Teachers perspective on attrition in the inner city: their voices, their stories
by Deborah Lee Smith

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Education
Montana State University
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Abstract:
There is ample research available which focuses on why teacher turnover is a prominent feature of urban schools. It is commonly known that urban school districts have a difficult time recruiting and retaining teachers, and many statistical studies show that teachers seldom opt to teach in these districts and often leave their positions within a short period if they do accept a position.

What goes unheard are the voices of the teachers who leave, which could bring life to the numbers on attrition. In this dissertation, grounded theory methodology was used to delve into this topic through semi-structured interviews. These interviews provide a description of the experiences of teachers who left inner-city districts and an analysis of their views of the school and community where they taught. The investigation focused on their decisions to leave, their thinking, their reasons, their experiences, and the emotional and cognitive processes that led to these decisions. Their decisions to leave teaching in the inner city and their stories were linked with research regarding cultural capital and social reproduction theories. The findings suggest that new teachers encounter many stressors including violence, displeasing student behavior and academic levels, negative climates, inadequate resources, and unsupportive administration and parents. The cultural mismatch between teachers and the community leads to miscommunication in dealing with parents and students.

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Deborah Lee Smith

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Education

in

Education

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

March, 2003

D378
Sm S36

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This dissertation has been read by each member of the dissertation committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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Date March 26, 2003

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have played a part in the completion of this dissertation. My chair, Dr. Ann deOnis, helped me during every stage of the research project and provided intellectual guidance and moral support during my time at Montana State University. I am forever grateful to her for everything she has done for me. My other committee members have provided valuable insights and helpful suggestions and were always willing to listen and talk with me regarding academic matters. Fellow students and friends, Lynn Gibson and Vicki Kraft, made my time in Bozeman worthwhile and listened to concerns about academic and personal matters.

My husband, Brian J. Smith, has also guided me throughout this process. He has inspired me, offered advice, and both emotional and scholarly strength. His constant support and loving nature made it possible for me to complete the project. Connor, my dear son who was born during my last semester of classes, has provided days of distraction and a clearer vision of what is truly important in life. Levi and Jasper take me on daily walks to the park. My family fills my world with perspective and warmth.

The teachers and administrators who took the time from their busy schedules to talk to me made this dissertation possible. In addition, my mother, Shirley A. Deneen, has instilled in me the value of education and a love of learning. My goal became possible because of the vast support of many.

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ABSTRACT

There is ample research available which focuses on why teacher turnover is a prominent feature of urban schools. It is commonly known that urban school districts have a difficult time recruiting and retaining teachers, and many statistical studies show that teachers seldom opt to teach in these districts and often leave their positions within a short period if they do accept a position. What goes unheard are the voices of the teachers who leave, which could bring life to the numbers on attrition. In this dissertation, grounded theory methodology was used to delve into this topic through semi-structured interviews. These interviews provide a description of the experiences of teachers who left inner-city districts and an analysis of their views of the school and community where they taught. The investigation focused on their decisions to leave, their thinking, their reasons, their experiences, and the emotional and cognitive processes that led to these decisions. Their decisions to leave teaching in the inner city and their stories were linked with research regarding cultural capital and social reproduction theories. The findings suggest that new teachers encounter many stressors including violence, displeasing student behavior and academic levels, negative climates, inadequate resources, and unsupportive administration and parents. The cultural mismatch between teachers and the community leads to miscommunication in dealing with parents and students.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The stories of those who persevere in the inner city have been told on numerous occasions. Stanford (2001) used a grounded theory method to examine the reason why some teachers continue in urban districts, effectively capturing their voices and describing their experiences. Ladson-Billings (1994) recounts the attributes which make eight teachers of African-American students "culturally relevant", in the hopes that her research will guide others to teach in a similar manner. Hunt (1998) reminds us that "stories of those who make a difference hold "a promise that anyone living in this world could take risks, turn despair into hope, and change the world" (p. xiii). Those who succeed against the odds are esteemed, and their stories can help us to understand their struggles and triumphs. Yet, many teachers leave when the conditions are unsuitable and few of their stories have been captured. Herbert Kohl (1967) took us on a journey into his classroom in the early sixties and told the experience of a Harvard graduate who dared to teach and care in Harlem. He taught there for two years before taking a year's leave to go to Europe, never to return to the classroom. He concluded his recollection by stating that the children he taught were suffering from the diseases of our society: "there are too many hundreds of thousands like them, lost in indifferent, inferior schools, put on the streets or in prep schools with condescension or cynicism" (Kohl, 1967, p. 224). Kohl compared his work in the inner city to the myth of Sisyphus who continually rolled

a rock up a hill day after day. Although Kohl cared and had a valuable encounter with the thirty-six children in his classroom, he felt that it was pointless because his work was undone by the others who thought of the children as animals with no chance for success. The goal of this research was to capture the personalities of those who left and describe their challenges in the hopes that this perspective will allow us a deeper understanding of teacher attrition; a deeper understanding could facilitate efforts to lower the attrition rates in disadvantaged districts.

Teacher attrition is a well-documented problem in our society. Newspapers and magazines regularly run headlines and cover stories about the shortage of qualified teachers in the United States. It is clear from these reports, however, that this problem is not experienced in the same manner for schools in different districts. While schools serving affluent and middle class populations are often inundated with applications for a single position, disadvantaged urban schools are forced to fill positions with long-term substitutes and hire people to teach who do not hold teaching credentials or allow those with credentials to teach outside of their academic specialty. Wilson and Corbett (2001) interviewed over 200 urban students about the teachers they wanted. It was often noted that substitutes and replacements were regular fixtures in their classrooms. "More than a few students adamantly asserted that some classes were a 'waste.' They explained that for some reason their 'regular' teacher had left and been replaced with a replacement teacher, or a succession of them" (Wilson & Corbett, 2001, p. 34). They noted that "one of the problems that these

students faced was a revolving door of teachers" (Wilson & Corbett, 2001, p. 58) and yet there was no further discussion of teacher turnover. This lack of stability in the teaching force in urban districts serves to further disadvantage these schools since a consistent staff is needed to implement changes which are needed to improve the quality of education. We must seek to understand the decisions that are made and capture the experiences and thinking of the teachers who leave so this aspect of teacher attrition can be represented. This introduction covers the following topics in regard to teacher attrition: statistics on turnover related to urban schools, problems related to turnover, and work conditions that contribute to attrition. This information confirms that we know so much about teacher attrition, but the gaps in our knowledge make it impossible to take strides in reducing the turnover rates for disadvantaged urban districts. The concluding section will discuss how this study relates to and adds depth to the existing literature by listening to the perspectives of those who have left the inner city.

The research on teacher attrition shows that 30 to 50 percent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Brunetti, 2001; Gritz & Theobald, 1996; Merseth 1992; Stanford, 2001). This situation is further complicated by an aging teaching population with a 50 percent expected retirement rate in the coming decade (Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991). These rates are even more dismal in low income districts where teachers are even more likely to leave in the first five years because of inferior working conditions (Haberman & Rickards, 1990; Mont & Rees, 1996). According to Matus (1999),

"the average career of an urban teacher is between three and five years, and in every five-year period approximately one-half of the urban teaching force leaves the profession" (p. 37). This teacher shortage in distressed urban areas becomes cyclical because the positions are filled by more unqualified, naive teachers who are overwhelmed by the problems associated with urban teaching and leave the districts. Aaronson (1999) effectively summarized the complexity of teacher attrition when she stated "most U.S. teachers start their careers in disadvantaged schools where turnover is highest, are assigned the most educationally needy students whom no one else wants to teach, are given the most demanding teaching loads with the greatest number of extra duties, and receive few curriculum materials and no mentoring" (p. 335). Given these conditions it should be no surprise that many leave and that those who do not merely learn to cope rather than flourish in their environments. These circumstances lead to a sense of futility and failure where new teachers burn out quickly or become deadwood, continuing to teach without any vigor or enthusiasm. This sense of hopelessness is one of many problems associated with high teacher turnover rates in urban schools.

