “one of the real problems” (p. 5) in education leadership. Gerald Tirozzi, executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), on February 22, 2001 said he is working to form a coalition with other minority education leaders to address the problem. Nationally, only 10% of principals are minorities, and about 4% are Hispanic, stated Tirozzi at the National Association for Bilingual (NABE) conference. “Candidly stated, we’re basically a white male organization,” Tirozzi reported. “We need a whole lot of minority representation” (p. 5) in education leadership positions. The issue of the lack of African-American administrators is especially critical given the quick pace of demographic change nationwide, noted Tirozzi, who has worked as a classroom teacher,
principal and Connecticut state superintendent, as well as the Education Department’s top K-12 official under the Clinton administration. In the next 50 years, “we’re going to see a dramatic change” as the United States becomes a “nation of minorities” (Tirozzi, 2001, p. 5). Therefore, the lack of African-American administrators has become a national dilemma and a problem that strongly needs to be addressed.

Relatively new to the educational system is the multicultural classroom. This type of classroom creates a demand and need for teachers who are aware of the cultural differences within the student population, “differences that affect learning styles, behavior, mannerisms, and relationships with school and home” (Skylarz, 1993, p. 18). Students who are from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds have the highest rates of poverty and the highest school dropout rates (Williams, 1992). Students such as these need the support and understanding of teachers from their own or similar cultures who are familiar with family practices and behaviors and who can serve as role models for educational achievement and success. In 1991, author Martinez adds the lack of minority teachers to provide ethnic role models in schools could “contribute to the underachievement of minority students, provide little incentive for minority students to advance in school, and negatively affect their career and life aspirations” (p. 3).

The Identification of factors teachers consider when deciding to remain in the profession would help educational leaders decrease the number of exiting teachers. This is particularly true for a particular county in the suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia, where lower teacher salaries and much fewer minority personnel have allowed the district to be somewhat at a disadvantage when competing with other districts for the best available
teachers. With the number of minority students, especially African Americans, compared to the number of African-American teachers in the school system, the school system would benefit from a better understanding of reasons African-American teachers decide to remain as teachers in the district. The county’s school district could use this information to create a more viable teacher retention program and retain quality teachers in sufficient quantity in order to benefit the students of the district. This study will determine African-American teachers' perceptions about factors that influence their decision to remain in teaching.

Significance of the Study

With the high teacher turnover, absenteeism, violence, student mobility, drop-out rates, and generally low achievement test scores there is a serious need to improve education in urban schools. Teachers and educators who live and work in the community should provide insight and perception into the problems and offer valuable solutions. However, children can progress from kindergarten to twelfth grade and never have a teacher from their community or home culture. In other words, some students may never have a teacher who share their own values, read the same books, watch the same television programs, listen to the same music, gain inspiration from the same worship service, and aspire to be like the same role models.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than 40% of the nation’s public schools do not have a single person of color on their faculty. In 1996, Vaughan found only one third of all education graduates have any experience teaching in
an urban setting. It is projected that by the turn of the century only 13% of teachers will be minorities. However, in the next five years this nation is said to need some 350,000 teachers for its poorest school districts (Horowitz, 1997). There is an even more serious challenge for acquiring teachers in the southern states. Because of the reduction and low number of education majors, Georgia will need 8,000 new teachers annually. However, certified teachers who graduate from schools of education in Georgia each year number only about 3,000. Many of these teachers will leave the state or will not enter teaching (Coley, 1995). It was predicted in 1996 that by the year 2000, only 5% to 6% of the teachers in Georgia would be African American (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1996).

The researcher believes the results from this study will provide relevant information for urban school districts, administrators, educational policymakers, and state officials regarding teacher retention issues.

As education reformers believe that all children can learn, they challenge the teaching profession to provide all children with the most qualified teachers available. That challenge has become very difficult for public schools, especially urban schools, as the diversity of the student body continues to rise while the supply of a diverse teaching force continues to decrease. Teachers from diverse backgrounds have insights, experiences, values, and approaches that can contribute to the organizational decision-making and effectiveness of schools in a time of comprehensive reform and accountability.
The findings from this research will provide school leaders an idea of the work life, professional, and personal life of a group of African-American teachers as they tell their stories concerning their chosen profession—teaching. Data gathered from this study will be useful to district level officials and principals as they strategize to recruit African-American teachers. The significance of the study will come from the stories of the teachers as they portray their profession of teaching. For others, the study will provide opportunities for understanding why African-American teachers stay in the field of teaching.

Even though the intent of this study is to document factors that have influenced and affected the career decisions of African-American teachers, this study may be useful in providing a context for understanding the views of minority teachers who remain in teaching. These teachers’ views, wisdom, and experiences may provide preparation programs and professional development opportunities for all educators.

The findings of this study could serve as indicators in the following ways:

1. This study could identify strategies to help retain African American as well as other minority teachers.

2. This study could inform career development programs for junior and high school students.

3. This study could identify retention-friendly practices.

4. This study could encourage the development of retention programs for retaining African American and other minority teachers.
Research Questions

In order to determine African-American teachers' perceptions about why they remain in the profession of teaching, this study will include the following research questions:

1. What professional factors have influenced their decisions to remain in the classroom?

2. What personal factors have influenced their decisions to remain in teaching?

3. What are the perceived personal and professional barriers that lead other African-American teachers to leave teaching?

4. How could school districts positively impact African-American teacher retention?
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

During President Bill Clinton’s 1997 State of the Union address, he challenged all Americans to make sure that there was a talented, well prepared, and dedicated teacher in every classroom across the country (Clinton, 1997). President Clinton’s challenge to the country was in response to the looming teacher shortage and the potential impact it could have on the educational preparedness of our children and our country (Ingersoll & Rossi, 1995). Groups of researchers who have studied teacher turnover nationally reported that it is certainly understandable that great difficulties have been encountered in filling positions with qualified teachers and then retaining them to establish a qualified and stable teaching force (Boe, Bobbit, Cook, Barkanic, & Maisling, 1998).

National Teacher Shortage

Secretary Richard Riley from the U.S. Department of Education conducted a nationwide satellite teleconference on April 17, 1997. The purpose for this conference was to solicit input from educators, citizens, and policymakers throughout the nation regarding the preparation, selection, and retention of teachers (Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrnamm, 1999). In 1998, Watson highlighted the essence of the Secretary’s speech when he commented: “Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley has warned that in the
next decade, our public schools will need to hire 2.2 million teachers, to keep pace with rising enrollments and to replace a generation of teachers who are about to retire” (p. 1).

Felter (1997) also noted that with the expected increase in student enrollment, in the next 10 years the number of teachers needed to fill our nation’s classrooms will grow by about 30%. A journal article (Archer, 1999) identified report findings which stated that a high percentage of new teachers leave the profession annually. Archer reported that the findings match well with earlier estimates that as many as 30% of new teachers leave their jobs within their first five years of teaching.

An often heard slogan, “Hire the brightest and the best” no longer seems to be an important solution to the teacher shortage. Studies have shown that bright college students are less likely to enter the teaching profession, and, even if they do, they leave in a shorter period of time (Howley, Pendarvis, & Howley, 1993). Employing qualified teachers in large numbers has become so difficult and demanding that 82.5% of urban school districts allow noncredentialed educators to teach in the classroom (Recruiting New Teachers, 2000). Mark and Anderson (1985) found that even though teacher education programs graduate students with teaching certificates, an alarming 25% of them never begin teaching or leave education within a few years.

According to a recent article in Education World (Chaika, 2000), 42 states now issue emergency credentials to people who have taken no education courses and have never taught a day in their lives. Chaika found many teachers to be hired based solely on their experience leading church or camping groups. Additionally, Chaika highlighted the fact that one fourth of all new teachers are not licensed or do not have the credentials to
teach in the area in which they are teaching. In other words, one fourth of teacher education graduates do not teach and another one fourth of those new to the profession who do teach are not certified.

The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) (2000) recently released information that underscored the importance and urgency with which schools will need to address teacher recruitment. School districts in the United States will need to hire 2.2 million teachers within the next decade. It has been reported that only 42% of 1992-1993 college graduates who prepared to teach applied for a teaching job between 1994 and 1997. Of schools that have vacancies in particular fields, over 50% found openings in the following fields difficult or impossible to fill: mathematics, foreign language, physical science, special education, English as a second language, and bilingual education. Thirty-six percent of our nation’s public school population is comprised of minority students, but only 13% of our teachers are members of minority groups (Dozier & Bertotti, 2000). Discovering teachers who are certified and qualified has become more difficult if not impossible for increasingly more school districts.

Institutions for teacher preparation institutions have also undergone scrutiny and investigation as a possible contributor to the teacher shortage and high attrition rate (USDE, 2000). According to the same government report, less than 30% of new teachers stated feeling “very well prepared” to implement technology into instruction, address the needs of special education students, meet the needs of diverse students and those with limited English proficiency, and integrate curriculum and performance standards (USDE).
Teacher educators as well have also come under review. Over 50% of teacher educators indicated that it had been over 15 years since they were K-12 teachers. To further add to the problem of quality teacher preparation is the fact that less than 40% of teacher education programs in this country are nationally accredited (Dozier & Bertotti, 2000).

Once teachers enter the field of education, there is no guarantee they will continue to teach in the profession. The largest single factor in determining the demand for additional teachers in the United States is stated to be teacher attrition (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 1996). Those beginning teachers who do enter the area of education, 40% to as many as 50% leave during the first 7 years of their career, and more than two thirds of those beginning teachers will do so in the first 4 years of teaching (Huling-Austin, 1986).

The departure of so many new teachers and the inability to fill their position has caused some to question the quality of education being delivered by those teachers who remain. An observer stated the current system of education is hard to defend to the public. He wrote, “I’m not sure any politician could get away with selling the current approach to education in this country as a set of campaign promises” (Mitchell, 1998, p. 3).

Impacts of the Shortage

The result of the teacher shortage can be recognized in many areas of public education. Student achievement, public tax money, and teacher morale are all at risk of
deteriorate as a result of teacher shortages. One researcher reported it would be unfortunate if the projected need for more teachers were to cause erosion of standards for teacher preparation (Felter, 1997). Felter also stated this scenario leads towards lower student performance, less job satisfaction, higher teacher attrition, increased public discontent, and further erosion of standards.

Several educational leaders have expressed their concern over the quality and caliber of teachers available for hire. Nationally, 30% of new public school teachers were hired without full certification for the area and field in which they will teach. About 43 states indicated that they granted waivers to allow school districts to hire teachers who did not have all the credentials or who were not fully certified. Recent studies have found that skill levels, basic literacy, and content knowledge that many states require of teachers are significantly below what they required of students on high school graduation tests (Dozier & Bertotti, 2000).

Due to the teacher shortages, it has forced some districts to employ whomever they can rather than who they deserve to hire. The demand to get “warm bodies” in front of the classroom has forced many school districts to employ unqualified teachers in order to open the doors. More than 50,000 people who do not have the training required for their jobs have entered the teaching profession on either an emergency or substandard license (Feistritzer, 1998).

Meta-analysis of national research data conducted by Linda Darling-Hammond of Stanford University noted strong correlation between certain teacher characteristics and positive student outcomes. In Darling-Hammond’s study (2000), she used data from a 50
state survey of policies, the 1993-1994 Schools and Staffing Surveys (SASS), state case study analysis, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The study discovered the ways in which teacher qualifications and other school inputs were linked to student achievement throughout the states. The findings suggest that policy investments in the quality of teachers may be related to improvements in student performance. Darling-Hammond stated that certification status and a degree held in the field were very significantly and positively related with student achievement. Darling-Hammond’s quantitative analysis denotes that measures of teacher preparation and certification were by far the strongest correlation of student achievement in reading and mathematics, both before and after controlling for student poverty and language status. Correlation coefficients ranged from a low of .64 in reading scores to a high of .87 in mathematics scores. As Darling-Hammond reported, the equations explain between 67% and 87% of the total variance in student achievement and were “robust across subjects and years.” She stated that teacher quality variables were more strongly related in student achievement than such factors as class size, overall spending levels, or teacher salaries (Darling-Hammond).

Statistical data analysis imply that measures of teacher preparation and certification are by far the strongest correlates of student achievement in reading and mathematics, even after accounting for student poverty and language status. Darling-Hammond’s meta-analysis suggested that polices and procedures adopted by states regarding teacher education, professional development, hiring, and licensing may make
an important difference in the qualifications and capacities that teachers bring to their work.

Sullivan (2001) conducted research in the area of teacher preparation; however, his conclusion did not match those of Darling-Hammond. Sullivan reported (a) teacher education programs cannot keep pace with the projected demand for new teachers over the next decade, (b) the terms “certified” and “uncertified” do not distinguish between teachers who are qualified and those who are not, and, (c) teachers’ years of experience, certification status, and degree level are not highly correlated with their effectiveness in the classroom (p.16).

A study of 6,000 school children from the state of Tennessee found that both black and white children score higher on mathematics and reading tests if their teachers are the same race as they. The report comes from a nonpartisan group based in Cambridge, Massachusetts called The National Bureau of Economic Research. The study comes at a time when minority teachers are at a great demand in the nation’s schools. Even though minority children consist of 40% of kindergarten through twelfth grade enrollment nationwide, minority teachers’ account for only 13.5% of the teaching force. As the minority student population continues to increase, the demand for more minority teachers is expected to do the same.

The study used re-analyzed data from the Tennessee experiment Project STAR, which was created to determine whether students learn more in classes that are smaller in size. The data suggested that students who had a teacher of their own race for at least one of the four years of the study usually scored three to four percentile points higher on
standardized tests than other students who had teachers of different races. This is a significant difference, only slightly smaller than the advantages gained by students in smaller classes.

The report adds that the advantage students receive from having a teacher of their own race is cumulative; increasing for every year the student has a same-race teacher. The effects were particularly strong among children with inexperienced teachers, poor children, and children enrolled in segregated schools. The report was not able to suggest whether students did better because they viewed their teachers as role models, or because the teachers might, in some way, treat their same-race students differently. Any race-linked differences diminished if students were placed in smaller classes (Viadero, 2001).

The National Education Association confirmed the results of this study by stating that students of color often do better with teachers of the same race because the teachers and students may have similar experiences and backgrounds. During the next few years African-American students will make up almost 20% of the students in American public schools, but only 6% of the nation’s teachers will be African American. The results: fewer African-American children will have an African-American teacher to model themselves after. Unfortunately, fewer community leaders, such as teachers, will be African American. The African-American culture will have a much stronger impact on society if there are more African-American teachers in the classrooms (NEA, 2002).

Several authors disagree with the popular view of a crisis regarding teacher shortages. They advise policymakers to be certain they understand the reported teacher shortages and its possible implications. Wayne (2000) identified four major findings in
his work that revealed caution should be taken when examining the literature. Wayne noted (a) enrollments are leveling off, (b) hiring will increase only 2% every year over the next decade, (c) excluding retirements, only about 1 in 20 teachers leaves each year, and (d) novice teachers who quit rarely cite job dissatisfaction as the reason. Wayne warned, “Basic survey research and demography contradict what many say about enrollments, attrition, hiring needs, and the loss of novice teachers” (p. 9).

No matter how one agrees on the extent of the problem, consensus opinion seems to point out that there is an increased need for quality teachers and that need will continue to magnify. One factor that adds to the need for more teachers in the profession is the exiting of experienced and qualified teachers. Identification of the factors teachers considered for leaving the profession would help educational planners with the exodus of teachers.

**Empirical Evidence**

Research literature on the study of teachers’ career choices is divided and often conflicting, revealing the complexity of factors associated with teachers’ decisions about their careers. There are a number of different retention-related terms that have been used throughout the literature while there is little agreement about what these terms mean. However, empirical studies indicate that a person’s decision concerning his/her feelings about their job may be influenced by a series of personal factors.

In 1982, Chapman and Hutcheson discovered that teachers who changed careers and those who remained in teaching could be distinguished in terms of the criteria they used in judging success in their profession. Working with a population of teachers in a
large school system in Florida, Hall and Carroll (1987) discovered that factors related to teachers' work environment were significant predictors of their long-range teaching plans; therefore, their influence to remain in the teaching profession. Other early studies revealed that bright college graduates were less likely to enter teaching, and if they did, they only stayed for a short period of time (Murname, Singer, Willet, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991). This phenomenon is partially due to retirement of "baby boomers" and a "brain drain" to more lucrative professions (Boe & Educational Resources Information Center, 1996). DePaul (2000) estimated that nearly 25% of teachers leave the profession during their first 3 years of teaching. She stated:

Nationally, 22% of new teachers leave the profession in the first 3 years, often because of our "sink or swim" approach to induction. This exodus costs taxpayers money for retraining and leaves a significant portion of the teaching force with little professional experience. The greatest cost is borne by students, whose learning is affected by the high turnover and unstable educational programs that often result. (p. 1)

Schlechty and Vance (1981) discovered the academic levels of students significant, with the most capable teachers deciding to leave the profession. Recruiting New Teachers (2000) reported that schools will need to hire an estimated 2 million new teachers in the next decade. Forecasts for personnel at the secondary level include particularly acute shortages in the areas of music, special education, math, and science (Darling-Hammond, 1988). A study released in January 2000 reported that almost 100% of the nation's urban school districts have an urgent need for teachers in at least one high
subject area such as special education (97.5%), science (97.5%), and math (95%). There is also an acute shortage that exists for bilingual and English as a Second Language teachers and educational technology specialists (Recruiting New Teachers, 2000).

Additionally, one study found stress as a factor in teachers’ career decisions. In 1979, Wilson found that differences in attrition rates between general education and special education teachers indicated higher attrition rates among special education teachers and affiliated that difference to the stress involved in working with special populations. In difference to his finding, other studies reported no differences in attrition rates between general and special educators (Beasley, Myette, & Serna, 1983). In investigating the attrition rates of general education and special education teachers, Kirby and Grissmer (1993) reported that general education teachers mainly leave to teach in another school district or for temporary reasons. Kirby and Grissmer cite other occurrences influencing teacher attrition including “retirement, illness or death, promotion to administration, or lateral transfer into education-related positions such as counseling, library, or curriculum planning” (p. xi). Additionally, Dworkin (1985) concluded that stress and burnout are problems for teachers in general and are related to teachers’ intent to leaving the profession.