The problems associated with teacher attrition are extensive and complex. Lower quality of teaching, loss of intellectual capital, cost factors, and inconsistencies in school reform efforts are all related to teacher attrition. The quality of teaching in urban districts suffers because of teacher attrition. Research confirms that new teachers improve dramatically during their first few years in the classroom (Olson, 2000). Since it takes essentially three years for a

teacher to become competent, it can be surmised that the urban districts are losing their teachers before they have the opportunity to reach their full potential (Haberman & Rickards, 1990). When certified teachers are not available, the positions are filled with "warm bodies" because "there is a lack of teachers trained in specific areas and of high-quality teachers in general" (Mont & Rees, 1996, p. 153). The result is that the students who need the most help sit in classrooms where uncommitted, unqualified teachers further damage their chances for succeeding.

In addition, teacher attrition is thought to devitalize the profession because the incentives and support are too weak to keep the best candidates. Gritz and Theobald (1996) assert that the "more academically able teachers leave teaching sooner than the less able" (p. 477). Those leaving are often the teachers who came from the top colleges and scored the highest on teacher-tests (Mont & Rees, 1996; Norton, 1999). This problem is exacerbated because the shortage could mean that districts are less likely to fire marginal teachers as they come up for tenure.

Another problem that is particularly troublesome in impoverished districts is the cost associated with replacing teachers. These districts already face fiscal problems, and the money that goes toward recruiting and hiring new teachers is money lost from a budget that already leaves students with inferior curriculum materials, equipment, and facilities. Another cost-related problem with teacher attrition is the lack of consistency in school reform efforts. Hope (1999) posits that "school improvement efforts, which often take years before reaching fruition,

in many ways require a stable group of teachers who are aware of and consistently work towards the improvement goals" (p. 55). Again this problem takes on a cyclical nature because the reasons teachers leave often have to do with the poor work environments, and those environments cannot be improved unless a stable group of teachers manage to implement successful reform efforts. Probing the cognitive and emotional process that teachers go through in deciding to leave the inner city can give us insight regarding the decision making and provide more understanding for this complex problem.

This introductory chapter is designed to describe the problem addressed in this study, including the context and significance of the problem. It also presents the specific purpose of the research and the overriding question that this research endeavored to answer. In addition, this chapter provides an introduction to the significance of this particular investigation. It concludes with the operational definitions and the methodology used while conducting the research.

Problem of the Study

Understanding teachers' interpretations of their experiences in the inner city and how they interpret leaving their positions is a first and necessary step toward lower attrition rates. The perspectives of the teachers who leave inner-city districts are not represented in the literature. There is a wealth of research on attrition and we recognize that large numbers of teachers leave; we know that the conditions are bad and that salary differentials, transportation issues, and

cultural mismatches all contribute to the high attrition rates. We know that teacher turnover in urban communities, which have a relatively high level of economically disadvantaged students, makes consistent implementation of school reform difficult to achieve. However, there remains a significant gap in our research knowledge: we lack in-depth understanding of how teachers who leave interpret their leaving; we lack research on what leaving the inner city means to those who do it.

In part due to the above knowledge gap, we do not know how to stabilize this workforce so that consistent implementation of reform efforts can be supported; thus, it is imperative that we learn more about the process that a teacher goes through in deciding to leave an inner-city district. "If the education of children in poverty is to be changed, teachers will be the work force of reform" (Connell, 1994, p. 143). Yet, as Lee and Burkham (2002) reported, the greatest problem in the inner city is high staff turnover, making implementation of school reform challenging. Our lack of understanding of what "leaving" means to teachers signifies that we are unable to prevent high teacher attrition rates at inner-city schools, and high teacher attrition rates further solidify urban youths' 'second class' education. Inner-city schools have limited options when they cannot find a qualified teacher to fill a vacancy. They can cancel courses if they are not required, or they can use substitutes or less qualified teachers if the position must be filled. Canceling classes further disadvantages students whose options are already narrowed, especially considering that the honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes are less available in poor urban districts.

"That many students in America– often those most in need of excellent teachers– are taught by unqualified teachers is a reprehensible form of publicly sanctioned malpractice" (Wilgoren, 1999, p. 8). Hiring less qualified teachers or substitutes has a multitude of drawbacks but is often more desirable than eliminating courses; thus many inexperienced teachers begin their careers in disadvantaged urban schools. Understanding how teachers interpret their leaving these school districts is a first step toward prevention.

Beyond the statistics that reveal a disproportionately high turnover rate for teachers at inner-city schools, there is a need to focus attention on diversity education because American schools are failing to meet the needs of diverse students. In general, students who are racially, economically, and/or socially disadvantaged are more likely to fail in and/or drop out of school. We are "inundated with stories of inner-city mass failure, student violence, and soaring drop-out rates" (Delpit, 1995, *xiv*) and yet many teachers continue to be unprepared for teaching these students. Schools need stable staffs, with a consistent program of staff development in order for these schools to serve their students. Connell (1994) asserted that "teachers' experience and educational reasoning are central to a strategy for reconstruction" (p. 126), yet the teacher turnover rates make it impossible to keep up with the influx of unprepared teachers in inner-city school districts. Reconstructing the schools involves formulating goals, changing curriculum, and implementing reform with intellectual teachers who are prepared to work with disadvantaged groups. Our understanding of the turnover is superficial despite the important influence that

teachers have in influencing the environment of a school.

Abundant research reveals that the conditions in urban schools are sub-par and that the education offered perpetuates social reproduction. The problem of teacher attrition further complicates the education system in poor communities for many reasons, including the need for stability and additional education or in-servicing related to teaching diverse students. Anyon (2001) noted that new teachers often react to poor students in one of two ways: they either attempt to nurture them or they react with anger and frustration because they are overwhelmed by the situation. Either reaction "begins with the basic assumption that the child is a deficient human being, and will prove to be miseducative and lead to more negative than positive achievements" (Haberman, 1993, p. 3). Additional education is needed in these districts to help new teachers learn to value the diverse backgrounds of their students and to teach them strategies for dealing with student resistance so that reform becomes a possibility. We do not know the significance of the lack of cultural correspondence and poor working conditions in teachers' decisions to exit urban schools because we have not listened to their stories.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this research was to develop a theory about why teachers leave their positions in inner city districts, and, in doing so, to document their experiences and their interpretations of their experiences. While teacher attrition is a common subject in contemporary research, there is a dearth of studies

which are specifically geared to inner-city teacher turnover despite research which shows that these communities experience the greatest exodus of teachers (Aaronson, 1999; Gritz & Theobald, 1996; Mont & Rees, 1996). Norton (1999) maintains that "records of turnover should be maintained and utilized in diagnosing turnover patterns and problem areas" (p. 55), but that is not enough. We must delve deeper and go beyond determining that a certain percentage leave to teach in the suburbs because the pay is better, while others leave because the commute is too far. This study endeavored to listen to the voices of those who left the profession and the stories that these professionals told about their experiences. The intent was to legitimize the voices of the teachers while simultaneously critiquing the content of their discourse. In addition, this study connected teacher attrition to the failure of inner-city schools to reform their educational policies and curriculum.

An additional purpose for this study was to create a model for inservicing teachers to be responsive and informed when dealing with students from other cultural backgrounds. Most graduates of typical teacher-education programs know little about the cultural traits, behaviors, values, and attitudes which different children of color bring to the classroom and how these variables affect the students' responses to instructional situations (Groulx, 2001). This lack of awareness can lead new teachers to misinterpret students' actions as deviant and treat them punitively or lower expectations (Delpit, 1995).

Questions to be Answered

The overriding question that this research presumed to answer was: What are the reasons behind teachers' decisions to leave urban schools which have a relatively high level of economically disadvantaged students? The researcher attempted to answer this question by probing teachers who have left an inner-city school. In order to answer the question the researcher also asked these questions: What are the experiences of those who leave? How do the teachers who leave interpret their own departure? In order to reach the goal of answering the overriding question for this study, these questions had to be answered.

Significance of the Study

The need for teachers is so desperate that television commercials are aired nightly to recruit new candidates to the field. At this time of crucial need, approximately one out of every three beginning teachers leaves within the first three years of teaching; the figures are even higher in inner-city schools. The teacher shortage crisis will need to do more than recruit new teachers; retention of the currently employed teachers is needed to increase stability and achievement.

If urban schools are to remain relevant and vital social institutions in America, and not educational warehouses for students, then change and reform will have to be a constant theme of school leadership. However, "we cannot continue to offer what we usually do: proposals for fresh, expert interventions

and for more research to support them" (Connell, 1994, p. 133). The United States' school system has to rethink its patterns of tactics. Teachers need to be a vital element of reconstruction efforts, but this can only occur if the teaching staff ceases to turnover at the current rate. Reform is necessary because students in poor urban schools are not currently being given the same educational opportunities as students in middle and upper-class school districts. Class status often overlaps with cultural diversity (Anyon, 1980) and thus the failure of our schools to equalize education is a significant propagator of institutionalized discrimination. It is reported in contemporary studies and generally accepted in the United States that *some* American schools are terrible places (Berliner & Biddle, 2000). "This is certainly true, but it is largely true because those schools lack resources and must contend with some of society's worst social problems" (Berliner & Biddle, 2000, p. 514). These, our neediest schools, have the most difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers; thus, it is important to develop more of an understanding concerning why so many of the teachers in these schools come and go within a short period of time so that the schools and universities can take measures to try to decelerate the turnover.

Current trends in education have necessitated that many departments of education include a multicultural component into their program. Although courses exist, the quality varies from institution to institution and they "tend to be isolated and fragmented, resulting in an incomplete picture for teacher-education students" (Hadaway, Florez, Larke, & Wiseman, 1993, p. 61). Many reports have shown that despite teacher preparation programs' inclusion of multicultural

courses, the effects have not been positive (Xu, 2000). While the research in this area is divided (Warring, Keim, & Rau, 1998), one effective means of changing preservice teachers' beliefs about students of diverse backgrounds has been extensive interactions through field service in combination with discussions and reflection (Gay, 2001). Not many education departments have the means or the time for this added component in teacher education. Thus, the research here was used to develop a model, grounded in the field, to help prepare new teachers to be culturally sensitive and responsive. If teachers in urban districts can feel a modicum of success, it is hypothesized that they will be less likely to leave the urban schools where they begin their career. A reduction in the attrition rate would facilitate schools in reform efforts.

Definitions of Terms

The following operational definitions are given because these words and phrases tend to be used with a variety of meanings, making it necessary to define them for the purposes of this study.

"Bank-clerk" teaching- A conception of teaching that does not value the student as having anything to contribute to his or her learning. The teacher simply must deposit the knowledge into the student.

Culture of power- The culture of the upper and middle classes that carry the codes and rules of power.

Cultural diversity- Any variance from the white middle-class or those who represent the culture of power within the school system.

Cultural reproduction- The theory that schools often function in a manner that results in the perpetuation of social inequalities.

Inner city- This refers to schools in urban communities which have a relatively high level of racially and/or ethnically and economically disadvantaged students.

Linguistic diversity- Any variance from Standard English.

Multicultural/diversity education- Education which values cultural pluralism. For a more detailed definition see Appendix B.

Preservice teachers- Education students who are preparing to become public school teachers.

Reconstruction- Putting new policies, based on building social equity, into place at urban schools.

Social reproduction- The processes that contribute to the transmission of social inequality from generation to generation, maintaining the status quo.

Social status- A person's class position, based upon income, occupation, education, values, behaviors, and life chances.

Urban schools- Schools in cities serving a high number of economically disadvantaged students.

Methodology

The researcher selected and interviewed twelve teachers who had left large urban school districts in the Midwest, Southwest, and on the East Coast. This study identified and analyzed the factors leading to teachers leaving their positions, and the data was used to develop a model for preparing new teachers

at urban schools. Grounded theory was chosen for the purposes of this study because "theory is more powerful when it arises from the data rather than being imposed on them" (Guba & Lincoln, 1983, p. 324). For these purposes the model developed was based on the findings of the research. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were the main source of data, but ethnographic descriptions, document reviews, and general observations were also used to substantiate the results. The in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to probe into the teachers' perceptions of the school and to ascertain the reasons that the teachers left their positions. The documents supplemented the interviews by providing a general history and the demographics of the schools. Even though all of the schools that teachers left were disadvantaged urban schools, there were unique characteristics regarding each. The systematic observation of the context of the schools gave the researcher an understanding of the social setting.

Urban schools were selected because of their reputations as the worst in the United States; they maintain the highest drop-out rates, the lowest test scores, and the highest rates of teacher attrition. Urban schools remain the focus of intense public scrutiny because of their widespread failure, and intensive research reveals a scourge of problems within their walls. The teachers were selected for a range of reasons while an effort was made to include a rich mix of people of various ages, genders, and races. There were disproportionate numbers of respondents who were White, young, and female, reflective of the largest exodus of teachers from urban districts. The requirement

for all respondents was that they must have taught for five years or less. Most taught for much less than this, but one of the respondents worked in the urban school for five years. This cut-off was deemed appropriate because it takes at least three years for the average teacher to reach competency. Thus, most of these teachers left the inner city before they had reached their full potential.

The nature of the question determined the methods used for collecting data. Qualitative research is a form of inductive analysis that gives the reader a chance to live vicariously. The description is a rich narrative, thick with detail that allows the reader to experience what the researcher has experienced and draw his/her own inferences. It allowed the researcher to capture the experiences of the people and write their story, recognizing that the accounts were filtered through the researcher's concept of reality. Grounded theory provided the chance to look at a complex situation holistically and do research in a natural setting which protected the inquiry from findings that were contrived or out of context. The researcher used multiple methods to help establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Summary

Chapter one is a general introduction to this study which seeks to address the high turnover rate of teachers in school districts that have a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students and students of color. This is a significant issue because of the cultural reproduction that takes place in our schools. Understanding the reasons that teachers leave could provide insights

that would allow for changes to be initiated. This overview is given much more explicit support in the ensuing chapter where the themes found in the literature are explored and their relationship to this study is established.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter the researcher presents the theoretical framework for this study and a review of the literature that informs this framework. This chapter begins with an overview of social reproduction theories and resistance theories. This is followed by a brief discussion of teacher attrition. Subsequently, there is a description of inner-city schools, including the teachers, curricula, resources and the climate. The researcher establishes that teacher attrition in a disadvantaged urban school district compounds social reproduction in the inner city because the lack of consistent teachers makes reform difficult to achieve. This chapter also includes an overview on teacher socialization and the reforms that are needed in the inner city. The chapter concludes with a review of the literature on grounded theory as a method of qualitative research.