Workplace Conditions

Notwithstanding teachers’ personal reasons for staying or leaving the profession, a series of studies disclose the impact workplace conditions have on their decisions about the profession. The low status affiliated with teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1984) and
undesirable workplace conditions (Billingsley & Cross, 1992) have been affiliated with reasons for why teachers leave. Several other researchers have found differences in grade levels taught and early entrance into the profession as factors associated with teacher retention. The literature discloses differences in secondary and elementary teachers with secondary level teachers exiting the teaching profession sooner than those at the elementary level (Heyns, 1988). Additionally, studies have discovered higher attrition rates in urban schools on the secondary level (Corcoran, Walker, & White, 1988).

Dworkin (1980) found race to be a determinant with majority teachers in urban areas more likely to leave than minority teachers and black teachers less likely to leave teaching than Caucasian teachers.

Empirical research methods stated in the literature in recent years divulge a number of predictor variables related to teacher turnover. Studies critiqued in the literature over the last 10 years on teacher turnover state that with the major exception of teacher salary, research has not shown persistent associations between actual teacher turnover and either school characteristics or working conditions (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic, & Maisling, 1998). For example, there has been no research evidence that variables such as class size, school size, community type (rural, urban, and suburban), or region of the nation are affiliated with variations in teacher turnover. However, “There is considerable evidence that higher salaries for special education and general education teachers are associated with higher rates of retention, and lower salaries with greater attrition” (Brownwell & Smith, 1992, p. 392).
Further studies on the topic present the changing circumstances related to the issue in reference to gender and race as determinants of teacher turnover. In several studies using state data that predate 1985, both teacher gender and teacher ethnicity have been reported to be associated with teacher turnover; however, more recent studies with national data have not found evidence that these variables are related to teacher turnover (Darling-Hammond, 1996).

Results of National Surveys

Contradictory findings from various researchers have identified countless reasons for why teachers leave the profession. A study conducted for the NCES (1995) directed and administered confidential surveys to teachers to find out reasons why they left teaching with less than four years of experience. Researchers collected data from the 1987-1988, 1990-1991, and 1993-1994 Schools and Staffing Surveys (SASS) and the 1988-1989, 1991-1992, and 1994-1995 Teacher Follow-Up Surveys conducted by the NCES and USDE. The study of K-12 public school teachers centered upon eight related areas: general elementary education, vocational education, mathematics and science education, business and vocational education, language education, special education, social studies education, physical and health education, arts, and other general education. Researchers discovered that teachers gave five primary reasons for leaving teaching in the first four years. Forty-four percent of the teachers stated family issues as their reason for leaving. Another 17% said they left because of job action or health reasons. Another 17% left teaching for better work and/or salary considerations. Respondents who went
back to school to earn advanced degrees or add degrees or certification were almost 12%.

Only 7.7% of the respondents were dissatisfied with teaching as a career (Boe et al., 1998).

In a 1997 NCES survey that stated reasons teachers gave for leaving the profession conflicting results were found. One of the most frequently cited reasons for teachers leaving the profession were retirement with 27.4% followed by pregnancy or child rearing with 14.3%. Another 12.1% of the teachers stated leaving the profession to pursue another career outside of teaching. A family or personal move was cited by 10.1% of respondents, family or personal reasons were cited by 6.5% of respondents, and health concerns were cited by 4.7% of respondents. Another 3.4% of the teachers stated they left to take a sabbatical or other break from teaching (Hardy, 1999).

The NCES additional asked other dissatisfied teachers what specifically prompted them to leave, the factors most often cited, in order of importance, were student discipline problems, poor student motivation to learn, inadequate support from administration, poor salary, and lack of influence over school policies and practices (Hardy, 1999). For many young teachers, teaching simply did not turn out to be what they thought it was going to be. They were not adequately prepared for what they were about to face and encounter.

Theoretical Assumptions

Several other investigations in the literature explore a number of theories that explain the patterns that occur in teacher turnover. In 1987, Kirby and Grissmer theorized
that, "The original commitment between a teacher and the school district regarding a
teaching position is predicated on prevailing information and circumstances" (p. 12).

One of the earliest theories discovered in the literature assumed that individuals
make an assessment of the benefits and costs connected with a job. In Kirby and
Grissmer’s (1993) “human capital” theory of teacher retention, it was stated that
“Accurate measures of teacher attrition are needed to serve several important planning
and policy objectives” (p. 7). During a longitudinal study conducted with 50,000 teachers
in Indiana from 1965-1987, Kirby and Grissmer studied teacher attrition by age, gender,
and area of subject; median survival time for selected groups of teachers; beginning
teacher attrition; and starting salaries by field and concluded:

1. The number of teachers needed each year largely determines attrition rates.

2. Attrition rates are difficult to predict because they vary over time.

3. Attrition rates provide good indicators of the relative adequacy of
   compensation levels and working conditions.


5. Individuals make assessments of benefits and costs in deciding to enter or stay
   in a profession.

6. The greater the accumulation of human capital, the lower the probability of
   attrition.

7. Attrition and turnover are more likely to occur early in the career. (p. 12)
To better understand teacher attrition is to recognize that "a change has occurred that causes a reversal or the original decision" (p. 10). The fundamental belief of Kirby and Grissmer's theory is a cost-benefit approach to staying or leaving a job.

As an individual stays in a profession, he/she accumulates human capital that translates in wage premiums. The greater the amount of specific capital, the less likely it is that the individual will consider leaving the profession. (p. 10)

Murname, Singer, Willett, Kemple, and Olsen (1991) questioned the relationship between the risk of leaving teaching and teacher salary and opportunity cost. Their data point out that the more a teacher earns, the more likely he or she is to stay.

More than 25 years ago Lortie (1975) recognized that teacher salary is often cited as a causal factor for the teacher shortage. He stated, "Salary tends to be a function of the salary schedule rather than teacher performance" (p. 5). For over 50 years The American Federation of Teachers has tracked teacher salaries. The first survey involved 1.25 million teachers in 1948-1949 when the average teacher salary was under $3,000 annually. Presently, the average salary for 2.8 million teachers is 440,574, tens of thousands of dollars less per year than their peers in other career professions (Feldman, 2001).

Feldman (2001) has chronicled the grave state of teachers' salaries. Due to the beginning of collective bargaining in some districts, wages for teachers had increased. The national average salary for a teacher was $6,195 (the equivalent of $32,787 in 1998-1999 dollars) during 1964-1965. By 1972-1973, the national average teacher salary
increased to $10,176 (the equivalent of $37,070 in 1998-1999 dollars). The progress in salaries came to a halt when urban fiscal crisis led to declining salaries. When the demand for public dollars changed to municipal infrastructure, salary funds were redirected from teacher salaries. The average teacher salary today represents an increase of only $135 (or 70 cents a day) in consistent dollars over the average salary in 1972-1973 (Feldman, 2001). Feldman further revealed that these chronically low salaries are having a serious influence on the ability of school districts throughout the country to draw the best candidates into the teaching profession.

Part of the difficulty in understanding the reason why teachers exit the profession is confusion and disarray over the terminology. In theorizing teacher retention issues, Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic, & Maisling (1998), described teacher retention according to teachers' behavior. These authors recommended three major categories of teacher attrition: "stayers, transfer, and teachers who exit" the teaching profession (p. 139). Additional researchers Grissmer and Kirby (1997), in defining attrition, described those teachers who leave the profession, as a "separation" from the teaching profession.

Regardless of the classification, understanding and knowing the factors associated with teachers who leave is essential in understanding teacher retention and reducing teacher shortage. When a teacher decides to leave the profession, schools face a considerable financial loss of taxpayer resources. School districts that invest in teachers either formally or informally through recruiting, mentoring, and training acquire a loss when a teacher leaves (Adams & Dial, 1993). One other writer stated that teacher turnover burdens school districts with additional recruiting and hiring expenses.
Concerns over student and school performance are exacerbated by disruptions in program continuity and planning (Theobald, 1990). As stated by Kremer and Hoffman (1981):

Teachers who are merely thinking about leaving the field are no less of a concern than those who actually carry out their intention because the presence of disgruntled elements in a school system may well infect other and start a chain reaction. (p. 1)

External Factors

From an historical point, the formal public education of African Americans began during the early 1830s. Stated in W.E.B. Dubois, Philadelphia Negro, “Public schools for Negroes were not established until about 1822... separate schools for Blacks and Whites were maintained from the very beginning, barring the slight mixing in early Quaker schools” (1899, pp. 85-86). For over a century, 1861 until 1954, a separate education system existed in the United States. This education system existed until the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in Brown vs. Topeka Kansas Board of Education. James Anderson, a scholar of black history, describes the societal influences associated with African Americans and segregated schooling for blacks. Anderson points out that:

From the end of Reconstruction until the 1960s, black southerners existed in a social system that denied them citizenship, the right to vote, and the voluntary control of their labor power. They remained an oppressed people. Black educators developed within this context of political and economic oppression. Hence, although black southerners were formally
free during the time when American popular education was transformed into a highly formal and critical institution, their schooling took a different path. (1988, p. 3)

The ability to read and write has long been a link to social, political, and economic power for African-Americans. Previous studies have revealed that access to quality schooling has been, and remains for many minorities, the necessity to an improved quality of life in this country. It was expressed by The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (1998) that African Americans have strongly affirmed the role of education as the most prominent factor in improving and enhancing the life circumstances of African-Americans and promoting social change. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies reported, “Economic and social progress in the United States has long been rooted in access to quality education” (1998, p. ix). This continuous regard for education within the African-American community stresses “education for liberation, citizenship, personal and collective power and advancement” (JCP, 1998, p. 3).

For African Americans the idea of “equal access” in public schools has been valued as a jumpstart to social equality and personal achievement. Fredricks (2001) points out that historically the largest group of African-American professionals to provide and offer leadership within the African-American community has been educators. During the 19th and first half of the 21st century, African-American educators in African-American public and private schools have held themselves responsible and accountable for the educational achievement of the children and adults attending their schools
(Neverdon-Morton, 1989) and have valued education as a method to achieve individual enrichment as well as social progress (Weiler, 1990).

Employment Factors

A review of the literature exposes a number of employment factors, which serve as restraints for teachers in general, but affect African Americans in particular. These factors affect both individuals’ initial decisions about the teaching profession as well as their decision to remain.

During previous years, the opportunity and chance for success and self-improvement for many African Americans was discovered in the classroom. Teaching accounted for nearly half of black professional workers in the 1950s, mainly due to segregated schools as well as few opportunities in other occupations (Cole, 1986). A few scholars have credited the current shortage of African-American teachers to past legislation. An ample amount of literature connects the current shortage of minority teachers to the unintended consequences of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in the Brown vs. Board of Education school desegregation case in 1954. Due to the court’s ruling, it has had deep impact on the supply and number of African-American teachers in the profession.

In 1982, Witty stated that between 1954 and 1970, several African-American teachers, who make up the largest and oldest subgroup of teachers of color, were released, given non-teaching and lower-line teaching positions, or were not employed as a response to the court’s landmark decision. Opposition by Caucasian school administrators to the
enforcement of the Brown vs. Board of Education decision demonstrated itself in the form of several state legislature-mandated job reclassifications and a series of evasive practices aimed at decreasing and eliminating the role of African-American teachers in the racially integrated classroom (Ethridge, 1979).

In fact, between 1954 and 1965, as an immediate consequence of desegregation, around 38,000 African-American teachers lost their positions as teachers and administrators in 17 states (Holmes, 1990). In 1993, King stated:

Whereas a purpose of desegregation was ostensibly to increase the educational opportunities offered to African-American teachers, in fact a significant result was the separation of African-American teachers from African-American students. (p. 135)

Recently, in his “Why Students of Color are Not Entering Teaching: Reflections from Minority Teachers,” Gordon (1994), notes “The research and commentary in the field offer both the view that people of color do not choose teaching as a career because incentives such as salary, prestige, and social mobility are low relative to alternate careers now available” (p. 12). Other researchers firmly believe minorities still face substantial impediments in gaining access to and success in teacher education (Goodlad, 1990).

Teachers have also cited disillusionment with teaching as a reason to leave education. Twelve hundred surveys were sent to various selected schools in nine states to determine teachers’ perceptions of professional prestige as it related to likely recruitment and retention of teachers. Schools selected for this survey were in the states of New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, Texas, North Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and
Tennessee. Over half of the 602 survey respondents, 53.8% indicated professional prestige was lower than they had expected. Numerous teachers felt that educators were not bestowed the prestige that they have earned and believed they deserved. Research indicates that dissatisfaction in this area is one that approximately two thirds of teachers and former teachers allude to as reasons for leaving the profession (Marlow, Inman, & Betancourt-Smith, 1995).

Despite several teachers’ perceptions of diminished prestige for their own profession, public support for teachers and public education remains high (Haselkorn & Harris, 2001). In Haselkorn and Harris’ study, they surveyed 2,501 adults in September 2000. The outcome of their survey indicated that strong support for public schools and their teachers remained high among those surveyed. Teaching was reported as “Far and away, the profession of greatest benefit to society. It outpaces its closet rival, medicine, by nearly 3 to 1 among 8 fields tested in the poll” (p. 5). Teaching (at 35%) is second only to the choice of medicine (45%) as the career those surveyed would recommend to a family member, no matter the disproportionate salary advantage to physicians. The reality is, stated Haselkorn and Harris, the public supports teachers better than teachers support themselves.

New accountability standards for teachers have had an impact on new entrants into the field. While the standards present challenges for all new teachers, some African-Americans have difficulty in meeting the necessary requirements to become part of the profession. Research indicates that for people of color, the pass rates on these tests in a
majority of states are far below that of European-American candidates (Darling-Hammond et al. 1998).

Additionally, research indicates that occupational choices of African-American college students are sensitive to new licensing requirements; therefore, many do not choose to go into the teaching profession. Traditional teacher certification programs include the fulfillment of a number of university classes in content knowledge and pedagogy, and internships, including a student-teaching experience. This is usually followed by written state-specified examinations and, in some states, in-class performance assessments, normally conducted during the candidate’s initial year of teaching (Shen, 1997, p. 30). With the dismantling of the Department of Education, funds and programs that directly supported the education of minorities were eliminated, as well as federal dollars for loans, grants, and scholarships for individuals seeking higher education (Bass de Martinez, 1988). These lacks of incentives reduce the supply of teachers eligible to work in classroom settings. Recent data point out a slight increase in minority teachers enrolled in teacher education programs. As stated by the AACTE (1999), in 1989, minority students comprise 9.5% of the total pre-service teacher population, whereas in 1995, their representation increased to 16.1% of the total enrollment.

In the past, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU’s) have attributed a major role in bringing African Americans into the teaching profession. Before 1945, HBCU’s enrolled 90% of all African American students working towards post-graduate degrees (Garibaldi, 1991). Prior to 1954, African Americans made up the
majority of the college students at HBCU’s, but by 1973, that percentage had plunged to one-fourth. In 1974, HBCU’s graduated 9,051 African-American teachers; in 1981, they graduated only 4,027 (Cole & Horton, 1984). Between 1982 and 1989, HBCU’s had a decrease of 36% in the number of education degrees conferred. Bachelor degrees conferred by HBCU’s declined dramatically between 1976 and 1989, as did master’s degrees (King, 1993). Garibaldi (1991) accounts for such a decline to a series of factors including the move toward business and social sciences and the option of more lucrative, prestigious career opportunities for minorities and women. In the past, black women sought teaching as a career. To further intensify the shortage of African Americans in today’s classroom, King (1993) has revealed that African-American women earned more than ten thousand degrees in education in 1976; by 1987, the number of degrees in education for African-American women had declined 75 percent to less than three thousand (p. 126). As stated by the American Council on Education (1988), education was once the most widely chosen field for minorities, it later slipped to third after business and the social sciences. During recent years, data gathered on trends for African Americans in four year institutions shows promise as well as dismay graduates are increasing, but fewer are choosing education as their field.

Difficulties in supporting teachers in the profession have shown to be the cause for teachers to leave the profession. Several studies have documented the obstacles experienced during the early years of teaching as a result of inadequate preparation and how these difficulties have caused several to exit during the early career period (Veenman, 1984). In interviews with dozens of teachers who decided to leave the
classroom, a picture emerged of new teachers unprepared for the realities of teaching. Even though help was available, it was often insufficient. With maddening frequency, the least experienced teachers got the most demanding students or the most secluded classrooms, often portables or trailers, where they struggled in isolation (Hegarty, 2001). Page, Page, and Million (1983) discovered that first-year teachers' self-assessment of the quality of their teacher preparation programs on specific learning variables (e.g., the use of questioning techniques, preparation to work with parents) was predictive of plans to remain in teaching. In 1991, Sweeney, Warren, and Kemis indicated that graduates who stayed in teaching were more fulfilled with their student teaching experiences and rated specific aspects of their teacher preparation programs higher than those who left teaching. Dupree (1993) revealed reforms in teacher education preparation programs came about as a result of teachers' complaints regarding the poor quality of the education they had received in their teacher education programs. Many teachers stated they did not feel prepared for the challenges and demands they faced in the field (Dozier & Bertotti, 2000). Approximately 85% of teachers reported they received less than 8 hours a year of professional development in a specific area, though teachers report and research confirms that professional development of longer duration is more effective and successful. Only 1 in 5 teachers divulged feeling "very well prepared" to address the needs of diverse students and those with disabilities and to implement technology into instruction. Communities often cut corners in spending for professional development despite evidence that such spending produces greater gains in student learning than other uses of budgeted funds.
The USDE sponsored four Teacher Quality Institutes intended at improving teacher education (McRel, 2001). After identifying areas most in need of improvement, the attendees outlined areas for change. An essential set of strategies that teacher education programs can use now and in the future was suggested: (a) establish a clear mission and set of goals for teacher preparation, (b) use standards to guide programs design, (c) exert leadership to make change happen, (d) forge relationships that make change, and (e) use information to assess and improve programs over time (p. 8). Due to the education reform movement of the 1980s, the push for higher student standards led to the adoption of minimum competence tests for teachers, such as the National Teacher Exam, which is designed to provide objective, standardized measures of knowledge and skills gained through academic teacher preparation programs (Rich, 1991, p. 126).