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This study is informed by several sociological theories as they relate to education. It draws heavily upon social reproduction theories which "analyze how class structure is reproduced from one generation to the next" and "show that schools actually reinforce social inequality while pretending to do the opposite" (MacLeod, 1987, p. 11). In addition, it is influenced by the theories of

cultural capital as put forth by Delpit (1995), and Bourdieu (1990) who explain the ways in which schools reward the cultural capital of the dominant classes and systematically devalue that of the lower class. The broad theoretical perspective that is encompassed in this study is reflective of the many sociological and educational factors that are entangled in the complex issue of diversity.

Social Reproduction

The number one predictor of an individual's social class is unrelated to intelligence, natural abilities, talents or level of education. Instead the social class of one's parents is the best predictor of an individual's social class. Much of the literature supports the claim that public schools in the United States, acting as agents of socialization, work to maintain this status quo. When an entire group of people do not have a genuine chance to develop their academic talents fully, our society is much poorer for their lack of educational opportunities. This is fundamentally unjust and potentially an enormous source of social divisiveness. The relationship between schools and social reproduction is complex, but the result is that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer (Kameenui, 1998; Mantsios, 1992). The first section of this chapter sets the context for the study's research problem which recognizes the impossibility of separating schools from the larger society in which they are set.

Traditional images of education portray schools as venues for objective knowledge to be learned and education as a primary means by which individuals

can achieve the American Dream of material success (Giroux, 1989). The possibility of realizing the American Dream is a dominant ideology in the United States (Hargreaves, 1967; MacLeod, 1987; Mickleson, 1987). Americans have cited examples of those who went from rags to riches as though to suggest that those who do not must not be trying hard enough. This view suggests that the United States is a land of equal opportunity and that any individual can become economically prosperous if s/he is willing to work hard. Oakes (1985) stated that in the United States:

> We like to say that because some students use the schools to achieve upward mobility, both educationally and economically, that schools in general are structured to provide students from all backgrounds with an equal chance to do so. But the overcoming of barriers by a small percentage of students certainly is not evidence of the unbiased nurturing of the talents of all students. (p. 135)

The ideology of the American Dream and examples of people who have made it against the odds have been used to suggest that those who do not make it are simply not working hard or not capable of success. It is commonly believed that those who succeed or fail, do so on their own merits; we each get what we deserve. Such thinking does not take into account the multiple factors involved in beating the odds.

Cultural Capital

Several studies reveal that the culture of the poor often does not align with the practices of mainstream schooling (Anderson, 1991; Heath, 1983; Ogbu, 1988). Differences in income can mean shortages of resources in the home and

"vulnerability to institutional power" (Connell, 1994, p. 135), meaning that their lack of status often provides limited options for resisting oppression. It has been suggested that students who have not been raised in middle-class surroundings, are less likely to be able to conform to the "middle-class measuring rod" of schools and thus are more likely to fail in and reject school (Cohen, 1955). Radical critics of education also challenge and debunk traditional views of schooling. They have suggested that official school objectives, based on dominant cultural values, hinder the achievement of minority and lower-class groups. Educational critics point to the "hidden curriculum" in schools that underpins the teaching of particular social and cultural values and beliefs through formal instruction and social interactions (Apple & King, 1983, p. 82; Giroux & Penna, 1994, p. 102). This "hidden curriculum" is not taught outright but consists of the lessons students learn indirectly. For example, a student of African-American descent might learn that her ancestors are not valued in the United States because their perspectives are not introduced in the curriculum. Critics of education suggest that schools often seek to impose dominant ideologies and practices on students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of the radical pedagogy literature is its articulation of the social reproduction elements embedded within the education system. Social reproduction researchers and theorists have argued that education systems often function to reproduce extant inequalities (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1977; Giroux, 1983, 1989; MacLeod, 1987; Willis, 1977). Bourdieu (1977) and

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) explored how culture operates within the education system to reproduce existing inequalities. The concept "cultural capital" is utilized to analyze the subtle, indirect role that schooling plays in social reproduction. Cultural capital can be defined as cultural "knowledge, dispositions, and skills that are passed on from one generation to the next" (MacLeod, 1987, p. 12). According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), the education system is structured according to dominant cultural standards; consequently, it rewards those students whose family upbringing has enabled them to acquire and employ the predispositions necessary to acquire these cultural skills successfully. Delpit (1997) has concluded that many school programs:

> merely provide an opportunity for those who already know the content to exhibit that they know it...this [means] that the child who did not come to school already primed with what would be presented would be labeled as needing 'remedial' instruction from day one. (p. 29)

The students who enter school with the accouterments of the culture in power are advantaged because their background has prepared them for school.

Cultural Conflicts in the Classroom

Resistance theorists have contended that "schools are social sites characterized by . . . dominant and subordinate cultures, and competing ideologies" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993, p. 67). Resistance theorists support the tenets of cultural reproduction, but they view human agency and social

interaction, and their links with cultural and structural elements, as central to understanding the social reproduction process. They have proposed that reproduction consists of complex social processes; during these processes marginalized individuals may play a role in the reproduction of their own unequal status (Giroux, 1983; MacLeod, 1995; Willis, 1977). Resistance theory submits that the reproduction of inequality is often a consequence of structurally and culturally based social conflict that arises from a school's organization, teachers' perspectives, and students' identities and values.

This resistance has been unduly complicated by white, liberal teachers who hesitate to exhibit power in the classroom (Delpit, 1995). Progressive pedagogy ventures to ignore diversity in the classroom. Teachers who believe in progressive pedagogy make teacher power invisible and produce indirect communication; this often results in increased cultural conflict in the classroom because culturally and linguistically diverse students "have difficulty interpreting these indirect requests for adherence to an unstated set of rules" (Delpit, 1995, p. 34). The teacher often removes the very explicitness that the child requires to understand the classroom culture and then faults the child for not complying. This conflict can cause students to reject school; "the prevailing conception of knowledge as a bank that saves valuables and dispenses capital to its borrowers is a primary cause of student turnoff" (Aronowitz, 1997, p. 182). Aronowitz (1997) contended that mastery of school knowledge involves self-estrangement and "many [students] view the price of rising above their class as too high for the promised rewards" (p. 185). This resistance is entrenched in opposition to

authority and lack of involvement in the process of schooling and leads to the same results as not being able to produce the expected work: failure for the disadvantaged students. This resistance in the classroom is often misinterpreted by teachers. The students who are resistant need teachers who are competent, understand their situation, and teach in a way that exposes their students to a critique of power in social institutions. The teachers in urban districts need to be the very best our universities have to offer because they must comprehend social reproduction in order to combat it, and they must teach their students to recognize it and take action against it. The following research shows that this is not currently the circumstance.

Themes in the Literature

Teacher Attrition

Empirical studies delineate the determinants of teacher turnover. The reasons include discipline problems/difficult students, paperwork overload, poor working environment, lack of administrative support, assignment to areas outside of their specialty, extra duties, and isolation (Aaronson, 1999; Hope, 1999; Norton, 1999).

> Even though most individuals are attracted to teaching because they want to work with children and youth, when they encounter intolerable working conditions, find themselves embedded in a profession with a poor image, do not receive the parental and administrative support to be successful as a teacher, or are assigned to teach outside their areas of strength or interest, many leave education for work in other fields. (Norton, 1999, p. 53)

Teachers are too frequently placed in assignments that leave them with little chance for success. This can be especially true in urban districts where teachers are likely to be met with more resistance and cultural diversity for which they are often unprepared.

Teacher attrition in distressed urban districts is an area that requires further research. Norton (1999) stated that "school leaders must devise ways to ascertain these reasons [why faculty leave the organization] and determine the factors that might serve to retain personnel" (p. 55). Teacher attrition most profoundly affects inner-city schools, and yet this consideration has only been addressed insubstantially in the literature. The limited data available lists reasons cited for leaving an urban district attained through a small survey but does not distinguish the length of service before leaving. Also, ninety percent of the teachers leaving went on to teach in another district but why they chose to change districts is not discussed (Haberman & Rickards, 1990). Furthermore, while a wealth of empirical studies enumerate the reasons teachers leave, none of the research listens to the voices of the teachers. Those who left and those who have seen teachers come and go can shed additional light on this complex problem. Learning why these teachers leave and what could be done to reduce the turnover in distressed urban schools is one positive step toward the resolution of this ongoing problem.

Schools in the Inner City

This study examined why teachers leave disadvantaged urban schools and in turn how these schools face the most difficulties in recruiting and retaining new teachers. This section attempts to create a picture of the schools in these urban areas as described in the literature so that the working conditions can be understood in relation to teacher attrition and the need for school reform can be established. This section of the literature review also describes how the educational experiences of students in poor/disadvantaged urban communities are significantly different from the educational experiences of students in other communities. Anyon (2001) noted the differences in the following areas: conditions and resources, curriculum and instruction, and school climate.

The lasting impressions when exploring research on schools in the inner city include a realization of the dismal conditions facing the poor and a feeling of hopelessness. One point that is particularly compelling is the magnitude of the injustice when considering the needs of the children. The literature describing inner-city schools examines the dismal conditions brought about by a lack of resources. Anyon (2001) noted that ten times as much money is spent per pupil in suburban districts than is spent in the inner city. The resources available are also insufficient because more money is needed for social programs due to the poverty in the communities these schools are serving. The school buildings are deteriorating, fewer computers are available, classes are larger, and there are insufficient materials available (Anyon, 1980; 2001). Kozol (1991) reported on

the conditions of inner-city schools in New York, East St. Louis, Boston, San Antonio, Chicago, and Camden, New Jersey. He detailed the appalling conditions in city after city until it became clear that filth and poverty continue to be extreme and widespread in our country's urban schools. In East St. Louis, Kozol (1991) reported that "gaseous fumes [were] being emitted from the pipes under the schools" (p. 24) and waste littered the playgrounds. The conditions described would be protested promptly and rectified if the community and the children attending these schools were valued.

In addition, the lack of funds means that teachers are offered less training when they actually need more to learn how to teach culturally diverse students. Kozol (1991) told of a permanent substitute who admitted "I am not prepared for this. I have absolutely no idea of what to do" (p. 64); she had a room of 39 sixth and seventh graders. The schools that most need leadership don't give their principals a chance either. They are often given teachers who cannot be fired because of tenure, but who are not wanted in the better schools in the district and who have no control of the students in their classrooms (Kozol, 1991). "I take anything that walks in" (Kozol, 1991, p. 63) is how one principal described his method for selecting teachers.

Many of the portrayals of teachers in the inner city are unflattering and show them as agents who unwittingly maintain social reproduction. Connell (1994) purported "the most common complaint from parents and students is about teachers who 'don't care' but cannot be made to change" (p. 134). Freire (2000) recognized that "there are innumerable well-intentioned bank-clerk

teachers who do not realize that they are serving only to dehumanize" (p. 191). He described bank-clerk teachers as those who do not value any prior experiences the students bring with them to the classroom; these teachers see students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge. Basic skills dominate in their classrooms to the exclusion of more conceptual and critical understandings and analyses. It is through this kind of instruction that bank-clerk teachers unconsciously dehumanize themselves and their students, while thinking that they are trying to rescue their students. Teachers can adapt to the frustration of working with culturally different students in various ways. Some become scathing and angry. They believe that if only these students would take the knowledge that is being offered to them, then the students could overcome their conditions. They try to anaesthetize the students and urge them to separate themselves from their background instead of asking the students to analyze and reflect upon their lives. Kozol (1967) described an art teacher in an urban Boston school who, "like a number of other teachers at my school and in other schools of the same nature, she possessed a remarkable self-defense apparatus, and anything that seriously threatened to disturb her point of view could be effectively denied" (p. 3). With the best of intentions teachers often drive students away from education and reproduce the inequalities that exist in our society. Even though researchers do not regularly blame teachers, Connell (1994) noted that "if exclusion is accomplished by schools, it is certainly in large measure through what teachers do" (p.138). Teachers' roles cannot be ignored.

The goals of the teachers for the inner city emphasize conformity and

passive-compliance, such as getting along with others, punctuality, and working quietly (Anyon, 1980). Bowles and Gintis (1979) suggested that for students from the lower social strata--those seen as most likely to enter the manual labor force--school and classroom relationships promote acceptance of coercion and obedience to established authority. Teachers have reproduced capitalist labor relations and inequalities by acting as agents of socialization and keeping students in their social-economic place.

The school climate is another area that is markedly different in the inner city districts. Poverty situations can cause stress, anxiety, aggression, or withdrawal, making it difficult to teach. Many of the students express hopelessness about the future, creating a "culture of resignation and despair" and when teachers respond with unsympathetic attitudes, anger, and frustration "urban schools thus become chaotic, angry places" (Anyon, 2001, p. 90). Kozol (2000) quoted a seventh grader with whom he has just had a discussion about Martin Luther King, Jr. :

> Write this down. You asked a question about Martin Luther King. I'm going to say something. All that stuff about 'the dream' means nothing to the kids I know in East St. Louis. So far as they're concerned, he died in vain. He was famous and he lived and gave his speeches and he died and now he's gone. But we're still here. Don't tell students in this school about 'the dream'. Go and look into a toilet here if you would like to know what life is like for students in this city. (p. 36)

This climate of despair cannot help but produce an environment that is tense for students and teachers alike. This bleak milieu is one into which many new teachers are socialized.

Teacher Socialization

There exists a large body of literature on teacher socialization that could inform us when trying to determine why teachers leave poor school districts. The importance of continued socialization is evident in the kinds of hardships beginning teachers endure. Teaching may be the only profession that requires beginners to be responsible for the same work expected by experienced veterans. Beginning teachers also are frequently assigned difficult or undesirable teaching assignments. The socialization research overlaps with research on teacher attrition in that it seeks to understand the staggering number of teachers who leave the profession early in the inservice stage (Tellez, 1992).

The typical profile for a newly-hired teacher is White, female, and middle-class. Formal socialization of teachers begins when prospective teachers bring their personal experiences to preservice training. Teacher socialization is "an overarching process whereby the individual engages in role learning that results in the situational adjustment to the culture of the profession" (Zeichner & Gore,1990, p. 331). As the preservice teachers progress through the preservice stage and then into the inservice stage, the interplay between their individual profiles, the context in which they work, and the agents with whom they work, changes their perspectives about the work of teaching and allows the teachers to create and define their professional roles. Stanton and Hunt (1992) concluded that the socialization of a teacher is a formal process beginning with teacher education and continuing throughout the teacher's career. The experiences and

interactions implemented for the socialization of preservice and inservice teachers are critical determinants in the socialization process.