However, these competency tests further complicated the issue. Smith (1989) researched the impact of teacher competency examinations on teacher candidates of color. In California, 26% was the pass rate on teacher competency exams for African Americans (Smith, 1989). College enrollment patterns, trends in the amount of African Americans majoring in education, and the opening up of previously closed careers logically provide a rationale for the limited presence of African-American teachers. Furthermore, the reality is that many prospective African Americans' efforts to one day become teachers have been thwarted by the institutionalization of competency test (King, 1993, p.193).

The impact of these well-intentioned measures to reform public education has unintentionally influenced the amount of minority teachers, poor children, and urban schools in particular. Research shows that teacher competency tests have contributed to
the decrease number of interested individuals of color accepted to and graduating from schools of education. During 1993-1994, more than 10% of teachers employed by the public schools did not have either an emergency or regular certification for the fields in which they were to teach. This lack of certification was especially prevalent in school districts in urban areas inside central cities in the South and West (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). Seventy-seven percent of the 39 largest urban districts hired noncertified teachers to fill their staffing gaps (Eubanks, 1996).

Furthermore, previous research has shown that work conditions and rewards are affiliated with teacher retention. The rewards teachers experience accounted to the conditions in which they work. In 1989, Rosenholtz insinuated that work commitment has “less to do with the personal qualities people bring to the workplace than with the design and management of tasks within it” (p. 423). No matter the quality of academic training and successful student teaching experiences, first year teachers may be disenchanted if suitable support and guidance are not present in the school setting (Delgado, 1999). Snider (1999) declared that many new teachers are demoralized by the absence of autonomy and professional status they find in the schools and that “As many as one-half of all new teachers respond by leaving the profession” (p. 64).

The National Center for Education Statistics (1997) indicated that throughout the nation, 9.3% of public school teachers leave before they complete their first year in the classroom and over one fifth of public school teachers leave their positions within their first three years of teaching. In addition, 30% of teachers exit the profession within five years of entry and even higher rates remain in more disadvantaged schools. According to
Heyens (1998), 30% of beginning teachers venture away from the profession during their first two years, and 50% of beginning teachers in urban districts leave the profession within five years.

In 1997, the NCES indicate that many who teach public schools in the central city are the least likely to stay in their positions and the most likely to move to other teaching positions. Central city schools agonize from far greater shortages than do suburban or rural districts. Urban schools tend to have higher teacher absenteeism, higher teacher turnover, and a higher percentage of substitute teachers compared to other schools (Bruno & Negrate, 1983).

Researchers credit the failure of urban districts, especially high poverty districts, to staff their schools with qualified teachers to a number of factors. Jones and Sandridge (1997) found new and returning teachers do not wish to teach in urban schools; therefore, the majority of teachers prefer to teach in suburban schools (Howey & Zimpher, 1991). When surveying 3,201 teachers hired since 1985, Feistritzer (1990) found only 12% were willing to teach in an urban school. In a survey conducted by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (1989), only 18% of undergraduate teacher education students would think about teaching in an urban setting. Findings such as these have a direct impact on the working conditions of all teachers. However, due to the fact that the majority of the teacher workforce in inner city schools is African American, this reality is especially problematic in retaining quality African-American teachers.

Research has not focused, however, on identification of why beginning teachers choose to stay in the profession. The perspective of beginning teachers is crucial to a
more complete understanding of how to successfully retain quality educators employed in our schools. Recently published by the Southern Regional Education Board [SREB] is information about retention of beginning teachers (Bolich, 2000). The publication emphasized the need to understand what causes new teachers to relinquish the profession. SREB stated:

Teacher recruitment efforts are important; however, the retention of beginning teachers is critical to maintaining an adequate supply of teachers. It is essential to understand the experiences and situations that may cause many teachers to abandon the profession early in their career.

(Bolich, p. 3)

School districts who obtain this information will be in a much better positions to successfully meet the increasing personnel demands of the public and the profession.

In 1994, Darling-Hammond, in a paper written for the National Commission Teaching and America’s Future, summarized the circumstances of urban schools and the teacher shortage when she wrote:

As teacher demand is growing, and as standards for teachers are being raised, the qualifications and abilities of teachers in advantaged communities are becoming even more impressive. At the same time, however, over 50,000 teachers annually have been entering teaching on emergency or temporary certificates with little or no preparation at all. Most of these under-prepared entrants are hired to teach in low-income schools in central cities and poor rural areas. In stark contrast to their
students’ needs, these teachers of disadvantaged students are least likely to have encountered knowledge about how children grow, learn, and develop, or what to do if children are having difficulty. (p. 2)

Personal Factors

The literature divulges that demographic factors have been studied more than any other factor in studying the issue. The association between gender and age has received more attention than many other variables related to attrition (Sweeney, 1987). No matter where they teach, beginner teachers, particularly first-year teachers may be disillusioned if they do not receive adequate support. Identifying teachers for their professional expertise, permitting them to have high levels of work autonomy (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) and encouraging them to be actively involved in decision-making (Bachrach, Bamberger, Conley, & Bauer, 1999) boost teachers’ motivation, commitment, and confidence, while a lack of independence tends to lead to dissatisfaction and/or attrition (Rosenholtz, 1989).

Teacher Retention Programs

Darling-Hammond (1998) identified teacher retention programs as a potential solution to the national teacher shortage problem. Researchers seem to consent that retention programs are usually concentrated around strategic efforts to keep quality teachers employed as part of an effective and efficient faculty (AASA, 2000).
Effective Strategies for Teacher Retention

If effective teacher retention programs are going to be successful, they will require a sound research base. One researcher suggested four central truths around which effective retention programs are created. The four core truths are:

- Teachers with less experience tend to move or leave, whereas more experienced teachers tend to stay.
- The amount of salary is positively correlated with teacher retention.
- Appreciation of intrinsic merits of the teaching profession helps teachers remain in teaching.
- Empowering teachers and giving them more influence over school and teaching polices are also associated with teacher retention (Shen, 1997).

Shen (1997) distinguished between those respondents who left teaching voluntarily and those who left involuntarily. Those who left involuntarily would include teachers who were non-renewed or who left for health or other catastrophic reasons. In almost all other studies, voluntary and involuntary leavers were not distinguished from one another. “Voluntary leavers” were only identified in Shen’s study.

Policy suggestions were made solely on the results from a survey of 3,612 teachers who took part in the 1992 Teacher Follow-up Survey conducted by the NCES (Shen, 1997). Suggestions included empowering teachers, building a career ladder into teaching salary schedules, providing incentives to teachers who work in schools with more disadvantaged students, and taking a multiple-perspective approach to the issue of teacher retention. These policy suggestions were meant to accommodate school districts
in addressing the issue on teacher retention; therefore, minimizing the impact of the teacher shortage.

Comprehensive programs such as those discussed previously were based on quality preparation. Districts that use shortcuts to fill teacher vacancies at the expense of quality preparation only serve to intensify and magnify the problem (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Darling-Hammond suggested a list for consideration by states and school districts.

1. Raise teacher standards while equalizing teacher salaries.
2. Establish licensing reciprocity across states.
3. Grant a license to out-of-state entrants who have achieved National Board Certification.
4. Create national recruitment initiatives, streamline hiring procedures, and develop on-line information technologies.
5. Create service scholarship programs to prepare high-ability candidates in shortage fields.
6. Expand teacher education programs in high-need fields.
7. Provide incentives for the establishment of more extended (ex., five-year and fifth-year) teacher education programs.
8. Provide incentives for community college/college pathways that prepare paraprofessionals for certification.
9. Create high-quality induction programs for beginning teachers.
10. “Just say no” to hiring unqualified teachers. (p. 3)
Coaching Programs

Another strategy for teacher retention is teacher coaching. Teacher coaching programs match beginning teachers with a more experienced teacher as their mentor. School districts try to contest the attrition problem by enhancing beginning teacher success rates through social and professional associations. A program such as this has also benefitted experienced teachers, who may update their own practices and expand their career responsibilities without moving into administration (Griffin, Wohlstetter, & Bharadwaja, 2001).

According to several researchers, many teacher coaching programs are formal and structured (Griffin et al., 2001). The authors stated the school districts will decide on the scope of topics that coaches and beginning teachers must complete. As much as possible the coach must conduct assessments on the quality of the beginning teacher’s classroom practices. These assessments can be used by principals and the school district to evaluate the newcomer’s performance. This one-size-fits-all approach allows the school district to have some room for preparation; however, it does not always individuate to meet a variety of beginning teacher needs.

Recruitment Strategies

Several school districts have increased their mentoring role to extend to recruitment. Collins (1999) indicated a number of strategies for states to look into in response to schools’ need to recruit more teachers. Collin’s report included five recruitment recommendations. The commission’s report recommended programs to be
offered to high school and college students who may be interested in teaching as a career. Mid-career professionals may be recruited from other occupations, especially those in technical fields. Loan debts and scholarships could be forgiven in exchange for teaching service in high need areas. Special efforts could be offered to help place teachers into low-performing schools impaired by economic hardships. Finally, the commission suggested the formation of positions, programs and agencies to further recruitment (Collins, 1999).

State Programs

In spite of federal recommendations, programs for recruiting and retaining teachers vary considerably from state to state. Some states have implemented strategies and procedures to meet specific needs in their state. Several states have duplicated various programs after successful initiatives in other states. For example, Kentucky and Connecticut equalized teacher salaries statewide in an effort to diminish regional inequalities. They discovered that several teachers were drawn to areas of the state and not others because of salary discrepancies. The state of Alaska created the Alaska Teacher Placement Clearinghouse which maintained a job bank accessible on the World Wide Web. The state of Oklahoma asked for more research to be done in order to understand why so many more students in the state train to be teachers than are hired by Oklahoma schools. Mississippi provided scholarships to teachers, high school-to-college programs, college courses, loans for teachers who teach in rural areas, and home loans or rental housing for teachers in housing shortage areas. Georgia offers the PROMISE
Teacher Scholarship, PROMISE II Teacher Scholarship, and the HOPE Scholarship for students interested in pursuing educational degrees. The Florida Department of Education created teacher recruitment and retention service offices to promote and advertise positions in targeted areas, provide information associated with alternative certification, and sponsor the Florida Future Educator Program. Following the lead of Pennsylvania, Florida established a program that forgives loans in exchange for teaching service.

Another state-sponsored initiative that supported numerous programs and activities is The South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment. Among the efforts proposed was the Pro Team Program, which informed primarily minority seventh-and eighth grade students to the idea of teaching as a career choice. Another effort was the Teacher Cadet Program that offered high school seniors with an Introduction to Teaching class they could take for credit. Allowing students to work in a one-on-one setting with teachers in a critical area was offered by The Teaching Assistant program. The Teacher Job Bank was an on-line option. The EXPO for Teacher Recruitment was a job fair that was offered and two scholarship programs for upcoming teachers were made available (Collins, 1999).

**Induction Programs**

Induction programs emphasize in starting the beginning teacher (and sometimes the deficient teacher) on the path to a successful and prosperous career. The Association of Teacher Educators (1989) described induction as a transitional period in teacher education, between preserves preparation and continuing professional development,
during which assistance may be provided and/or assessment may be applied to beginning teachers.

Marso and Pigge (1990) stated that the most significant areas of assistance reported by beginning teachers were (a) meeting school requirements and procedures (b) handling student discipline, and (c) dealing with colleagues. Other researchers (Depaul, 2000) identified the need for beginning teachers to be connected to a support system that comprises of effective veteran teachers.

Research on assisting and lending a hand to the beginning teacher is a recent development (Furtwengler, 1992). Interest in assisting teachers began around the early 1980’s. Literature on mentoring, induction, and teacher retention comprised mainly of program descriptions, survey-based evaluations, definitions, and general discussions of several roles and responsibilities. By 1992, at least 34 states had some form of teacher induction program mandated or supported through the state government (Furtwengler, 1995). Currently, 28 states direct districts to offer induction programs. Eight states plan to offer induction programs in the next few years, and five more expect to increase their current programs (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). While program contents change from location to location, many have as their goal the extended professional engagement of a quality educator.

Bolich (2000) reported support for beginning teachers has been identified as the greatest tool states can provide. She stated:

Nationally, about 65% of teachers with less than three years of experience participate in induction programs. Studies show that teachers with less
than five years of experience who have not participated in induction programs are nearly twice as likely to leave teaching. (p. 7)

There is growing support for the idea that mentoring and/or induction programs can be an effective method to deter teachers from leaving education as a profession.

Little, however, has been written about why beginning teachers choose to stay in the profession. Huling-Austin (1987) indicated that research about beginning teachers is in its early stages, and there is still much to be learned. Feiman-Nemser (1996) reported that educational decisionmakers need to know and understand more about how mentors learn to work with novices in productive ways, what structures and resources enable that work, and how mentoring fits into broader frameworks of professional development and accountability.

**Mentoring**

Mentoring was first affiliated with beginning teacher induction and, as a result, usually led to a restricted view of mentoring as a form of brief support to help beginning teachers cope and deal with the demands of their first year of teaching. The primary goal of mentoring beginning teachers is to support and assist their professional growth. Mentoring programs presume that beginning teachers still have an abundance to learn about the teaching profession even though these teachers are usually well prepared in content and theory (Odell, 1990). Due to the fact that mentoring involves highly personal interactions, performed under different situations in various schools, the role of mentoring cannot be rigorously specified. Therefore, it is a mistake to create any external
definition of mentoring and institute it by means of political pressure or high-powered staff development activity (Wildman, Magliaro, Niles, & Niles, 1992).

Feiman-Nemser (2001) stated the term “educative mentoring” was created to explain experiences that add rather than decrease further growth and lead to richer subsequent experiences. Mentors who believe in this orientation focus on beginning teachers’ present concerns, questions, and purposes while remembering the long-term goals for teacher development. The mentors enhance skills and habits that allow beginning teachers to learn from practice. Mentors use their knowledge, professionalism, and expertise to assess the direction beginner teachers are headed and establish opportunities and conditions that provide and support meaningful teacher learning in the service of student learning. By mentors advocating for observations and conversations about teaching, mentoring can help teachers evolve methods for continuous professional improvement. Mentoring will fulfill its promise as an instrument of real reform if learning to teach in reform-minded ways is the focus of this work (Feiman-Nemser, 1996).

The fulfillment of a mentoring or induction program places trust in district and school leaders who are willing to allocate and designate resources and promote the professional growth of new teachers. Resources and activities which promote professional growth lead to job satisfaction and consequently teacher retention (Allen, 2000).
Summary

Much of the literature on teachers’ career decisions to stay in or leave the profession is segmented and at times contradictory. Therefore, it is difficult to draw conclusions about retention issues given the limited number of conceptual models available. It is especially difficult to draw conclusions about a specific group of teachers, namely teachers of color.

Billingsley’s model provides a starting point for conceptualizing the multitude of factors affiliated with teachers’ decisions about their careers and provides a framework for understanding the connection between a number of external, employment, and personal factors as they relate to teachers and their career decisions.

Attrition in the teaching profession proceeds to be a major problem facing schools. Evidence suggests that teachers’ hesitation about the profession originates at an early stage and is a source of concern in minimizing teacher shortages. Empirical and theoretical studies of the issue indicate that the criteria used to detect whether or not teachers remained included such things as age and gender, job autonomy, satisfaction, salary, academic ability, and job commitment.

Additionally, the professional literature recognizes the scarcity of African-American teachers due in large part to the Brown vs. Board of Education decision. As a result of that decision, a number of unexpected consequences have occurred. The impact of opportunities available in other professions as the outcome of the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, and other events in the nation’s history which have opened up opportunities to teachers of color have accumulated more respect and prestige
than teaching. These events have contributed to the present shortage in the supply of African American and other teachers of color.

Historically black institutions, which produced the largest number of African-American teachers, experienced a reduction in teacher education students. A fewer amount of African-American women are choosing education as their major field of study and are opting for other professional fields. Federal monies have decreased in recent years for students and fewer scholarships and grants are available for black students to continue into higher education. Competency tests, new licensing regulations, and accountability standards have been challenging for many African Americans.

Altogether, these factors have decreased the supply of teachers in general and African-American teachers in particular. While these factors are not intensive, they provide a frame of reference within which solutions for retaining African-American teachers can be addressed. Researchers have assumed numerous reasons for the low number of students of color, in general, and African Americans, in particular, teaching. These studies provide reasons, but not the explanation. Recognizing that schools are surrounded by the reality that much experience already exists between its walls, the research literature provides a frame of reference from which to inquire from those who have selected to remain. Using this approach to investigate retention issues can be useful in providing vital information on teacher retention, in general, and the retention of African-American teachers, in particular.

An overview of the teacher shortage at the national level was presented. Reports stated teachers were exiting the ranks of professional educators at a rate faster than they
were being replaced. Therefore, supply has decreased at a time when demand has increased. More quality teachers are needed at a time when fewer teachers are available to meet the demand.

The impacts of the teacher shortage on the public, students and teachers were noted. Reasons given by teachers for leaving were identified through an examination of recent studies and reports. Specific effects on student achievement were stated and examined.

Teacher induction programs and beginning teacher mentoring programs were defined and examined. Essential elements of effectiveness were explained in terms of research and practice. Definitions and distinctions between induction and mentoring were presented and crucial elements of each were identified. Individual state programs were identified with emphasis placed on identification of effective and efficient mentor activities and candidates.

The public is increasingly demanding more of its educational system. Accountability, expectations, and resources are increasing. On one side, the single most significant component in the classroom, the teacher, is becoming scarcer with not significant relief in sight. One possible solution to the scarcity problem is to retain the quality teachers already in the field.
CHAPTER III
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There is an abundance of literature that focuses on the external and employment factors that effect teacher retention in general. Teachers’ work conditions, rewards, intrinsic merits, salary, teaching policies, and influence over the school are frequently cited in the literature as the primary factors related with teachers decisions to remain or leave the profession. Literature on employment factors have been researched and studied by several theorists such as Shen, Chapman and Green, and Grissmer and Kirby. Billingsley specifically noted in her studies how teachers remain in the profession due to intrinsic rewards and the concern teachers have for a child’s future and education.
Throughout the research, several teachers have stated similar reasons for why they remain in their career and have helped to develop and influence the researcher’s theory of teacher retention. Teachers feel they have a sense of responsibility and commitment towards children and their education, especially if they were raised in a family where education was stressed as being important and their family members were educators themselves. Even though employment factors may play a role for teacher retention, the researcher’s theory is based upon Billingsley’s studies on teachers’ feelings towards a commitment to a child’s education and their desire for students to be successful.
As a result of the problems associated with teacher turnover, there has been numerous interest among educators in making teaching a more stable and firm profession. Despite this interest, researchers have documented high attrition rates among teachers (Mark & Anderson, 1977). However, few studies during the past twenty years have developed a conceptual model or framework of teacher attrition and retention (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997). Existing research shows the complexity of factors associated with teacher retention.

Interestingly, the notion has been studied from several viewpoints. In 1993, Billingsley has supported the issue by creating a model of teacher retention that identifies the primary variables that are hypothesized to influence teachers’ career decisions and suggests possible relationships among these variables. Implied within Billingsley model is the idea that teachers’ career decisions are influenced by a wide variety of variables, including “external,” “employment,” and “personal” factors. “External factors include societal, economic, and institutional variables that are external to the teachers and the employing school district. . . he external variables have an indirect effect on teachers’ career decisions by influencing employment and personal factors” (p. 146).

In reviewing the literature on teacher retention and attrition, Shen (1997) noted that there are essentially two approaches to studying the issue. The first approach, multivariate, or theoretical, inquires into a set of variables simultaneously to test theories explaining why teachers choose to stay in or leave the teaching profession, such as the human capital theory (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993), the social learning theory (Chapman & Green, 1986), and the theory of teachers as economically rational decision makers.
One of Kirby & Grissmer's (1993) studies examined teacher retention by age, gender, subject area, and salary and concluded “Individuals make systematic assessments of the net monetary and non-monetary benefits from different occupations and make systematic decisions throughout their careers to enter, stay, or leave an occupation” (p. 6).

Other results of multivariate approaches to the issue of teacher retention indicate that differences in personal characteristics, educational experience, initial commitment and career satisfaction influence teachers' career decisions (Chapman & Green, 1986). In 1990, Theobold theorized the “relative deprivation” of teachers as rational decision makers and concluded that teachers' decisions to continue in teaching in the same school district were negatively related to the property wealth of the community and positively related to salary.

In 1991, Murname, Singer, Willet, Kemple, and Olsen conducted additional studies that investigated the respective roles of salary, gender, ethnicity, and subject specialization. It was suggested in their findings that bright college graduates are less likely to enter the teaching profession, and that even if they do, they leave in a short period of time.

In studies conducted by Bobbit, Faupel, and Burns (1991) the results from 1988-1989 and 1991-1992 Teacher Follow-up Surveys found the rate at which public school teachers in general education subjects leave the profession varies little by field of subject specialization. Other researchers have concluded that involvement in decision making, more support from the administration, and other behavioral variables help to explain
teacher retention (Bobbitt, Faupel, & Burns, 1991). In comparison to previous research, Shen (1997) investigated whether teacher retention and attrition are functions of individual factors, school-related factors, and the interaction between these two groups of factors as reflected in individuals' perceptions of school and professional-related issues. Shen’s results were found to be consistent with other previous studies. First, teachers with less experience are more likely to move or leave, whereas more experienced teachers are more likely to stay. Secondly, the amount of salary a teacher receives was positively correlated with teacher retention. Third, appreciation of intrinsic merits of the teaching profession helps teachers remain in teaching. Finally, empowering teachers and giving them more influence over school and teaching polices are also associated with teacher retention.

Even though the results of these studies contribute to our understanding of teacher retention, they have limitations as well. As Shen noted in 1997, empirical data tend to support specific theories from a certain perspective: “The multivariate approach tends to narrow the scope of variables... the bivariate approach does not take into consideration the relationship between and among those variables related to teacher retention/attrition” (p. 82).

Focusing back on Billingsley’s theory, the researcher feels personal relationships are the driving force in determining African-American teachers’ decisions to remain in the profession. These intrinsically rewarding relationships exist with the students they teach, their colleagues, and school administrators. Teachers who remain in teaching seem to have a “sense of calling” that compels them to teach. Although teachers need
professional and personal support, there is a higher commitment to their profession.

Relationships with students provide teachers with the fundamental validation for their reasons to stay in the profession. Teachers feel an intrinsic self-worth from the work they are doing with students. Teaching seems to be their mission in life.

Scope and Limitations

The following may be limitations that occur while conducting the research.

1. The research will be limited to studying African-American teachers.

2. Participants may be dishonest when answering questions.

3. The research may be limited to studying a certain number of participants.

4. Interviews may be dominated by women because of the low number of minority male teachers.

5. The views of these participants may or may not be congruent with the views of other African-American teachers, or of teachers in general.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

Qualitative research was selected for this study because it allows openness, depth and detail in studying the focus of this research, African-American teacher retention. According to Bogdan and Bilken (1982), qualitative issues emphasis “inductive analysis, description, and the study of people’s perception” (p. xiii). The purpose of this study is to hold conversations with a group of African-American teachers about their experiences in the teaching profession and their reasons for remaining in teaching. Interviews were conducted to investigate teachers’ views related to their decision to remain in teaching and to learn and understand teacher’s perceptions and beliefs about why they choose to remain the field. The researcher also interviewed two school system administrators in order to help the researcher understand the administrators’ perspectives on the role of teachers, their beliefs on African-American teacher retention and suggestions from the administrators on how the county can retain African-American teachers. Substantial time was spent talking with the teachers and administrators about their life histories and experiences as educators.

Qualitative research was used to create rich descriptions about the phenomenon and is based on emergent design. These methods allow the researcher to extend the
understanding of experiences, which are detailed such that others understand similar situations, and extend these understanding in subsequent research (Patton, 1980).

Patton (1980) states there are three kinds of data collection in qualitative research: (1) in-depth interviews, (2) direct observation, and (3) written documents. In this study, a group interview (focus group), and individual, in-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted. Data and information from in-depth, open-ended participant interviews formed the basic data for the study. Open-ended responses allowed the researcher to better understand the respondents’ feelings toward their profession.

The reason for gathering and collecting responses to open-ended questions is to allow the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without presupposing the points of view that may be obvious for the respondents. Direct quotations are a basic source of raw data in qualitative inquiry, revealing respondents’ depth of emotion, their experiences, their basic perceptions and the ways they have organized their world (Patton, 1980).

The general interview guide approach was the main method used in this study. According to Patton (1980), the general interview guide approach uses “a list of questions or issues that are to be expected” so as “to make sure that basically the same information is obtained from a number of people” (p. 283). The interview guide is an important tool used in qualitative studies because it provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that explain the particular subject. Patton (1980) states, “The interview guide approach is especially useful in conducting group interviews: it keeps the interactions focused but allows individual perspectives and
experiences to emerge” (p. 283). In this research, the interview protocol from the focus group interviews guided questions for the individual interviews that followed the focus group session.

For the purpose of the study, it was important for the researcher to learn about the participants’ backgrounds, experiences, and perceptions in their own words. Therefore, qualitative research was selected because it provided the flexibility that was needed for the interviews and allowed participants the opportunity to express those issues that they felt strongly about. The researcher allowed each participant to explain their experiences in their own words so this type of data could be collected.

According to Creswell (1998), qualitative research is “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” (p. 15). Creswell also commented, “The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyze words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). The point of the qualitative researcher is to provide a framework in which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about their world.

Participant Selection

African-American teachers who work on the secondary level with five or more years of experience were asked to participate for the study. Teachers for the study were selected from a county in the suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia through the use of convenience sampling. To protect the county and its participants from the study the researcher named
the county, County A. The benefit and purpose of convenience sampling was to describe some particular subgroup during a short length of time in a quick and easy method. Sampling for the focus group usually consist of bringing people together of similar backgrounds and experiences to participate in a group interview about major program issues that affect them (Patton, 1980).

There were two reasons for making the decision to work with African-American veteran teachers for this study. First, it was important to explore and understand the prospective of a group of minority teachers who could provide insight from their experiences over a period of time. The researcher was able to provide explanations to issues related to teacher retention by simply asking those teachers why they stayed in the profession. Their experiences will hopefully give meaning to concerns about their presence in the profession.

The second reason for working with African-American veteran teachers was practical and counterintuitive. The shortage and continuous decreasing number of minority teachers in the profession has been described as critical. Understanding the contexts that surround African-American teachers and their choices related to the profession is a way of knowing the meaning of teaching for them. Keeping that in mind, administrators should be better able to reflect on meaningful and appropriate strategies in order to support and encourage the presence of African-American teachers in the profession. Therefore, two school system administrators from County A who work on the secondary level and participate in the hiring process of teachers were also asked to participate in the study.
Human Subjects Review

Participants were asked to volunteer as members of the focus group and individual interviews. Before the interview participants were given the interview questions and a consent form to read and sign. The consent form consisted of the purpose of the study, what the participant will need to do in the study, if there are any risks and benefits for being a part of the study, time required for the interview, who to contact for questions, and a statement assuring confidentiality. In order to protect the participants in the study, false names were given to each participant.

Data Collection

The first step in the data collection process was two focus group interviews of four and five teachers using an adapted structure for in-depth interviewing as described by Seidman (1991). Seidman stated, "As long as a structure is maintained that allows participants to reconstruct and reflect upon their experience within the context of their lives, alterations to the three-interview structure and the duration and spacing of interviews can certainly be explored" (p. 15). The purpose of selecting this approach was to provide the teachers with the opportunity to describe their life histories, provide details of their experiences, and to reflect on how they made sense of their decisions to remain in teaching.

Following the group interviews were two individual interviews at the teachers' respective schools in County A after school and during their planning period. After the individual teacher interviews were two administrator individual interviews at the
administrators’ respective school. Both, the group interviews and individual interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. A summary of the transcription was copied and given to each participant for member checking and approval.

During both group and individual interview sets, field notes including attention to the context of the school, the respondents’ facial expressions, gestures, and display of emotions was noted in a personal log. Bogdan and Bilken (1982) stated that a personal log “helps the researchers to keep track of the development of the project. . . and to remain self-conscious of how he has been influenced by the data” (p. 74). County A’s Chamber of Commerce provided a set of demographic information concerning the history and make up of the county as well as the schools principal and assistant principal over instructional curriculum provided demographic details on the school’s instructional and support programs. A questionnaire was sent to those participating in the study before conducting any interviews in order to get an idea of why these teachers remain in the teaching profession and their demographics, and how administrators feel African-American teachers can be recruited and retained.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research involves systemically establishing and organizing the interview field notes, transcripts, and other collected data in a way that the researcher can understand and be able to present the information to others. Data analysis is depended upon working and organizing data, arranging the data into manageable units, synthesizing the data, examining patterns, finding out what is important and what needs
to be learned, and what is necessary to tell others. The analysis allows the researcher to move from the beginning stages of the study to the end products of research in dissertations, books, papers, presentations, or plans for action if the study is applied research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Wolcott (1994) defined data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data and contends that qualitative data analysis “is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data” (p. 23). According to Glesne and Peshkin (1998), data analysis in qualitative research involves organizing what the researcher has heard, seen, and read so that he or she can make sense of what he or she has learned. Finally, Wolcott states that “analysis addresses the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships (of the observations made by the researcher and/or reported to the researcher by others) among them, in short, how things work” (p. 12).

In order to analyze the researcher’s data, the audiotapes from the focus group and individual interviews were transcribed. Data that are similar in words, phrases, participants’ ways of thinking, behavior patterns, and activities, and events that repeat themselves were coded and categorized in order to better understand and organize the data. Initially collected data was reviewed and broad emergent themes were identified. The second level of analysis involved a closer examination of emergent themes in order to dissect broad categories. Topics, words, phrases, activities and events that helped make sense of the researcher’s study was categorized and coded into themes. The themes were of substantial use and ones that the researcher liked to explore. The third level of
analysis focused on identifying data patterns that illuminate and synthesize participant responses. Participant responses were arranged and carefully read for understanding. While the researcher read the data a preliminary list of possible coding categories was developed. Phrases that do not make coding categories were placed into generic codes. Preliminary coding categories were then assigned (as abbreviations) to the units of data (field notes, transcripts, or documents that can be placed under certain topics represented by the coding category). During this process, coding categories were modified, developed, and discarded in order to find out the usefulness of the categories that had been created (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Data Validity and Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) define trustworthiness as that aspect of naturalistic inquiry that assures the audience of the worth of the findings. There are four major criteria required in order to establish trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmation.

The first component for ensuring credibility was triangulation. The purpose of triangulation was to support theories and ideas with multiple sources of information. Patton (1980) defines triangulation as “A process by which the researcher can guard against the accusation that a study’s findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s biases” (p. 470). In this study, data sources included interviews (focus group and individual), documents, questionnaires, and field
notes from additional sources. An analysis of these sources validated the information
gathered.

The second source of credibility was member checking. Each interview was
transcribed and summarized so the participants could see the accuracy of their interviews.
The purpose of member checking was to ensure the accuracy of the information collected
from the participants.

Peer debriefing was the third component of credibility. Lincoln and Guba
described peer debriefing as "the process by which the researcher is kept Honest"
(p. 308). A professional colleague was asked to serve as an auditor to insure that "the
research was conducted in a professional manner in conformity with generally accepted
qualitative research principles" (Beck, 1990, p. 97). The peer debriefer for this study was
a colleague in the same doctoral program who was familiar with naturalistic
investigations and who understood the responsibilities of a peer debriefer. Data related to
interviews, the researcher's personal journal, methods of inquiry and other conversations
related to the study were discussed with and provided to the peer debriefer throughout the
study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated, "It is the researchers' responsibility to provide
the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential
appliers" (p. 316). Descriptions described by participants who shared their point of view
gave insight into the context of their real-life experiences.

Dependability was guaranteed throughout the study while the researcher worked
to assure the preservation of all documents that were used to assure the process of
naturalistic inquiry. Confirmation was the criterion that was established to assure the study was supported by data.

Timeline for Completion

In order to research the factors that influence African-American teachers' decisions to remain in the teaching profession, the study was conducted throughout the 2002-2003 school year. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were conducted during the first semester school year. Once the focus group and individual interviews were conducted, transcription, and summarization of the participants' responses were analyzed. Throughout the entire study, research for the Review of Literature were collected in order to better understand African-American teachers' decisions to remain in the profession and assumptions associated with teachers' decisions about their work.
CHAPTER V
DATA ANALYSIS

This study strived to determine factors that influence African-American teachers’
career decisions to remain in teaching. Through Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) application
of the naturalistic paradigm, this study investigated these findings by including interviews
of eleven African-American teachers and two school administrators’ from a public school
system in the suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia. The public school system used for the study
was called County A.

First, two focus groups of four and five African-American teachers were asked to
share information about what lead them to seek a teaching position. Next, they were
asked to share their beliefs, views, and opinions about what influenced them to remain in
teaching. Then they were asked how they felt about teaching in the county. This method
of data collection allowed the participants to “speak their own minds” in sharing with
others their perspectives, opinions and experiences through open dialogue and discussion.
The themes that became apparent from the participants oral responses assisted the
researcher in developing the interview protocol for a series of individual interviews.
Explicit and tactic knowledge acquired during this process helped to increase both the
validity and reliability of the information gathered.
Both the group and individual interviews consisted of teachers’ responses to questions which seek to inform the following research questions presented in chapter one:

1. What professional factors have influenced their decisions to remain in the classroom?
2. What personal factors have influenced their decisions to remain in teaching?
3. What are the perceived personal and professional barriers that lead other African-American teachers to leave teaching?
4. How could school districts positively impact African-American teacher retention?

Additionally, this chapter entailed some background information on County A and its public school system, a brief summary of the two secondary school settings where the interviews took place, a brief description of each participant, and a summary of their responses to the research questions. These brief descriptions were developed using the researcher’s words to link direct quotes from the participant’s responses. This method of using the participants’ own words as much as possible allowed meaning to the true essence of their points of view. Following these discussions, the themes that developed from the data were presented.

County A and its Public Schools

The county where the interviews took place is a prosperous and well-developed county. It is a county with a strong heritage and unique community. It was a county that was once known as the “Mother of Counties” because it emerged out of land acquired
from the Creek Indians at the Treaty of Indian Springs. Stretching from Jackson north to the Chattahoochee River, the county encompassed not only today’s current land area, but also several other Georgia counties.

The county is located about several miles southeast of downtown Atlanta, Georgia. It is about 350 square miles in size. Cheap land and a large number of starter homes helped make County A the seconded-fastest growing county in Georgia during the 1990’s. County A consisted of 58,741 people in 1990 and 119,341 people in 2000. In comparison, the county’s population grew 61.8% in the 1980’s. County A’s population has more than tripled since 1970, ranking the county in the top ten fastest-growing counties of the nation and number one in the Atlanta area. Black, Hispanic, and Asian populations increased during the 1990’s, though whites still numerically dominate the county. Whites make up 81.4% of the population now, compared to 88.7% in 1990. Blacks are now 14.7%, compared to 10.3% in 1990. Hispanics are 2.3% of the population now, compared to only .8% 10 years ago. Asians are 1.8% of the population now, compared to .6% in 1990. The majority of the residents of County A are members of the Southern Baptist Church as well as the Methodist Church. Every year the county houses numerous festivals, several athletic and youth associations, attractions and main events that make the county distinctive. Major attractions include music in the parks and numerous celebrations during holidays (County Board of Commissioners, 2000).