In the preservice stage, the universities are the primary socializing agents for future teachers. It is impossible to know which students will work in urban schools and which will not. Thus, it is imperative that all potential teachers be prepared to teach in diverse settings. This is a difficult challenge because a large step in the preparation process is to self-reflect about preconceived ideas. Pohan and Mathison (1999) queried "since beliefs and the assumptions that propel them serve as our primary navigational tools in the world, is it any wonder that we cling to them so dearly and are so disoriented in their absence?" (p. 15). In addition to self-reflection about their own beliefs, a beneficial diversity training program would also have students explore the privileges of being White. McIntosh (1989) spoke of facing the fact that "this is not such a free country; one's life is not what one makes it; many doors open for certain people through no virtue of their own" (p. 11). The process of preparing preservice teachers to be culturally sensitive and responsive to students with differing backgrounds is an arduous journey and often left unaccomplished as graduates set out to teach. Marshall (1999) posited that "most [universities] offer a single course experience that focuses largely on the least complex elements of multicultural education as a field of study" (p. 56). This lack of preparedness leaves it up to the particular school where a novice is hired to socialize him or her regarding diverse students. This transfers a large burden and great amount of responsibility to the hiring

schools, often themselves unprepared to provide new teachers with the professional development they need.

Arfwedson (1979) stated that "socialization of teachers varies according to the school conditions which are, in turn, dependent on the local society surrounding the school" (p. 340). As is evidenced by the prior descriptions of low-income schools, schools serving these populations provide a very different atmosphere for teachers' socialization as compared to schools serving middle or upper-class students. Research has shown that how teachers are socialized into the profession influences their perspectives regarding teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Thus, it becomes necessary to look at the process by which teachers are socialized to determine if there is something about this process that influences teachers in poor districts to leave those districts.

Although teachers have long-held beliefs prior to teacher education, the socialization process contributes substantially to the attitudes and knowledge that will inspire their teaching. Despite the learning that occurs during teacher education programs, the bulk of development takes place once the teachers enter the classroom. Stanton and Hunt (1992) noted that "experiences in the classroom have the most profound influence on shifts in teaching perspective" (p. 124). Thus, the context of a beginning teaching experience is significant in determining the attitudes and perspectives that are developed. A new teacher in an urban context is likely to be working largely with ethnic minorities who are trying to "cope with numerous cultural, ethnic, and/or linguistic differences between themselves and their teachers" (Groulx, 2001, p. 61). The new teachers

often equate their struggles to lack of ability or motivation and form a bias about the students that lowers their expectations. "For many new teachers, this naivety can become a form of 'dysconscious racism', a pattern of resistance in thinking about differences that is characterized by a chronic lack of self-awareness about one's own assumptions" (Groulx, 2001, p. 61). Many students in urban schools passively accept these lowered expectations and these become self-fulfilling prophecies. The concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy is well summarized by Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan, and Shuan (1990):

> The teacher's reduced expectations lower students' self image and effort and lead the teacher to present less-demanding material, resulting in reduced cognitive achievement. (p. 128)

Thus, the interactions that teachers have in their classrooms can diminish students' ability levels because of their lowered expectations. One possible way to combat this vicious cycle is through staff development.

Once these teachers are hired, it is up to the schools to assist them in developing the skills necessary to teach in a diverse setting. Anyon (2001) reported that "the vast majority of school districts attempt to bring long-time teachers up to date and improve the skills of all instructional personnel" (p. 89). However, the lack of funds means that in the inner city these attempts are insufficient; they often consist of half-day workshops with little or no follow up. Money is not available to allow teachers to attend conferences, visit master teachers' classrooms, or provide the materials with which to practice new skills. In addition, the environment in disadvantaged schools often does not provide encouragement or incentive to improve.

The culture of the school or "the institutional context within which teachers work can either foster or restrict opportunities for professional development" (Stanton & Hunt, 1992, p. 124). "As organizational members intertact, shared values, norms, beliefs, and ways of thinking emerge. These shared orientations form the culture of the organization" (Hoy & Miskel, 1996, p. 38). A strong school culture encourages development of teacher behaviors and commitment to values and beliefs as well as allowing teachers to become part of something larger than themselves. A weak school culture leaves a new teacher feeling abandoned, isolated, and unsupported. Cantor (1998) reported anguish and emotional exhaustion among graduate students who were working as advocates for students in inner-city schools; they gave up and reverted to traditional practices to survive.

Agents of the socialization process during the inservice stage, as identified by Stanton and Hunt (1992), are the principal, colleagues, mentors, pupils, parents, and others, such as personal friends or family members of the inservice teacher. Some of these agents have indirect impact on the socialization of inservice teachers. Principals, for example, rarely spend much time interacting directly with the teachers. They do, however, set expectations and provide opportunities for additional formal professional development. Parents of students also have indirect impact on the socialization of teachers. Parents may exert more influence when they express concerns about classroom events or respond negatively to the teacher. The lack of parent involvement in urban schools leaves the teacher to infer their position from the students in the

school.

The students with whom a teacher works and the classroom environment have been identified as the primary agents of socialization for beginning teachers. Teachers are usually isolated from colleagues, having significantly less contact with administration or other teachers as compared to the students in their classrooms. Students influence the general teaching approach, and the type and frequency of particular teaching methods utilized by teachers (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). According to Zeichner and Gore (1990), "the environmental demands posed by current classroom arrangements establish limits on the range of teacher behaviors that can be successful in particular settings" (p. 339). So, it can be concluded that teachers in the inner cities are socialized differently because of the context where they are teaching. Hargreaves (1988) gave support to the argument that the actions of teachers are closely tied to environmental circumstances:

> Teachers do not just decide to deploy particular skills because of their recognized professional worth and value, or because of their own confidence and competence in operating them. Rather they make judgments about the fit between particular skills, constraints, demands, and opportunities of the material environment of the classroom; about the appropriateness of particular styles or techniques for present circumstances. (p. 219)

The judgments made about the students with whom they work are often detrimental to the students' progress. "It appears that teachers are often unprepared to deal with the diversity and complexity they encounter within their students' lives" (Stanton & Hunt, 1992, p. 126). As a result, teachers change

their instructional practices and lower their performance standards. Metz (2000) posited that "in the long run the teachers adjust to the student body as much as the students adjust to them" (p. 379). Teachers also become more tolerant and empathetic when dealing with the personal problems of their students; this too can leave students at risk of not getting the education they so desperately need because when expectations are low and teachers are benevolent, low quality work is accepted as the norm (Clark, 1999; Hilliard, 1994). Even those who sincerely desire success for their students "may project feelings of discomfort and hold beliefs that they may be less effective in minority schools. Such feelings and beliefs affect their daily interactions with their minority students and make a crucial difference between empowering or disabling them" (Groulx, 2001, p. 64). Teacher efficacy in an urban school is often lessened; this can have tremendous impact on teachers' self-concepts and performance.

Though limited when compared to students, colleagues have been an important source of socialization for beginning teachers. Collegial behavior can "support open and professional interactions" where "teachers are proud of their school, enjoy working with their colleagues, and are enthusiastic, accepting, and mutually respectful of the professional competence of their colleagues" (Zhixin Su, 1990, p. 144). Conversely, colleagues can be icy and unaccepting, especially if a new teacher tries to change the existing structure (Kozol, 1967). "Many studies have cited the function of the peer group as an important mechanism for socializing new members of a profession....Moreover, individual changes in attitudes, values, and motives are based on group consensus"

(Zhixin Su, 1990, p. 723). High teacher attrition can have a negative impact on acceptance from veteran colleagues. Lohr (1999) stated that "older teachers waited for us to fail" (p. 296) in her first urban assignment. She felt this was because they were proud of having endured in a harsh neighborhood and expected the new staff not to persevere.