With the county’s population continuously increasing, County A’s school system enrollment grows over 10% annually. Because of the amazing growth, the county voted and approved a one-cent sales tax in order to build more needed schools. The county
currently consists of 29 schools (17 elementary, 6 middle, 4 high schools, 1 alternative school and 1 evening school). An additional high school and elementary school is scheduled to open in August, 2003. The projected student enrollment for the 2002-2003 school year is 27,588 with a previous enrollment of 25,301 during the 2001-2002 school year. The beginning teacher salary is $33,199 with an average per-pupil expenditure of $6,353. Forty seven and a half percent of the faculty has advanced degrees with the average teacher having 12.3 years of experience with a T-4 certificate. In 2001-2002, 51% of the high school graduates earned college preparatory diplomas, 21% earned technical preparatory diplomas, and 15% earned both the college and technical preparatory diploma. The county’s school system is the largest employer in the county.

As County A continues to grow, so do the number of minority students. It has been reported by the county’s board of education that no school has increased its percentage of white students since 1993. Matter of fact, the percentage of white students enrolled in the county’s school system has declined by 4.3%. This is the largest percentage of decrease since the school system was desegregated in 1970. The percentage of white students enrolled declined by 3.3% last year. Eighteen out of twenty-nine schools have declined by 5% or greater in white student enrollment during the 2002-2003 school year. Two schools in the county have a decline of 10% or greater in white enrollment this school year. It has been noted that the school system will have a majority of minority students in six years if the percentage of white students continues to decline at the same rate as it has in the past five years. Two elementary and one middle school already have a majority of minority students enrolled. An additional elementary school
will be added to this category during the 2003-2004 school year, while five additional schools will have a majority of minority students in the next six years. As of August 2002 the African-American student enrollment was 24.7% rather than 21.4% during the previous year. The Hispanic enrollment went from 2.4% last year to 2.9% during this current school year and the Asian population rose from 1.9% last year to 2.0% this year.

The county's board of education has also reported that there are only five African Americans currently working as officials, administrators, and managers at the county office. Other 2002-2003 percentages of African-American personnel in the county include 4 African-American school principals, 13 assistant principals, 117 elementary classroom teachers, 34 secondary classroom teachers, 14 in guidance, 3 media specialists, 27 teacher aides, 9 clerical staff, 191 service workers, 14 non-teaching assistant principals, 84 other classroom teachers, 3 in psychological services, 14 considered professional staff, 1 technician, 4 skilled craftsmen, and 6 unskilled laborers. Overall, the county's board of education employs a total of 3,241 full-time staff with 102 of them being African-American males while 427 are African-American females. There are only 21 Hispanics, 22 Asians or Pacific Islanders and 7 American Indian or Alaskan Natives employed by the county's board of education (County A School District, 2003).

The county is a diverse area with much to offer. It is a county that has always been involved in the state's agriculture, transportation, and the state's industry. As the county continues to grow, so does its many resources and developments in order to stay current with the 21st century.
School Setting: Focus Group 1

One of the high schools' used in the study is located near the town's city square. The school was opened in 1972. The school has one principal and four assistant principals. The high school staffs 127 teachers with only 17 being African American and two Hispanic. The high school serves grades 9-12 and has a current enrollment of 2,053 students. Every year the high school participates in the Governor’s Honors Program, Star Student, Academic Team, and Literary Team to name a few. The high school prides itself on its emphasis on academic excellence. Faculty, students, administration, and the community work together to best meet the needs of all students (County A School District, 2003).

Focus Group 1 Interviews

The first focus group consisted of four veteran African-American educators with an average of 24 years of experience in teaching. Each focus group member volunteered to participate in the study. The focus group interviews took place in an English teacher’s classroom after school. All participants for the focus group interviews arrived on time and all appeared interested in participating in the study.

The researcher decided to report the group interview as well as individual interviews in narrative form so that the reader could “hear the voices” of the participant’s. With each participant, the researcher seeks to introduce the teachers individually and share information about them by way of interview comments and observations that shows
their life histories. In order to protect those in the study, the researcher has given false names to each participant.

The researcher welcomed each participant to the interview session. Participants sat in desks arranged in a small circle. Once seated, participants were given consent forms (Appendix C) for his and her approval. A reminder of the study’s purpose was reviewed as well as answering any questions before the session began. The interview session was opened by asking any member of the focus group to begin by sharing their background and what led them to become a teacher.

Beth

Beth, a middle-aged, dark complexioned, African-American woman with a very soft-spoken, kind voice was the first to arrive to the interview. Beth also allowed the researcher to use her room for the interview session. Beth has taught for 9 years and seemed very willing to help the researcher with the interview. Beth made sure her room was nice and tidy for the interview and that everybody was comfortable. Beth was also the first to speak. She received a degree in mass communication from a four-year college in Georgia. While a senior in college she needed an elective to complete the credits needed for graduation. She chose a teaching course that focused on literature as her elective. As part of the requirements for the course, Beth had to teach a class. After teaching a few times, Beth soon learned that she enjoyed the interaction with the children and helping them to learn. Beth then decided she would go back to school to become certified in teaching once she finished her mass communication degree. Her certification to teach only took one year. After receiving her certification Beth would look for a job in
the teaching profession. She decided if she did not find a job in teaching she would continue with the area of mass communication. Beth stated she had no trouble finding a position in teaching. Her first job teaching English literature was at the high school where she graduated. As a first-year teacher, she felt she received one of the worst classes in the school, but did not want to quit. She saw how many African-American students needed black role models and people who cared.

I was glad that I had chosen the profession, but more so where I was because I felt like I could relate to the students. This is probably how I survived my first year because I knew the students, saw that that made a big difference, and because I knew the kids that I was dealing with. I knew their parents. Someone else might not have been able to reach them the way that I could simply because I was from the area and because I was black.

Sharon

As if encouraged by Beth, Sharon speaks next. This is the only school system where Sharon has taught. She is also a soft spoken woman who seems extremely knowledgeable about the county where she works, but does not live. She appears to be the oldest member of the group. She chooses her words slowly and thinks before she speaks. Sharon has worked as an educator for the past 28 years. She currently assists students who have special needs in their vocational and elective classes.
In my neighborhood we had two teachers and a principal. In our church working in the summer we had vacation bible school in the small gym. I was the teacher for the vacation bible school. I felt after teaching bible school I had a good relationship with the kids and a lot of influence on them, so I decided then that I wanted to be a teacher.

So Sharon stated how she went to school to become an educator. She finished early and received her first position as a teacher in a high school. The high school was in a rural area where she felt they needed role models. Sharon felt she would make a good one.

Leah

This is the first year for Leah at the high school. Leah is a dark complexion woman who always has a smile on her face. She is very energetic and seems to love her career in teaching. Leah teaches Biology to children with special needs.

Leah stated how she always knew she was going to be an educator. During the eighth grade she was asked what she wanted to do in life. As early as middle school, Leah knew she wanted to be a special education teacher. So once she finished school she received her associate degree in the study of children. Leah wanted to work in all kinds of areas dealing with children in order to receive a good foundation to work with others. One place where she worked was in a homeless shelter helping children and their mothers get back on their feet. Leah later moved from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and came to Georgia to attend Georgia State where she received a communications degree so that she
could become a speech pathologist. She wanted to add this somehow to her area of education. As she was working on her communication degree, she noticed that some of the people that she was coming in contact with did not remember what they were learning. So Leah went back to receive her Master’s degree in the humanities because she wanted to be able to go around in every area and not be confined to teaching one specific thing.

I wanted to just go out there—still in special education, but be able to touch on all kinds of levels. I’m working on my certification in teaching now because I never did do that part of it. I have substituted in all kinds of school systems- Pittsburgh and here in Atlanta. I really love working in special education. I got into that back in Pittsburgh and ran all areas of the program. I did everything in that area and I loved it! I especially enjoyed working with those who needed extra attention and help.

Joe

Joe is the high school’s chorus teacher and led both the county’s high school choir and the women’s choir to first place at the St. Louis music festival. He is the only male in the group. Joe is tall, heavy set, and well groomed. He has been in the field of education for 7 years. He has a charming, but forceful voice. Joe stated he was excited about the interview and wanted to do what he could to help with the research. Joe brought his own refreshments and offered them to everyone at the interview.
Joe stated how he was honestly born to be a teacher. “I can’t ever remember wanting to do anything else ever in my life!” Joe had a couple of uncles and several close church members who were teachers. “These people had a great influence on me wanting to teach.” In high school, Joe wanted to stay around the school so that he could help and be around teachers. Teaching has been his dream and what he has always wanted to do. “Music is something that I love and have always done. So why not put something that I love and have always wanted to do and be happy.” Joe even taught bible school while he was young.

Being a musician, teaching church choirs and church songs and things of that nature to people much older than myself really gave me a good foundation. Really even before finishing high school and going on to college to get a degree in music education. To be honest I don’t remember wanting to do anything else. I have always wanted to teach. I’m here. I love it! Everyday of it!

Following Joe’s experience, the researcher began to move the participants to sharing their opinions and experiences about the county’s school system and what it is like for them to teach here.

Beth

Beth began by saying “I have no complaints. Working here has been both a growing and good experience.” She feels teachers who are thinking about transferring are disgruntled and most likely not looking at the best interest of the students. “They
probably have more personal issues than any thing else for wanting to leave.” Beth stated several teachers who are moving to other schools are also doing so because they do not like the administrators.

There have been some administrators that people have really not liked while at the same time these administrators have really helped me to get to the position I am now. So things are a lot easier and I did not even realize what they were doing at the time except helping me. So I really do not have any complaints at all.

The main reason Beth stays in the county besides her care for the students is because of her colleagues and faculty members.

I must say for the most part, there is something about working with the majority of the faculty, especially working with the veteran African-American faculty. The African-American faculty has always made me feel welcomed.

She feels you can speak with other African-American teachers and know it will be kept confidential. Teachers such as these stated Beth will tell you where to find things if you need them and give helpful advise. Beth does not recall African-American faculty members talking behind her back.

It has been a really good experience for me, a growing experience and of course some growing pains, but I think overall it has been a good experience.
Sharon

“Well since I have been here the longest I guess you can tell that I like it here.”

Sharon never had any intention of staying because she never wanted to be associated with a small town, a rural place.

I was headed to a larger school system and could have left anytime, but I choose to stay here because I think when I first started we had half and half-black and white. I never met such a warm faculty. They were loving and caring and they took you under their wing, especially if you were new.

That was my first experience here at the high school.

Sharon thought she may have headed to other school systems in the Atlanta area but realized she needed to stay here for the students. She could not believe how so many students who live so close to Atlanta do not know much about the city or have not visited certain parts of Atlanta. Sharon expressed how “By being in special education I have meet some of the parents and to me they were uneducated and they needed somebody to help them.” Sharon has seen changes for the better and likes the children because they are diverse. She feels the county has been good to her and there is no reason for her to leave until she retires in a few years.

Leah

Leah has only been in the county for several months so she felt she could not compare the county to other former places of employment. She stated she would compare the county to another county in the Atlanta area as being a good district.
What I had to deal with being in another county in Atlanta was very
difficult being in special education and some of the issues there were
awful. So far I like it here. I will add though that I wish more teachers
were able to share in the decision making process at this school. I haven’t
seen much of that here.

Joe

Joe first started by saying this county was not the place were he was headed for
his teaching career. He went to a predominately white high school with over 3,000
students. His high school was about 80% white. He went to an all-black college for his
undergraduate work. Joe’s life long goal was to teach in an inner-city, all black, high
school because he felt a lot of times he is so bothered by our children only wanting to sing
gospel.

Just to be able to have the opportunity to go into an inner city all-black
high school, not saying that all black kids want to just sing gospel, but just
to be able to have the opportunity to be able to go into a situation like that
and be able to broaden their horizons and just take them to the next level.
That is the way I wanted it to be, but of course I ended up here which of
course was no choice of mine, but I feel I was destined to be here.
Everything is planned. I have loved every minute of it.
Teaching in an all black inner city high school for him was an experience of a
lifetime. He stated he would cherish that experience forever.
Usually in an all black high school the staff is predominately black. Being here and being able to offer African-American students what I know they wouldn’t get unless I was here has really made this stay much more enjoyable. It is not just our African-American students, but everything here in the county is so traditional, so the way it was many years ago. We have a lot of students’ whom parents went to this school and their parents’ parents went to this school. All they know is how it has so called been in the past.

With Joe teaching choir he has had the opportunity to take his students all across the United States. Joe could not believe how so many of his students have not been to popular locations such as Six Flags located in Atlanta. When Joe takes his students to many different cities he feels he is changing their lives.

What I have been most pleased with are my students’ parents. Usually about the students’ junior year, their parents are really opening up to me and getting to know me and are taking advantage of the opportunity my program offers. But I really do like working here, the kids are special, their unique and different.

Joe thinks his students are not all the same way and feels the school as well as the county has a nice mix. He continues to mention how much he enjoys working at the high school and for the county.
I think the system is growing. I think in the past the county has always
looked at the “Jones” meaning surrounding counties, but I do not think the
county realizes that they are the “Jones.”

Joe stated that he feels when he first began to teach in the county he would notice,
How the county would look to surrounding counties to see what they were
doing when all along other counties were looking at us to see what we
were doing! This county is growing so fast that now we are becoming the
true “Jones.”

He added how the county itself, such as with the county coordinators, are stepping up to
the plate and realizing how they have something going on here and need to branch out a
little bit more to fit every students need.

After Joe’s comment, the researcher began exploring the question of what keeps
the participants in the teaching profession. Beth, once again, began first.

Beth

What keeps me teaching is making a difference. I have students who have never
had African-American teachers before. I have been walking down the hall and have
heard a black student say to another black student,

“That’s Mrs. Beth, that’s my teacher.”

“Oh, you have a black teacher! I want to be in her class!”

“Just because of that fact, just because I’m black, students want to be in
my class, so I feel needed. I think our presence is so needed.”
Beth feels African-American teachers are important because African-American students need good role models and someone whom they can look up to. Beth feels she can only do so much as a female.

I think we need more African-American males. I can give an example. One particular morning I was on duty and there were three of us there. I was there, an African-American male teacher was there and a white female teacher was there. And a young African-American man had come by and he was drinking a soda in the hallway which is a violation of school rules. He also had a hat on in the building which is another violation of school rules. The white female teacher approached the African-American student and he became really belligerent. He did not want to hear what she had to say, he acted as if he was ready to attack her. The black male teacher stood there for a moment because he was going to let the white teacher handle the situation, but because it was getting out of hand all he said to the student was, Hey, you need to watch your mouth. Who do you think you are talking to! And as soon as he spoke up the young man took off his hat without the black male teacher having to ask him to. The student immediately did what the white teacher had been trying to get him to do all along. It was just the presence of a black male teacher and the student immediately calmed himself down. And that shows that the presence is needed. Just our presence is needed.
Sharon

“I think they need their own kind. Somebody that they feel they can go to when they are in need not just academically, but for personal need.” Sharon feels her students know they can come to her for almost anything. “When they need stuff for their class and were not able to get it from home, they know they can come to me. They will come to me for personal stuff as well.” Sharon believes African-American teachers can see where the need is and can communicate with African-American students.

I know in my years they do not know how to approach our kids and how to communicate with them. And I think I know what’s best in the number of years that I have been here. The kids will come to me and ask me for a pencil, a pen, note cards and if I don’t have something that they need, I will go out and buy it for them. So I think they need us here. They need their own kind where they feel they belong. I guess that’s why I sign my contract every year because for a lot of these kids there are not enough of us here for all their needs.

Leah

I think I’m going to ditto that. It is a need for the kids, but it is also the caring that we give them. Sometimes you can look at a child who is not paying attention when you’re in front of the board trying to teach something and you have to give them that look, and you know we know how to give that look! All children respond to that look that other cultures
may not be able to give. Just that caring that you can give when they come to ask you for a pencil and you go ahead and give them that pencil. Because why fight that battle! It is unnecessary and I see that a lot around here. There are so many battles that I see so many teachers fighting unnecessarily around here. You may be the only caring teacher that they have all day! A lot of times you may hear that their sleeping in cars or whatever else is going on. They have to fight to find a place in bed, maybe even in a meal. We don't know what is going on when some of these kids leave here. They look to come to school sometimes to get that “I’m going to her class and I know it's going to be alright feeling.” So for me it's always been that touch that I always think about because I do not know what's happening in that child’s life once they leave here. Let me be that positive part of their day.

The room was particularly quiet and calm when Leah spoke. Following Leah’s comments, the researcher strived to reiterate several comments made during the focus group session. The researcher then asked Joe to give his comments:

It is my students that truly keep me signing my contract and coming back every year. To have the opportunity to educate all students, especially black males, gives me a sense of giving back to others. It is like how others gave to me when I was back in school and now I can do the same for others. I really, really enjoy my job because I am helping to make our
students productive members of society. I just enjoy being around young people and making sure they have an education.

Following Joe’s comment, several teachers made the statement that they definitely do not come back every year because of the money. There was also a small discussion over how teachers should be able to help more with the decisions made at the school. The participants stated how they would feel even better about their jobs if this were to occur. They stated coming to work every day is all about the students. After Joe’s comment, the researcher thanked the group for their participation and the session concluded. As expected, time constraints prevented all members of the focus group from responding at length to all the research questions.

School Setting: Focus Group 2

The second group of focus interviews was conducted at another high school in the same county. The high school serves grades 9-12 and has a current enrollment of 1,985 students. The school currently staffs 132 teachers with 22 of them being African American. The high school opened in August 1990 and was the newest high school in the county since 1964. The high school’s community is one of the fastest growing areas in Georgia. Even though, the city where the high school is located has traditionally been known to include the greater share of minority students, there are a higher percentage of African-American students enrolled at this particular high school (36%).
Focus Group 2 Interviews

The second focus group consisted of five veteran African-American educators with an average of 16 years of experience of teaching. Before beginning the researcher welcomed each participant to the interview session. All five participants sat at a round table in the special education office. Once seated, participants were given consent forms (Appendix C) for their approval. A reminder of the study’s purpose was reviewed as well as answering any questions before the session began. Once again to protect those in the study, the researcher has given false names to each participant. The interview session was once again opened by asking any member of the focus group to begin by sharing their background and what led them to become a teacher.

Gloria

Gloria is the school’s special education department chair. She has a great deal of enthusiasm and loves working with children. She has long black hair, is very petite, and has a great smile. She has taught for 10 years in Missouri and 8 years at her current high school.

Gloria’s first teaching experience was in Missouri where she started out in a Mildly Intellectual special education program for high school students. Her first background in education was in the area of early childhood. Gloria believed she ended up in special education because she was interested in how students learned and some of the problems they had with learning made special education interesting.
Looking back when I was in high school we didn’t have the special education classes that we have now. Years back people would say how that person has some type of disability.

It made it interesting to Gloria to learn how to teach students with special needs. For Gloria special education is exciting and has a certain flow to it.

I wanted to teach different strategies and techniques so these special education kids could learn better. I wanted to be successful and productive with these students. I wanted to make a difference.

She likes helping special need students with the transition to adulthood and helping to make them productive members of society.

Lillie

Lillie was raised in a family of educators. Her mom was a teacher and so were many other members of her family. Lillie has been in education for 13 years. She is very open with her experiences and eager to help with the study. Lillie arrives to the interview early and sits patiently until the researcher is ready to begin. Lillie was a drama teacher at one point in her career, but is currently teaching ninth grade English. She has always enjoyed speech and drama and interacting with children. She believes teachers can influence student lives in so many different ways. “Teachers can have an enormous effect on students. That effect must be a positive one.” Several students that Lillie has taught have been very successful and gone to college. She has kept in contact with several of them after they have graduated from high school.
Karen

Karen, very similar to Lillie’s background, came from a family of educators as well. Her mother, father, aunts, and uncles were all educators. Karen’s mother was a third grade teacher while her father taught chemistry. Karen became a business education teacher because of the influence of her high school business education teacher. “She was such a dynamic teacher. I believed she may have influenced my reason for teaching more than my family did!” Karen believes she is a caring and helpful person. She feels she was meant to teach. Before going into the teaching profession Karen worked in corporate America.

I went into the business world and realized that that was not for me.

People were cold and only interested in themselves. I had to get out and go into something much more enjoyable and rewarding.

So Karen entered the teaching profession where she felt more respected. What make’s her feel really good are the students who come back and tell her how she made a difference in their lives. “You can be everything to your students. I know that my students need me. Teachers are counselors, parents, friends, etc.” Karen has always enjoyed teaching business courses rather than teaching academics. “Teaching has always been a part of my life and probably always will be.” Karen has taught for the past 13 years.
Laura

Laura did not go to school to be a teacher. She became a teacher after becoming a military wife and mother. "I needed the extra money" stated Laura as the main reason to why she became a teacher. She received a degree in math and after her daughter was born she decided to teach. Laura taught in several different states and enjoys what she does. She has been an educator for the last 16 years. Laura states that she enjoys teaching a subject that many people do not enjoy—math. Laura has a degree in educational leadership, but wants to stay in the classroom due to the fact that administrators in the county work twelve month contracts instead of a teacher’s nine month contract, and they do not have the contact that she has with the students. Laura likes children and believes she is good at what she does. She states that her classes have a good time with learning. "I use a lot of different techniques and strategies to help my students learn. They seem to enjoy them." Laura feels teaching keeps her mind going and enjoys being with the children. She later states that she believes even if she was not a military wife or mother she probably still would have gone into teaching. "It’s such a rewarding career that it would be hard for me to leave."

Pam

Pam arrived late to the interview due to having to help students work on their science fair projects. She was definitely welcomed by the other members of the interview session. Pam came to the interview session wearing African attire and a big bright smile.
She had a strong Caribbean accent. She is an older woman with spunk and excitement. She was ready to talk about her educational experiences once she arrived.

Pam stated how she became interested in teaching because of the influence of her fifth grade elementary teacher. She stated how this teacher was a hero in her eyes as well as a role model. “I loved her statue, how she walked and carried herself. I wanted to be just like her, even if that meant becoming a teacher.” Pam has taught for over 23 years.

Following Pam’s experience, the researcher began to move the participants to sharing their opinions and experiences about the county’s school system and what it is like for them to teach here.

**Gloria**

Gloria was very eager to express her views on working for the school and county. She compared the county to her former state of employment in Missouri. Gloria stated the special education department in the county is very far behind compared to other states.

“The technology and programming over all in the county is bad.” Gloria feels that some specific special education programs in the county are improving, but have far to go. She feels how the county responds to African-American females in general is not good.

There needs to be an improvement for all teachers to have a say in decisions made at the school and the amount of promotions and advancement opportunities they give to African-American females as well as African-American males should be increased.
Because of the increase minority population, Gloria states there is a desperate need for more African-American males in the school system as well as in administrator positions.” Gloria stated she feels overlooked. “The county is a good old’ boy system where not very many people move up the ladder, especially African Americans.” She hopes this gets better. Gloria does state that there are some good changes within the county such as the school system’s new balance calendar and techniques to help motivate teachers to stay in the county. She feels the superintendent has listened to some of there concerns such as sponsoring a diversity workshop to the faculty. “Still so much is needed to be done.”

Lillie

Adding to Gloria’s statement, Lillie began by stating how she felt the diversity workshop really did not work due to the fact that many teachers had excuses for not attending. She feels the thought for the seminar was good, but needed to be enforced in order for the workshop to be successful. Lillie stated how the current teacher population is not enough to handle the African-American student population. She stressed how the county needs to hire more black males because students, especially black males, need good role models and someone to talk to. “There is also a definite need to see more African Americans in administrative positions and positions at the county level.” Since this is the only school system Lillie has worked, she can not compare it to another school system. She is very comfortable with the county’s schools but knows there is much needed progress.
Lillie states she has a small grudge towards the administration in her building. She also has not had a good experience with the faculty at her school and feels it is because of her race. Lillie expressed her concern for once being the school’s drama teacher and never feeling like she had any support from the administrators and several teachers.

I had to beg over and over again for materials and money to buy supplies that I knew was in the budget. Now that I am no longer the drama teacher things have changed. I was asked to step down from the position and to teach ninth grade English five periods a day. I was hurt when I got the news, very hurt, but I stayed at the school because of my students. They needed me and I wanted to be there for them. Now the new drama teacher gets whatever she wants! Whatever supplies she needs she gets! I have a big issue with that. My feelings continue to be hurt, but I go on.

Karen

This county is Karen’s first public school experience. She feels comfortable where she works and the county’s school system itself. Karen has seen a lot of change in the department. “I was once the only African American in the business department, now there are two of us! I also never thought I would be the technical/business department chair. That has been a good feeling for me!” She feels she has established many things for the school and her department. Karen stated how she agreed with both Gloria and Lillie in regards to how the system is a “good ole boy system” and needs major
improvements. Karen also feels it is much harder for African-American females to get in administrative positions. “You basically have to know who to hang with and be around. If you are not in the right crowd then you can forget it!”

Laura

Laura begins to jump in by stating how she will not give up anything to be in an administrative position. “I will not give up my friends or join circles that I do not want to be a part of just for a job!” Laura has taught in several different environments and continues to come back to this particular school system. She feels she has been in better school systems where teachers were taken better care of even with less pay and they were able to express their concerns for how the school environment could be better.

Teachers here are not always invited to everything that affects them. We do not always get a say in how things impact our careers and lives. I wish that was changed.

Laura was once on the school leadership team and other school committees, but because she would not say what everyone wanted to hear she states, she decided to give the position to someone else. She, too, agrees with the others in regards to the school system needing change.

Pam

Pam feels the school system is weird and wishes the school system would enforce more of their goals and missions for their students. “We all need the system to give us an idea of what the system is all about and their concerns for the children.” The county she
stated is big in politics. “You need to know someone in the county in order to move up.” Pam stresses how she enjoys working with the students, especially the minority students, but sees a drastic difference between those she taught in the Caribbean and those in the county.

I never knew students to not stand up and say good morning to a teacher when they first walked in a room. The Caribbean stresses discipline and respect unlike the United States. It’s a big difference, but I still enjoy being here.

Following Pam’s comment, the researcher began exploring the question of what keeps them in the teaching profession. Gloria commented first.

**Gloria**

I enjoy what I do. I enjoy and care for the students. I know they need me. I know they need someone who looks like them. Because of that I don’t think I will be leaving anytime soon. I also stay because of the job security teaching gives, the holidays, breaks, and vacation time. I have small children and it helps for me to be home to help them with their homework and take them on vacations. Sometimes being a teacher can be difficult because of the overcrowding and full classrooms, but its still worth staying.

Once Gloria completes her thoughts and comments, Lillie begins to respond.
Lillie

My views are very similar to Gloria’s. I have a sense of connection with my students and I believe they have a sense of connection with me. I believe it was more of a connection when I was the drama teacher though, but it’s still there with many of the students I teach now. I like to be around the students because many of them want to learn and earn their diploma. It’s a wonderful feeling to know that you have helped them to accomplish their goal. That’s what teaching should be about, helping people to succeed and become successful in life. Even if you’re not teaching the subject you have such passion for.

The room continues to be soft in nature while everyone listens to each others comments. Throughout the interview the participants nod their heads to each others comments and feelings. The participants all seem interested in what the other participants have to say. Karen expressed her comments next.

I love what I do. Simple as that! I love what I do. I always have. I have developed programs through the school’s business department that I feel will help our students, especially our black students. They need to know about the value of money, stocks and bonds, the stock market, financial investments, interest rates, supply and demand and so fourth in order to be able to retire and live comfortably one day. I try to teach them about not spending their whole paycheck on clothes and needless materials. They need to learn how to save, save, save especially because of the way our
economy is looking now. I do not feel our students would be getting the same information I am giving them from someone else. I do not want them to experience not having any money. Our students need to learn about saving now! I want to be the one who helps to explain to them how.

Laura and Pam both nodded their heads in agreement. Both Laura and Pam commented on how the reasons why they stay in the teaching profession is because of their love for the students, feeling they are good role models for the students, especially the minority students, and being able to provide for others.

Following Laura and Pam's comments, the researcher thanked the group for their participation and the session ended. As expected, time constraints did not allow all members of the group from responding at length to all of the research questions.

Summary

Following the focus group interviews the audiotapes were transcribed, and the researcher began to analyze the data. The interview guide served to divide the data into predetermined categories. These segmented categories were grouped into topics and then color coded. As the researchers field notes were examined, many themes began to emerge from the data. As anticipated, not every member of the focus group responded to every questions presented. However, many commonalities occurred among all nine participants relating to how they became teachers and what it was like to teach in the county's public schools.
In responding to the interview protocol in answering the first question concerning what led them to seek a teaching position. Nine of the nine participants spoke about personal factors as influences on their decisions to pursue teaching careers. Specifically, one out of the nine always knew they were going to be a teacher, one out of the nine was influenced by a teacher, one out of the nine pursued teaching because of the military and needed money, one out of the nine aspired to be a teacher because they were influenced by relatives, one out of the nine strived to be a teacher because they were influenced by both relatives and teachers, one out of the nine was influenced to be a teacher because they felt they could be a good influence and role model and three out of the nine wanted to interact, help and influence children.

In responding to the second interview question, “What is it like to teach in the school district?,” all eight of the nine participants referred to the students. One out of the nine felt working in the county “has been a really good and growing experience.” One out of the nine likes working in the county so far. Two out of the nine looks at working in the county to provide students with opportunities and help make a difference. Five out of the nine feel the system needs improvement in several areas.

In responding to the third interview question, “What keeps you in the teaching profession?” All nine participants remain in the teaching profession because of their care for the students. One participant felt her presence is needed as an African American and because students need good role models. “I think they need their own kind and to give them a sense of belonging” was mentioned by two participants. One participant mentioned “that she wants to be that positive part of their day.” Another participant
spoke of enjoying what she does and having a sense of connection with her students. “I love what I do, I always have” was strongly emphasized by one participant. One talked about enjoying what she does as a teacher as well as having vacation and holiday breaks and job security.

The focus group interview contributed some initial qualitative insights into the individual teachers and their personal experience growing up. In sharing their life histories many were invigorating and lively. Many of the teachers felt their careers were “important in making a difference” for their students. There was a definite sense of pride, persistence and commitment frequently developed as stories about students and the background of the teachers past were recalled. Several members of the group spoke of some personal experiences related to why they became a teacher and what it was like for them to teach in the district.

Emerging Themes

Results from the coding process permitted the researcher to arrive at two clear themes that developed from the data collected.

1. It was obvious that each of the nine participants exhibited an ethnic care about their students. The importance of caring and concern was expressed both implicitly and explicitly by all nine participants.

2. The idea of commitment and a sense of personal and professional responsibility emerged as the second major theme in this study. Eight of the nine participants has a long history with the school and was familiar with the
students and their individual needs. Four of the nine participants were positive about describing their instructional efforts and persistent in working year after year in the same environment.

3. To further examine the research questions and confirm the interview protocol, individual, one-on-one interviews were conducted next. The researcher was interested in how African-American teachers make sense of their teaching profession and what keeps them in teaching.

Individual Interviews - Teachers

The two individual interviews began after school hours in a technology education classroom. Each interview was prearranged and lasted about an hour. The researcher began the first interview by welcoming each interviewee to the interview session when they arrived. The interviewees were given a consent form (Appendix C), was reminded of the purpose of the study, and asked if there were any questions. Indicating that there were no questions, the researcher reviewed the interview guide and then began the first individual interview session. The researcher listed each participant with a false name in order to protect them in the study.

Barbara

Barbara is a person who loves to teach and work with children. “I like just seeing their light bulbs just go off when they finally get a concept. Working with children is better than working with adults who act like children!” Barbara attended Morris Brown College and then later transferred to Spelman College in 1990. Her first major was
computer science, but later changed her major to music/education. After graduating from Spelman College in 1995, Barbara found a teaching position immediately in Brunswick, Georgia. Barbara taught middle school in Brunswick, Georgia for five years and later moved to Atlanta in 2000. Barbara never thought about teaching until her father continued to mention to her that she would make an excellent teacher. At first Barbara was in denial and did not want to have to deal with children's bad behavior and their discipline problems, but the more Barbara thought about it, the more she began to like the idea of teaching. Before changing her major to education/music, Barbara would teach the younger kids in her neighborhood and teach Sunday school. She loved every minute of it and knew teaching was what she wanted to do!

For Barbara, teaching has been a challenging, but rewarding experience, both professionally and personally. When teaching middle school, she stated she had to deal with children's attitudes and misbehaviors. "If you can survive middle school you can survive almost any level!" Now she is currently working in the high school's music department. When Barbara speaks about the perceived personal and professional barriers that lead African-American teachers to leave teaching, her response was such:

It's the political stuff that goes on in schools. Some principals have their favorite picks and it is just very obvious. They seem to give some teachers special treatment than they will to other teachers. For example, at my school the specialist areas such as art, music, and physical education get the grunt end of almost everything. We are like the stepchildren of the school and many times the babysitters. Our feelings and concerns are not
validated all the time by different people. So, things like that make teachers want to move on and do something different. I also feel sometimes that the parents can be a little overbearing. It is nice to have parent involvement, but not having the parents to run the school. If they disagree with the teachers, they can always go higher. They go to the principal and then the parents have their way. Grades get changed and everything else can be changed. It's whatever the parents want! So then the teachers are not always being supported by the administration, so why would you want to stay!

During Barbara's response she uses her hands a lot to express herself and how she feels. She seems to want the researcher to know exactly how she feels. On how Barbara makes sense of what she does in the classroom, she gives considerable thought to her career and answer.

I make sense of my job by having children be a sponge. I want to take kids from where they are and bring them into another level. I want them to grow musically and if I am able to help them grow musically in parts of moral knowledge and things like that then I think I am doing a good job. Just to help them grow in more ways than one. Not just in my area.

Barbara continues to reflect on her job as she pauses for a few minutes. She states how she has become a better person from teaching and only wants the best for her students. Next the researcher asked Barbara what personal factors have influenced her decision to remain in teaching. As the researcher asked the question, Barbara began to
have a smile on her face. She stated how she remains in teaching because of her love for working with the students.

Working with the students is the best part of my job. Sometimes I go to work not feeling my best and when I see the students I just forget all my problems. The problems just seem to go away.

Barbara stated she remains in teaching mainly because of the students, but also because of the fringe benefits and vacation days. Even though teachers do not earn much money, Barbara stays for her students. She feels working with the students out ways the pay.

When Barbara speaks about what the district needs to do to retain African-American teachers, her response was quick and to the point.

It would be nice to see more African Americans in administrative positions. It would be nice if they leveled the playing field in terms of how they respond to African Americans especially with their tone of voice to non African Americans. We need to be validated and allowed to do the things we need to do in a creative manner.

In stating her feelings about whether or not she would leave, she simply ended the interview by saying,

I thought about it, but what would I do? I love teaching so much. I love music. And so working with children and loving music, I don’t know where I would get this fulfillment that I have on a daily basis. I wouldn’t be able to get this feeling working for corporate America. My stressful level would probably go through the roof if I worked for corporate
America! Working with kids it tends to be stressful at times in terms of behavior, but overall I don’t feel stressed when working with students. It’s just working with the adults that stresses me. Not the children. But I have thought about leaving the school system because of all the politics that goes on in the school system, but working with the students out ways the politics. I have to keep my eyes on the prize. Working with the kids are definitely the prize in my opinion. Molding those minds.