Similar to the literature on teacher attrition, the literature on teacher socialization mentions urban schools, but none of the studies focus on how socialization differs in this setting. A link between teacher socialization and teacher attrition is easy to establish. Those teachers who are socialized into a negative, unsupportive climate are likely to leave those conditions if possible. Haberman and Rickards (1990) noted that "90 percent of the leavers in this sample [taken from Milwaukee public schools] sought and were able to secure teaching jobs" (p. 298). Other employment is the most cited reason for teachers who left inner-city schools (Haberman & Rickards, 1990), but it is still unknown as to why they chose to seek positions in other districts.

Reforms Necessary

Connell (1994) stated that "a series of social movements expended enormous energy to desegregate schools, establish comprehensive secondary systems, and open universities to excluded groups" (p. 128). These endeavors were made in an attempt to equalize education for poor and minority students and yet indications of unequal outcomes continue to mount. That reform is needed is unmistakable, as evidenced by the problems that exist in the inner-city

schools. A new teacher can expect to encounter "the plagues of modern life-crime and violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and lack of adequate health care" (Rushton, 2000, p. 365). Test scores are low, drop out rates are high, and nothing appears to be happening to make the situation better. Mason (2000) put it simply when he stated that "to advocate for quality schooling for urban students, or any student for that manner is just the right thing to do" (p. 29). In any reform effort that is undertaken, the relationship between curriculum and policy should be one of concurrent development. As the character of our schools becomes more complex, educators need to be able to acknowledge issues of diversity with changes in school policy and with changes in the school curriculum. The American culture is changing rapidly. No longer can the majority ignore the needs of the growing minorities. Connell (1994) articulated that "policy discussions about education have frequently been conducted in the absence of the two groups most likely to understand the issues: poor people themselves, and the teachers in their schools" (p. 133). The teachers need to be included in devising the policies to implement and the poor need to be viewed as more than the recipients of policy interventions.There are numerous areas for educational reform which need to be addressed for meeting the challenges that face new teachers in the inner city.

What these urban schools and the teachers who work there intend to accomplish is the first aspect that must be considered. As stated by Eisner (1999), "schools do not exist for the sake of high levels of performance in the context of schools, but in the context of life outside of the school" (p. 411).

Students of all backgrounds need a supportive school climate and an education that incorporates respect for difference. According to Gay (1999) "diversity should be infused into the learning experience of all students regardless of ethnic demographics of specific school and classroom sites, practitioners still tend to make its implementation contingent on the presence of specific ethnic groups of color" (p. 355). Schools are a part of the local community which they serve but no community is isolated from the world any longer. Teachers often spend more time with students than their parents, so it is important for teachers to balance an understanding of the students and community that the school serves, with an awareness of the diverse world in which the student will grow up. Educators have an obligation to adopt proactive roles for appreciation of various cultures and lifestyles to combat the racism, and ethnocentrism in society.

One key for a teacher to consider his/her intentions is self-reflection. Gay (2001) noted "teachers need to see and understand how they behave toward culturally diverse students in their classroom" (p. 217). She suggested videotaping teachers and critiquing interactions so that it is possible to monitor their progress. Examining race and racism is one way for educators to become aware of discriminatory behaviors in schools which are often very subtle and include less assistance, greater aggression, and avoidance. Whites are seldom conscious of this modern form of prejudice, even as they practice it (Delpit, 1997).

No one suggests that examining oneself as a multicultural being is an easy process. It takes time and is a very complex process. Giroux (1997)

declared that "the issue of making white students responsive to the politics of racial privilege is fraught with the fear and anger that accompany having to rethink one's identity" (p. 309). This viewpoint is echoed by Titone (1998) who expressed that "it is extremely difficult to maintain a productive learning environment in which participants are experiencing considerable discomfort while grappling with the truth about themselves and white racism" (p. 164). But these self-reflections would be necessary in order to develop the crucial teacher characteristics identified by Titone (1998), which stated that teachers would be:

> (1) cognizant of themselves in relation to history and place; (2) willing to initiate, and able to hold a group in, discussions of racial issues and education, even emotional and confrontational ones; (3) cognizant of the ways curriculum and projects can be used to address students' unarticulated beliefs about the connections between race and education; and, (4) aware of the opportunities for supporting students in their racial identity development even in situations of informal advising and contact. (p. 167)

As White educators increase their contact with minority students, awareness of their intentions plays a growing role in resisting the cultural reproduction that schools have maintained for so long. Gay (2001) maintained that "teachers do not understand how thoroughly and subtly cultural nuances permeate all of their behaviors and can generate negative effects in instructional actions toward students who do not share their cultural frames of reference" (p. 217). A careful examination of oneself as a teacher is necessary to be responsive and accepting of culturally different students; this self-examination should be the intention of every teacher who comes in contact with disadvantaged students.

The model developed for this research paralleled Gay's (2001) guidelines for diversity which encompass four primary areas: self-knowledge, understanding differences in cultural values and behavior codes, development of pedagogical skills, and development of public relations skills. The first area delineated by Gay (2001), self-knowledge, involves an attempt to make teachers conscious of cultural values and beliefs and how these affect their attitudes and expectations for students of color. Once they understand their own prejudices and are willing to confront them, then it becomes valuable to understand differences in cultural values and behavior codes (Gay, 2001). This knowledge would permit teachers to comprehend how instructional processes can be restructured to accommodate students of color and allow them to obtain knowledge to replace racial myths and stereotypes. Another salient element that would need to be addressed is teachers' development of pedagogical skills. Beginning teachers must learn how to diversify teaching strategies so as to create more culturally diverse, supportive environments for learning and reduce tension and conflict in ethnically pluralistic classrooms. The last area that Gay (2001) suggested be covered was public relations skills development. She considered it necessary to reform how educators are prepared to communicate and interact with parents of color and to teach new educators to mobilize community resources. While the model that was developed for the study is grounded in the interviews and information attained from the stories of the teachers, many of the themes that emerged overlapped with Gay's guidelines and thus the guidelines were utilized in developing the model.

Inner-city schools also need to analyze their basic structure and the policies that are established. Many schools serving low-socioeconomic communities currently emphasize separateness while there is a strong need for inclusion. Partnerships need to be formed between schools, families, and neighborhoods with the common goal of educating the children of that community. For too long schools have acted upon the premise that they are the arbitrators of right and wrong behavior in their community. Today, a school needs to place itself in the position of serving the needs of its community. "The traditional American family--to the degree that it ever existed--represents a minority of all households in the United States today" (Sears, 1999, p. 363). Nontraditional families are a growing phenomena in the United States, and our schools need to address the unique issues that our student population will encounter. The schools need to accept and foster all students and take extra care to ensure acceptance of diversity. We cannot shelter all students from the discrimination and hostility they may face in the world, but we can set policies in our schools that encourage an open, on-going dialogue about important issues. The structure of our schools can be modified to assure that advancements are made.