Jan

The researcher began the second interview with Jan. Jan walked in the interview room with great spirit and zest. She seemed eager to help the researcher with the interview and began by giving the researcher a history of how she came to be a teacher. Jan was a small child when she realized she wanted to become a teacher. She grew up in a community where there were many teachers. A couple who lived very close to Jan taught French and English. She stated how the couple strongly encouraged the young people in the neighborhood to get their education and become educators. Jan stated during the time when she was growing up there were not many occupations available for black women except teaching and cleaning houses. Jan knew she did not want to go into housekeeping so teaching as a profession became her choice. Once Jan finished high school she was able to attend a state teachers college where she could still live at home. During the summers Jan taught bible school, worked at summer school programs and helped out at the YMCA. She always felt she had a good relationship with the smaller
kids and was able to get them to do things and keep them on task. So she felt teaching would be a good profession for her and something she would always like to do. Now Jan teaches computer courses to high school students.

Next, the researcher begins asking Jan what the perceived personal and professional barriers are that lead other African-American teachers to leave the teaching profession. Jan comments first on the administration.

Sometimes I think it could be the administrators and co-workers. Most of the time there are barriers put in front of African-American teachers from their immediate supervisor if they are from another race that causes them to be stressful. They put stumbling blocks in their way to keep them from growing professionally. They try to make it difficult and hard for African Americans. Teachers also have to deal with the money, the very low pay. Let’s say the very low pay along with the long hours. You can’t get a chance to do other things outside of school. A teachers’ job just does not end when they leave the school building. Many teachers take home papers to grade and are involved in extra curricular activities that they help to sponsor for the students. We put in this extra time that takes away from our families. So I think many teachers leave because of the administration and because of money. Many teachers will choose to go elsewhere where there is more money and do something else that they enjoy. They get a chance to come home and be with their families.
Jan stated that the long hours do not matter as much to her anymore since her daughter is now grown and living on her own. Jan mentions that now she just has to deal with the administration and trying to continue to receive their support. The researcher asked Jan how she then made sense of her teaching profession. After she reflects, she states “To encourage and make kids feel loved.” She feels a lot of kids come to school feeling hostile and having many attitudes towards you. “Sometimes you can go to them with a smile on your face and a soft spoken voice and they do not know how to respond.” Jan feels this is so because the student may live in a hostile environment and does not know how to respond to kindness or someone showing them love.

They seem to think that everybody is out to get them or you are against them. Then the few that you can reach you think your not and later on they come back and seek you out because you have been kind to them. And they will find out that you meant them no harm and were looking out for them. Sometimes they will tell you thank you. Because of that and you see them succeed and they learn that you are there to help them, they learn and go out and do well.

Jan mentions that if you help kids they will remember you. She has been teaching for 25 years and has always tried to be nice and show students a lot of love. “That brings me joy to see students succeed and learn.”

The researcher next asked Jan to express what personal factors have influenced her decision to remain in teaching. It does not take Jan long to respond to this question. She began by saying that she really enjoys teaching. This was mentioned several times.
She enjoys seeing students learn new things and to watch them learn is exciting for her.

She enjoys being creative with her students and trying new things. “I enjoy being around the kids. Many of them are a lot of fun. I just like being around them.”

Jan was then asked to comment on what the district can do to retain African-American teachers. Jan feels that over the years she has seen the district trying to keep African American in the school district.

In the past it was hard for the district to keep African-American teachers because the district was competing with the city of Atlanta and other neighboring counties. The city of Atlanta and one other particular county in the city were the highest paying counties at the time so African-American teachers were prone to go there so they could be with their own kind and maybe be able to move up the ladder a lot quicker.

Jan states how this county is now paying their teachers better. Jan thinks for a moment and then responds by saying,

Years ago there was no place for African-American teachers to live in the county. Now the county is building new decent homes and apartments. We do not have to look elsewhere to find a place to live nor go out of the county to find nice restaurants and places to shop.

Jan mentions how she has heard about the county giving new applicants a standardized test. She is not sure if other school systems are doing the same, but believes this is definitely a deterrent for African Americans.
I know the county may be looking for the best and the brightest, but many African Americans do not test well. We may be losing out on a great teacher because of this test. And with the teacher shortage that may make the shortage even greater.

Jan mentions once again how if the county continues to develop and grow, African Americans will be more likely to stay. Going into the next question Jan tells the researcher that she will need to leave soon. The researcher presents the final question of whether or not Jan has thought about leaving. Jan’s response was “Many times, many many times!” When Jan had only taught for a year and a half she left teaching because she moved to Atlanta with her new husband and began working for the government. Once her daughter was born she left her government job and returned to teaching because of the vacation time, holiday breaks and being able to leave work around 3 p.m. Once she was back in teaching, Jan had to deal with large classes and student behavior problems, but decided to hang in there.

The administrators were also flexible and the teachers did not mind watching or covering your classes if you needed to leave school early for medical reasons or other personal reasons. But it all comes down to the love for the kids and working with the kids. We continue to have a lot of fun together and that makes me want to come to work everyday.
Individual Interviews - Administrators

Mr. Brooks has been an administrator for the past five years. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Physical Education and his Masters in Secondary Education from the University of Arizona. He received an Educational Leadership endorsement from Northern Arizona University. Mr. Brooks stated that he became a teacher because he was interested in students learning, wanted to teach young people about being physically fit, and he wanted to coach high school football. Before becoming an administrator, Mr. Brooks taught physical education and health for 25 years. Mr. Brooks believes teachers need to educate without restrictions. He feels teachers should not always lecture to their classes because children can not express themselves that way. “Teachers must allow their students to think and use their imaginations. This can not always be done through lectures.” The researcher asked Mr. Brooks why he thinks African-American teachers leave the teaching profession and the school district. His response was geared towards many African Americans feeling a cultural shock when they come to this county.

This county is not the city of Atlanta. There is a lot of progress happening in this city, but it still may not be fast enough for some. The county is still developing and building, but you still do not have the variety of shopping centers and restaurants that you may have in the downtown area. Some people need to have closer access to things like that. I feel many African-American teachers may also leave the county because they are definitely in the minority. Some teachers may not be able to adjust as quickly as others and need to see more people like themselves in the workplace. For me
being an African-American male from Arizona I have been able to adjust to all people very well. In Arizona there are more Hispanics and Caucasians than African Americans. So coming to this county for me was no big adjustment or problem. I came to help educate students and help create a successful environment for all to learn and grow.

After hearing Mr. Brook’s response the researcher next wanted to know how he felt the county could retain and recruit African-American teachers. He stated how the county should recruit more minority teachers by selling the county’s public schools through career fairs at predominately black colleges and graduate schools and actually recruiting new teachers from the college’s education department.

The county’s recruitment office should make it a point to meet directly with educational departments at historically black colleges. This way the recruitment office can go into actually classrooms where students are preparing to become teachers and then recruit. The students can ask questions at that time and get a better sense of the county. Once the county begins to recruit more and more African-American teachers it will hopefully create a better mentor program that will cater to the needs of minority teachers. Well I’ll say that the county needs to establish a better mentor program for all new teachers to the county, but especially create some type of mentor or support group for minority teachers. I believe if African-American teachers have that needed support they may stay in teaching longer.
Before the researcher was able to completely finish the interview, Mr. Brooks was called to the front office to conduct an emergency hearing. He was not sure how long the hearing would take, but while walking out of his office where the interview was conducted, Mr. Brooks stressed the need for a more diverse faculty and staff since that is the way our student population seems to be headed. He mentioned that the county can have a diverse faculty by having better support and mentor programs, employing more minorities at the county level, and hiring more minority recruiters. Even though Mr. Brooks did not realize it he answered all of the researcher’s questions.

Several years ago Mrs. Woods was standing in front of a classroom at the high school teaching applied problem solving and applied algebra. She is currently in her second year as an administrator. Mrs. Woods taught math for nine years in the county, but later thought about one day becoming school superintendent. She then realized if she became school superintendent she would be separated from the students. “I wanted to become a teacher because I wanted to see students learn and become successful. I can’t actually see them learn if I am in the county office.” She received her Bachelors in Secondary Math from The University of Georgia and her Masters from Georgia State. Her Specialist in Educational Leadership was also received from Georgia State. Mrs. Wood will be beginning her Ph.D. program in Educational Leadership sometime next year. Mrs. Woods wants to see teachers who are concerned about their students and have a positive vibe. “I want to see teachers who demand the best from their students.” Mrs. Woods feels there is a steady increase of African American and other minority teachers in the county. She states that she knows the number of African-American
teachers does not represent the number of African-American students in the county, but that the county seems to be working on it. Mrs. Woods feels the Teach for Georgia website, job fairs at minority colleges, and word of mouth can help with the recruitment of African-American teachers. She also states the county needs to make new teachers feel more welcomed and comfortable. "Minority teachers especially need to feel welcomed sense they are still in the minority in the county. If teachers do not feel comfortable then they will go elsewhere." Mrs. Wood states once again how the county is changing and hiring more and more African-American teachers. She feels the county can recruit and retain African Americans by being supportive and standing behind them. Besides being supportive the county needs to hire more minorities into administrative positions. If minority teachers know there is room for advancement in the county more and more minorities may apply." Mrs. Wood mentions the school system needs to work on increasing their teacher salaries. "Other school systems in surrounding counties pay a lot more money to their teachers and staff. It is hard for our county to compete with that." Mrs. Woods states because the county does not pay as much as the other counties it must make up for it in other ways such as with more incentives and rewards.

I do know that the money is not all that matters with several of our teachers. Many are here because of the love for the students and their commitment to them. That's one of the reasons why I want to stay in administration at the high school and not become school superintendent.
Summary

After the individual interviews, the same data analysis procedure was conducted that occurred for the focus group. Audiotapes were transcribed and analyzed, the interview guide served to separate the data into predetermined categories and those separated categories were grouped into topics and then color-coded. The researcher’s field notes were also examined. Even though each individual participant was asked and answered all of the questions outlined in the interview protocol, individual teachers emphasized different questions. However, many commonalities occurred among the two individual teacher interviews, two individual administrator interviews, and the focus group interviews.

**Question 1 (all participants) – What led you to seek a teaching position?**

All participants shared similar responses to this question. The participants came to teaching as the result of a personal decision. A relative suggested to Barbara that she pursue teaching as a career because of her interest in working with children. Jan became a teacher because she felt she had a good relationship with children. Both Mr. Brooks and Mrs. Woods became teachers because of their interest in helping students to learn.

**Question 2 (all participants) – What are the perceived personal and professional barriers that lead other African-American teachers to leave teaching?**

Barbara believes African-American teachers leave the teaching profession because of all the politics and non-supportive administrators. Jan felt the same way as Barbara, but added the long hours after work can lead African-American teachers to leave their
teaching careers. Mr. Brooks feels African-American teachers leave because they need more support from mentor programs. Mrs. Woods states African-American teachers may leave because they may not feel as comfortable here as maybe somewhere else. She also mentions the lower salaries may cause many to leave.

**Question 3 (individual teacher interviews) — How do you make sense of your teaching job?**

Both participants expressed a personal sense of commitment and responsibility in making sense of what they do in their teaching positions. Barbara expressed that she makes sense of job by helping students to grow in more than one way. “I want to take kids from where they are and bring them into another level.” Jan commented that encouraging students and making them feel loved is how she makes sense of her teaching job. “That brings me joy to see students succeed and learn.”

**Question 4 (individual teacher interviews) — What personal factors have influenced your decision to remain in teaching?**

Barbara stated her love for working with the students and the fringe benefits were what continue to influence her stay in teaching. “Working with the students is the best part of my job. Sometimes I go to work not feeling my best and when I see the students I just forget all my problems.” Jan is influenced by enjoying teaching and being able to see students learn.
Question 5 (all participants) – What does the district need to do to retain African-American teachers?

Barbara suggested that the district needs to hire more African-Americans in administrative positions. Jan responds by stating the county needs to continue building and making progress within the county. In regards to the school district, Jan feels the county will lose several good teachers if they administer a test for new teachers. Mr. Brooks states the district needs to have better support and mentor programs, employ more minorities at the county level and hire more minority recruiters. Mrs. Woods feels the district should increase teacher salaries, make African Americans as well as other minority teachers feel comfortable and welcomed, and hire more minorities into administrative positions.

Question 6 (individual teacher interviews) – Have you ever thought about leaving the teaching profession?

Both participants have considered leaving in the past, but are currently happy with their careers. Barbara and Jan stated they would not leave teaching until retirement.

Emerging Themes (individual teachers)

Ethnic Care

Both participants revealed an “ethnic care” and understood the importance of serving as positive role models. The participants were supportive and encouraging in meeting the challenge of disinclined learners and both seemed persistent in helping their students become successful.
Commitment

Both participants illustrated an obligation to their positions as teachers. They know their students and their circumstances and feel obligated to helping them experience success.

Barriers to Retention

Both participants spoke about their concerns with the school’s administration. These concerns implied that the administrators should be more responsive in meeting the needs of the teachers. One participant expressed concerns about the administrators choosing sides and not being as supportive towards the teachers. The other participant stated administrators can add stumbling blocks and make it hard for African Americans to grow professionally.

Summary

For the last thirty years, the diversity in the nation’s teaching workforce has continued to decrease while the student population grows increasingly more culturally and racially diverse. With the imbalance in race and the culture of the nation’s teaching force and the students they teach, this has caused implications that go far beyond a discrepancy in numbers. Despite the research on the importance of diversity in the teacher workforce, increasing the supply of African American and other teachers of color is a challenge for educational leaders.

With the current climate of teacher shortages, and the limited amount of teachers of color, it is logical to ask those experienced teachers of color what makes them stay in
the teaching profession. Matter of fact, with these teachers expressing their experiences, values and beliefs, this might best inform and help educational decision-makers in recruiting and retaining teachers of diversity in a time of major educational reform and accountability. Therefore, a group of veteran, African-American teachers were selected as the key participants for this study.

The purpose of this study was to allow two groups of African-American teachers an opportunity to express their reasons for why they choose to remain in teaching and to sort through the information they provided with what the literature recommends about teacher retention in general. The study explored and examined the perceptions of nine African-American teachers in a focus group, two African-American teachers in individual interviews and individual interviews with two of the school system’s administrators. Participants were asked to state their story about their teaching careers. Participants were also asked to explain why they continued in teaching and what can be done to recruit and retain African-American teachers.

As described in Chapter IV, the study reported here consisted of ethnographic interviews of African-American teachers and two administrators. Qualitative methods were chosen for this study to allow openness, depth and detail in order to make out the meaning of the experience of the participants. Bogdan and Bilken (1982) stated the emphasis is placed on “inductive analysis, description, and the study of people’s perception” (p. xiii). Having a conversation with groups of African-American teachers about their decision to teach as a career and discussing with them why they choose to continue in the profession was the essence and gist of this study.
This qualitative study depended on interviews of African-American teachers with five or more years of teaching. The researcher first conducted two focus groups with a total of nine African-American teachers. The results from the focus group interviews served to guide the interview protocol for two, one-on-one individual interviews with African-American teachers and two administrators from the county’s school system. All eleven teachers were asked to speak with the researcher about how they came to be a teacher and reflect on their experiences as teachers in the county’s school district. The participants were also asked to discuss if they ever thought about leaving their current teaching position. The teachers described stories about their teaching experiences and what it meant for them to be teachers in the school district. Additionally, they offered suggestions on how the county’s school district might be able to retain other African-American teachers.

The essential questions asked to the participants were:

1. Why do you choose to remain in the teaching profession?
2. What has influenced your decision to remain in teaching in the district?

Three primary themes emerged from the data:

1. “Ethnic care” is central to the teaching-learning process. Teachers understand the importance of supporting their students in becoming successful, being positive role models, encouraging students to achieve, and meeting the challenges of reluctant learners by caring about them. They remain teachers due to the fact that they care about their students.
2. Commitment is part of the teachers’ responsibility. Teachers recognize their students and their circumstances. They demonstrate and show a sense of personal responsibility in enabling children to become successful. Teachers who are committed remain in teaching.

3. Sound suggestions for educational leaders emerged as a theme as a result of the individual interviews.

An ample amount of literature on teacher retention focuses on the external and employment factors associated with teacher retention in general. Teacher’s rewards, salary, working conditions, and other employment factors are frequently mentioned in the literature as the primary factors associated with teachers’ decisions to remain or leave the profession. For the most part, the educational literature has concentrated on empirical data related to employment factors as the major influence on teachers’ career decisions.

The results of this study suggest and propose that the personal and professional factors are more important than employment and external factors in African-American teachers’ decisions about their careers. Therefore, the experiences, beliefs, and practices of these African-American teachers offer opportunities for school leaders to reflect on how they can retain African-American teachers.

By examining the family and educational backgrounds of these African-American teachers and listening to their stories as they explain their perspectives for why they choose to remain in teaching, this study validates the importance of personal and professional factors as the major influence in African-American teachers’ decisions about their careers and their decisions to remain in the profession.
This study builds on the existing literature pertaining to external, employment, personal, and professional factors associated with teachers in general and the retention of teachers of color in particular. The study also provides educational leaders with additional information concerning practical suggestions that can be carried out in recruiting and retaining minority teachers.

Even though these participants mentioned several employment factors such as benefits, salary, vacations, and working conditions as discussed in the work of Kirby and Grissmer (1993) and Shen (1997), they repeated on several occasions that the personal and professional factors affiliated with their jobs were critical to their decisions to remain in the teaching profession. The employment factors were stated only briefly in terms of barriers to be overcome. It should be emphasized that these barriers were only temporary and did not influence the participants’ decisions to remain in their teaching positions.

These findings have vital implications for leaders and policy makers. It may appear that leaders and policy makers have little control over an individual’s “ethnic care” and commitment. In actuality, this is not the case. The research literature suggests that adults play an important role in influencing children’s behavior. By carrying out an “ethnic care,” teachers send a message to students that they are important and deserving of respect. An atmosphere of mutual trust and support can influence students’ behavior in school and eventually improve student success.

Educational Researchers have considered the way in which care is expressed in schools, by teachers (Noddings, 2001) and by administrators (Lomotey, 1989). This research draws upon these notions and has illustrated a shared professional sensibility
among black teachers and administrators that is culturally grounded. The study’s participants demonstrate a form of “ethnic caring” that compels their personal sense of responsibility and professional obligation within an arching cultural context. Thus, “ethnic care” aptly describes a critical component of their professional identity.

The recommendation for educational leaders is the importance of personalizing schools by building strong, collaborative relationship with the entire school community. This idea comes from Dufour and Eaker (1998) in “Professional Learning Communities.” One of the views expressed by several participants during the individual interviews, and described as a limitation to the school’s program, was the perception that administrators needed to share their authority and decision-making role with teachers in developing programs within the school.

The results and outcome of this study seek to inform principals and other educational leaders of the importance of having a strong school environment in influencing their decisions to remain in teaching. Based upon the ideas generated by the participants, school leaders should create professional learning communities that strengthen parents, students, and teachers’ sense of participation in schools. School administrators can partake in the learning process by creating school communities that encourage more than academic achievement, but personal responsibility and care for each individual in the school’s community. Participants place confidence that the principal should be seen and supportive of their efforts. This means sharing the role of school leadership with teachers. It also means that the school leader must empower teachers to serve as leaders by helping them to gain personal knowledge of students’ circumstances
and their family’s circumstances. One of the most important roles of the school leader is to serve as a collaborator and establish the necessary support teachers need in helping them to be successful. School leaders must offer to teachers, their students and their parents the necessary resources to be successful and effective in the classroom. Ideas such as these suggest that school leaders must have the practical knowledge and ability to share the school’s leadership with the entire school community (Sergiovanni, 1992).

In this study, teachers revealed their sense of commitment and personal responsibility for the students. The participants believed that all students have the ability to be successful. They understood the students’ circumstances and were accustomed and familiar with their backgrounds. Several participants stayed in contact with former students, gave advice, counseled students about careers and life situations, and demonstrated knowledge of students’ personal relationships. School leaders must recognize and acknowledge the work of individual teachers who are committed to their jobs by appreciating and rewarding their efforts.

One of the most commonly recognized needs for African-American teachers’ focuses on the role modeling they offer for students in general and especially children of color. This proposes that children need to see teachers and school leaders of color in positions of authority and leadership. The existence of educators of color sends a message to children of color that they too can achieve academic success. For school leaders, this suggests that diversity is important and essential in schools.

Diversity in America’s schools is important and can play a vital role in assisting in the progress of the 21st century. Students deserve to see themselves and others different
from them in school. Teachers of color serve as important links in helping them in that endeavor. School leaders must recognize the importance of diversity in hiring practices and support diversity in its various manifestations within schools. This suggests accepting differences of opinions and allowing students, teachers, and parents’ opportunities to speak and discuss their differences. By opening lines of communication, school leaders can bring different groups together to manage change, resolve conflicts, and encourage shared decision making. Beliefs such as these can become the focal point of a school’s vision and mission with the leadership of principals, teachers and others in helping all members of the school’s community understand value and appreciate the importance of diversity.
CHAPTER VI
FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Findings

The participants in this study continue to remain in teaching for both personal and professional reasons, student relationships, and for some administrative support. No matter the teacher’s working conditions, institutional and bureaucratic procedures, and other external forces, the participants chose to stay in teaching because they care about their students and are committed to their careers as teachers. In the participants' point of view, the ethnic of "caring" is vital to student learning. It is important for these teachers to give something back to the community. For these teachers, they remain in teaching because of such personal reasons as caring and commitment being a part of what they believe in and what they do as teachers. Their beliefs go beyond simply sharing knowledge and recognizing individual differences and establishing the belief that a positive learning environment is facilitated by strong teacher/student relationships. The participants in the study accept the challenges of the school’s environment and assume personal and professional responsibility in doing what is necessary and essential in order to help all students to be successful. Beliefs such as these are typical of successful teachers in general.
In our society, education for minority children is even more important and necessary than ever before. Our youth will be able to compete in our society if they are given a good solid education along with committed and dedicated teachers. Teachers are needed who can educate and motivate all students, particularly minority students, to meet the challenges of competing for fair education and job opportunities. Teaching is a commitment to lifelong learning and rewards. With this in mind, participants from the study have suggested that school districts could positively impact African-American teacher retention by continuing to include fringe benefits, improving teacher preparation programs, and providing support both personally and professionally. School districts will have a better chance of retaining minority educators if they create a continuous network of support, mentorship, and professional development.

Implications

The findings and conclusions from this study have several implications for educators and those interested in attracting and retaining quality teachers. Educators and policy makers must learn all they can about why teachers, particularly African Americans and other teachers of color, stay in the profession if they are to fulfill their commitment to staff every classroom with a qualified teacher.

This study supports previous research findings on the importance of creating positive personal and professional relationships among staff in the school (DePaul, 2000). Positive relationships among teachers, students, and administrators are definite factors in determining teacher retention as stated by several participants in the study. As schools
become even more focused on increased student achievement and school improvement activities, time needs to be allowed in order to address these challenges in a way that provides personal relationships to prosper in schools. If educational leaders wish to retain quality personnel, personal relationships cannot be ignored.

Administrators familiar with the behavior of reluctant learners need teachers who are aware of those behaviors and work continuously to motivate and encourage them to succeed. Therefore, it is not unreasonable for administrators and other educational leaders to create programs that directly affect the performances of teachers in helping them to experience success in the classroom which ultimately effects teacher retention. School administrators must make certain that teachers understand the importance of being energetic and motivated. Teachers with this type of attitude hopefully take a hands-on approach to learning. Studies have found that as teachers progress from teacher preparation programs to the realities of the classroom, new skills and techniques are needed in order for teachers to become successful. Participants from the study are eager to learn and keep up with these new skills and techniques.

Educational leaders can play a vital part in helping teachers, African-American teachers in particular, learn these new skills and techniques by allowing teachers to participate in curriculum and staff development activities. Teachers who participate in staff development activities can learn updated strategies and techniques that can increase the learning process and help students better understand their lessons and the curriculum. Staff development activities can sometimes answer questions about classroom performance and school improvements. Beginning teachers need staff and professional
development opportunities that will assist them in learning and becoming better classroom managers and teachers. Training and support should be available to beginning teachers and experienced teachers if needed in order to improve their teaching and classroom management skills. Teachers who are able to take advantage of staff and professional development are most likely going to remain in the field of education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study several recommendations are offered. The first recommendation includes an “induction” period where teachers become familiar with practices and procedures that may help them to be successful in the teaching environment. Fideler and Haselkorn in 1999 stated induction can make an enormous difference in the type of teachers they develop into and the quality of the teaching and learning experiences students will have. One comment about teacher induction is to offer ongoing assistance to teachers coming into the profession through mentoring programs so it enhances their effectiveness as teachers and increases their retention in the profession. Efforts such as these can go a long way in promoting and supporting new teachers, incorporating teachers into the teaching learning process and reducing teacher turnover (Huling-Austin, 1987). According to Odell (1990), mentoring programs are a part of teacher induction and are meant to influence beginning teachers’ practices and beliefs, to increase their retention, and to improve the instruction of new teachers. Mentoring programs can go a long way in helping teachers to feel supported in their endeavors in the classroom. A quality mentoring experience for teachers is a positive professional
experience that improves their ability to connect with other professionals, improves their ability to teach, and provides an environment for learning and growth.

It is important for educational leaders to allow opportunities for teachers to collaborate with one another in creating effective strategies that support teachers in being successful in the profession. The first recommendation for creating opportunities for teachers to collaborate with others is diminishing teacher isolation. Administrators and principals can prevent teachers’ sense of isolation by providing constructive feedback which is important to teachers’ growth and visiting the teachers’ classroom frequently. For many teachers the only time they may come in contact with administrators and other school personnel is during faculty meetings and classroom observations. Eliminating teacher isolation helps teachers by assisting them in improving their skill in teaching. Regular personal and professional communication between the teacher and administrator enhances teacher retention. Administrators who eliminate teacher isolation model the characteristics of effective leaders.

Educational leaders should communicate job performance expectations for the beginning and experienced teacher. Teachers desire to know what their administrators expect of them. They want to know how they are performing professionally and how to improve that performance.

Administrators should also provide a work environment that is attractive and has resources teachers need to successfully meet their job performance expectations. Teachers who feel they have access to needed resources and materials are more likely to stay in the teaching profession.
Where schools involve shared ideas, school administrators and teachers share roles and responsibilities. Allocating veteran teachers as mentors to beginning teachers allows a way for creating collegiality and can magnify teacher retention. The assignment of veteran teachers to beginning teachers also lets teachers know that what they do and say is essential and important. Teachers can speak with other teachers about classroom management, lesson planning, pedagogy, and solve problems together. Administrators can help in recognizing veteran teachers to assist new teachers in comprehending the culture and environment of the school. Therefore, beginning teachers, administrators and experienced teachers work as a team in creating strategies and techniques for the school program.

School administrators who provide an “open” philosophy about expectations, evaluation, and participation in the entire school program can accomplish these tasks by working with teachers frequently and on an individual basis. Limiting interaction to occasional contacts of one type or another will not provide the strong support teachers need to feel accepted in the school. School administrators who devote themselves in school-based orientation benefit in the end because teachers grow professionally, school leaders encourage relationships with other colleagues, and school systems do not exhaust additional resources on finding new teachers. Therefore, regular personal and professional communication between the teacher and administrator enhances teacher retention.

This study found that participants’ beliefs and cultural experiences were essential in their decisions to remain in teaching. Teacher and student relationships, trust between
teachers and students, and a commitment to teaching and caring were described as being important to the teaching experience of the participants. Educational Leaders must recognize a teachers' commitment to teaching. Teachers in this study felt an intrinsic motivation to be in the profession. In order for teachers to remain in the profession, these teachers need to be recognized and rewarded for their career choices. Since financial rewards and benefits are limited for the teaching profession, teachers need to know others appreciate their hard work and what they do everyday for the school and in the classroom. Educational leaders should recognize teachers, compliment them for a job well done, and provide special ceremonies that allow public recognition of their dedication to the profession.

This study further suggests the importance of school administrators understanding the distinctive qualities of teachers' cultural experiences. A diversity of political, social, and historical factors is related for teachers. The implications for teacher educators however, are vital in the retention and recruitment of teachers in today's diverse classrooms. Since research state that most teachers are not able to handle student diversity and report that their teacher preparation courses for the classroom did not prepare them for today's diverse classroom, implications such as these are important (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Another suggestion to this problem is to restructure the teacher preparation course to include longer student-teaching experiences in diverse communities and environments, engaging in the school's culture through participation in locally sponsored church, community activities and neighborhood associations.
Even though participants for this study were encouraged by personal and professional factors to remain in the teaching profession, employment factors are noted in the literature for teachers in general in respect to their decisions to remain or leave the profession. The notion of salary is often noted in the literature as a main consideration in teachers' career decisions. In fact, low salaries have been connected to higher rates of teacher attrition (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

A national study that was completed in the last four years stated teachers designated low salaries as the second most common reason for leaving the profession (NCES, 1997). However, Langdon in 1999, stated that low pay was number one on the list for reasons it is difficult to recruit and retain good teachers. According to this study, three of the thirteen participants suggested salary as an incentive to allure new teachers to the school district. None of the participants stated salary as being the reason for them to leave the district. According to the National Association of State Boards of Education (1998), teachers with experience who move to other positions are careful in transferring to other school districts because of seniority and wages, as well as investments in pension plans.

To add to the issue of salary, concerns in the work environment have been affiliated with teacher attrition (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Four of the eleven teachers in the individual and group interviews alluded to issues regarding their school's administration. Concerns related to the administrative management of the school program and school based decisions were particularly upsetting to correcting the school's environment in making sure things get done.
School leaders should acquire the knowledge and skills needed to make efficient and effective decisions regarding school management. Acquiring this knowledge and skill can be accomplished through improved research and studies about the practices of successful learning environments. Theodore Sizer (1992) recommended the school essentials needed to have successful learning communities. The following suggestions are equivalent to some of the works studied by the Coalition of Essential Schools on the basic guidelines for high school communities. These principles include the following:

1. The school should focus on helping adolescents learn to use their minds well. Schools should not attempt to be “comprehensive” if such a claim is made at the expense of the school’s central intellectual purpose.

2. The school’s goals should be simple: each student should master a number of essential skills and be competent in certain areas of knowledge.

3. The school’s goal should apply to all students, but the means to this goal will vary as these students themselves vary.

4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to maximum extent feasible.

5. The governing metaphor of the school should be student as worker, rather than the more familiar metaphor of teacher as deliverer of instructional services.

6. Students embarking on secondary school studies are those who show competence in language and elementary mathematics.

7. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress the values of expectation.
8. The principal and teachers should perceive of themselves first as specialist (experts in a particular discipline).

9. Administrative and budget targets should include substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per-pupil cost not more than 10 percent higher than that at traditional schools. (Sizer, 1992, pp. 207-209)

Recommendations for Further Study

The conceptual model used to frame retention concerns in this study recommend that personal and professional factors, external and employment factors influence teachers' decisions about their careers with employment factors contributing the most to teachers' decisions. However, in this study the participants made distant recommendations, which may be of essential importance in retaining African-American teachers more specifically.

In this study it is suggested that school leaders can play an important part in recruiting and retaining African-American teachers specifically, and teachers in general. School administrators especially need to (1) recruit minority teachers who possess the personal commitment described by the participants; (2) develop and create a supportive and friendly school environment; (3) create a professional learning environment that shares the school's vision, mission and builds collaboration among its members; (4) make the teaching experience more personable for minority teachers by appreciating, recognizing, promoting and supporting the value of culture and diversity within schools.
The culture of the school is essential for the success of both the teachers and students. As mentioned earlier in the study, practices of culturally relevant teachers demonstrate a focus and set of beliefs about students, their culture, and learning the school community. Teachers can serve as cultural guides were they focus on continuous learning.

Further research looking to notify and inform educational practitioners and decision-makers about teachers of color and their decisions about their work should be conducted. African Americans' points of view and other teachers of color in alternative schools, suburban, rural, and other urban settings need to be heard. Studies such as this are too important to end. The accumulated thinking of the group generates benefits for each individual. Very often conversations are limited to just those in areas of authority. The practices and behaviors of the African-American teachers in this study, implies that they are the change agents. This study is a representation of their lives. Essentially, the researcher's responsibility was simply to share a small amount of time in the participants' lives by questioning, identifying, and reporting what they believe about what they do as teachers. The researcher believes that these teachers inspire and motivate children to learn. An understanding of how teachers, especially African American and other minorities, determine early in their career whether they will leave or remain as an educator will allow schools to retain an ever decreasing teacher and personnel shortage.
APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

1. What led you to seek a teaching position?

2. What is it like to teach in the school district?

3. What keeps you in the teaching profession?

4. What are the perceived personal and professional barriers that lead other African-American teachers to leave teaching?

5. What personal factors have influenced your decision to remain in teaching?

6. What does the district need to do to retain African-American teachers?

7. Have you ever thought of leaving the teaching profession?
APPENDIX B

Pilot Questionnaire on Teacher Retention

1. Briefly state what lead you to seek teaching as a profession.

2. Are you still in the teaching profession because of an ethic care for the student?  
   (a) Yes ____  (b) No ____

3. Are you still in the teaching profession because of the commitment and sense of responsibility towards your students?  (a) Yes ____  (b) No ____

Demographics: For research purposes, please check the following that apply to you.

4. Gender:  (a) Male ____  (b) Female ____

5. How many years have you been a teacher?  
   (a) 0-5 years ____  
   (b) 6-10 years ____  
   (c) 11-15 years ____  
   (d) 16 or more years ____

6. Please check your highest level of education.  
   (a) BA/BS Degree ____  
   (b) MA Degree ____  
   (c) Specialist or Higher ____

7. Please check one of the subject areas that you teach.  
   (a) English ____  (e) Foreign Language ____  
   (b) Math ____  (f) Fine Arts ____  
   (c) Science ____  (g) Special Education ____  
   (d) Social Studies ____

8. Are there others in your family who are or have been school educators?  
   (a) Yes ____  (b) No ____

9. Do you intend to remain as a classroom teacher?  
   (a) Yes ____  (b) No ____
APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Agreement

Study: Qualitative Study on Factors That Influence African-American Teacher Retention: Implications for the Principal Pipeline

Researcher: Dawn M. Turner

Please read the consent agreement carefully before deciding to participate in the study.

Purpose of the study:
The purpose of this study is to determine why African-American teachers' chose to remain in the teaching profession.

What participants will do in the study:
Participants will be asked questions about their career as a teacher during a one-on-one, face to face interview that will last approximately one hour. Participant responses will be audio taped.

Time required:
Participants will spend approximately one hour participating in the study.

Risks:
There are no anticipated risks in participating in this study.

Benefits:
There are no direct benefits in participating in this study. The study may add to the body of knowledge related to African-American teachers and their career decisions.

Confidentiality:
The information that participants provide in the study will be handled confidentially.
Appendix C (continued)

Voluntary participation:
Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study:
You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

How to withdraw from the study:
If the participant would like to withdraw from the study, please notify the researcher or the academic advisor at any time at the address and phone number provided below. Any data collected will be discarded.
Informed Consent Agreement

Study: A Qualitative Study on Factors that Influence African-American Teacher Retention: Implications for the Principal Pipeline

Who to contact if you have questions about this study:
Dr. Melanie Carter, Academic Advisor
School of Education
Department of Educational Leadership
Clark Atlanta University
223 James P. Brawley Drive, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30314-4391
404-880-8503

Or

Dawn M. Turner
Stockbridge, Georgia
678-289-6008

Agreement:

I agree to participate in the research study described above.

Signature

Date

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.
REFERENCES