Teachers can play a significant role in bringing schools together with the community by cultivating "public relations skill development" (Gay, 2001, p. 218). Instead of blaming parents for their lack of involvement in urban schools, teachers must ascertain an appreciation for the ethnic dynamics of different communities and extend the olive branch to the families who do not feel included

in the work of the school. Many parents in disadvantaged communities face a dilemma because they "want educational advancement for their children but cannot deploy the resources or techniques called for by the school" (Connell, 1994, p. 134). Their own previous failure causes many parents to feel alienated by the education system, and it is up to the schools and the teachers to mend this division. Poor and minority parents do not have the power to form an agenda for change. They have the knowledge and the desire and must be respected rather than objectified, but they need teachers who can use cultural diplomacy to establish bonds focused on supporting their children to succeed.

Urban schools particularly must examine the kind of activities used and content that is taught. Each school should carefully examine its curriculum to be certain that it is equitable, reflecting all aspects of American and global culture, not just the traditional European-American view. The curriculum needs to represent ethnic diversity, and the growing presence of various configurations of nontraditional families represented by our students to serve all students better. As noted by Gay (1999) "multicultural classroom instruction is not often synchronized with curriculum development" (p.353) which means that students do not find their own cultures represented in texts and materials.

The culture of the inner-city school should also be examined, for here is often found the hidden curricula. The school should look for practices and assumptions within the school's daily life and interpersonal interactions for signs of prejudice, or even barriers to the acceptance of diversity.

What is taught is not the only issue that should be considered; how

material is presented needs to represent the diverse learning styles in our changing classrooms. There has been remarkable growth in the research concerning multicultural education, and yet there is a gap between theory and practice which must be bridged so that the needs of all students are met. Gay (2001) explained the vast scope of pedagological reform that is necessary:

> Their explanantions include teaching about the cultural heritages and contributions of ethnic groups of concern; social and interpersonal relationships between students and teachers that convey a sense of personal kindredness, interdependence, connectedness, and caring; using cultural frames of reference to make the content personally meaningful to ethnically diverse students; concern for the affective and moral as well as the cognitive development of students; and cultivating social and cultural consiousness, solidarity, and responsibility. (p. 217)

This genre of teaching is likely to empower students and facilitate their understanding of the world. Once the teaching reflects the diversity of the students, then the students can be evaluated equitably.

Evaluation, the final consideration, is a fundamental aspect of school reform. Changes made in the intent, structure, curriculum, and pedagogy of a school cannot be successful unless assessments are created that reflect the new views and emphasis of the school. Assessments must be redesigned to reflect the needs of a multicultural community. According to Darling-Hammond (1999), "if assessment is to be used to open up as many opportunities as possible to as many students as possible, it must address a wide range of talents, a variety of life experiences, and multiple ways of knowing" (p.392). Traditional evaluative tools, including standardized tests, have proven to be

invalid in the assessment of those students of diverse backgrounds (Mehrans & Lehmann, 1987). Educators must be proactive when we see inequities in testing practices. We must accept that the role of the school is changing and embrace the opportunity to help students in an increasingly complex society. Connell (1994) believes:

> The work force is not static. Families move into and out of poverty, and teachers move into and out of disadvantaged schools. For both reasons, issues about poverty *should* concern teachers in all parts of a school system. I would argue that these issues should be major themes in initial teacher training, and that competence in work with disadvantaged groups should be central to the idea of professionalism in teaching. (p. 143)

It will take the commitment of the administration and teachers, working together. This dissertation intends to build upon the previous work in this area by providing a forum for teachers' voices. In order to reform our inner-city schools, the teachers must be heard. These schools must stop functioning as proving grounds for the inexperienced and start retaining quality teachers who can then make reform possible, and this can begin with a deeper understanding of the teachers' experiences.

Historically, top-down reform efforts have failed to make meaningful progress because teachers have not been full partners in the process. Tozer, Violas, and Senese (2002) claimed that the reforms have been unjust because they "fail to understand the genuine ills of the American schools; those who know best have been consulted the least" (p. 460). Teachers voices must be heard so that school reform can benefit all students and we must learn why teacher

turnover is high in urban districts. Darling- Hammond (1999) asserted that "districts with the greatest concentration of poor and minority children are also those where incoming teachers are least likely to have training in up-to-date teaching methods" (p. 461). If the teaching force can be stabilized in these districts, then the districts will reap the benefits of training provided and the experience gained as new teachers mature and grow in their profession. In order for significant reform efforts to be successful in the inner city, we must curb the flow of teachers who begin their careers in these schools and then move on just as they are gaining the proficiency that would make reform a possibility.

Grounded Theory Methodology

A variety of approaches has been used for educational and sociological research that relates to this study, but little qualitative research has been done other than a few ethnographic or phenomenological studies. This research project utilized the grounded theory method in an attempt to collect a significant amount of data in order to construct a model for retaining teachers and to determine a theory about why teachers leave the inner city at disproportionate rates. Qualitative research was chosen because it is most appropriate for answering the study's research question and because of the unique contributions it affords educational research. As maintained by Putney, Green, Dixon, and Kelly (1999) qualitative research approaches enable us "to explore and understand systemically and theoretically the local and situated nature of classroom life and how that life is consequential for particular members of

groups" (p. 374). This study conveys why teachers leave the inner city, as expressed by the teachers themselves, and qualitative research was the best means for performing this task.

As a result of using grounded theory methodology, the model that was devised in response to this research is "grounded in the field" (Creswell, 1998, p. 56). Data was collected until the model was completed in all its complexity, and particular care was taken to assure that the model was allowed to emerge from the data. Grounded theory methodology was also selected because it "is designed to guide researchers in producing theory that is 'conceptually dense'" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 47). Stanford (2001) used a grounded theory method to study the sources of satisfaction and support for resilient, perservering urban teachers; the results were a thick rich description of the experiences and stories veteran teachers have to share. This research aspired to use the same technique to capture a description of the teachers who do not persevere, and to determine if a model for recruiting and retaining these teachers could stabilize teacher turnover in urban districts.

Conclusion

Each fall thousands of new teachers enter their first positions full of hope and optimism. They arrive with boundless idealism and the motivation to make a difference in the lives of the children they teach. Their experiences, as recanted by Ness (2001) are enough to make the most energetic turn away from the task at hand:

> After two short years the insurmountable challenges have taken their toll: teaching 43 students in one classroom, never having enough desks or textbooks to go around, being sworn at by students, observing countless gang fights, having personal property stolen and vandalized on campus, and teaching through rolling power blackouts. (p. 8)

Many feel committed to educational reform when they begin their careers, but soon they are exhausted and jaded and leaving is a matter of their own survival. Their insights can help us to understand the reasons they leave, and that knowledge can be used to improve conditions for the future so this cycle of turnover can be reduced.

The rate of teacher turnover in urban districts is a complex subject with far-reaching implications. Reproduction and resistance interact to create cultural conflicts that are exacerbated by poor working conditons, limited resources, and biased curricula. The answer to these problems is even more complicated than the question because there is a need for critical reflection and because working to break down the maintenance of the status quo necessitates threatening the existing social order of the United States. Critical theorists question whether it is possible for the education system to change or for teachers to work as agents of change. Despite knowledge of the problems in the inner city, reform movements have not been successful, as evidenced by the current reproduction occurring in America's classrooms. The researcher argues that by stabilizing the current rate of teacher turnover, we may be able to make strides toward improving education in the 21st century.

Weaknesses and Contributions of the Current Literature

One of the marked weaknesses of the research on reproduction and resistance theories is the lack of empirical data, along with suggestions for correcting the problems. Often, critical theorists believe that nothing can be done within the present system to improve conditions. Another weakness of the literature comes from the cultural reproduction theorists' deficiency in allowing for the existence of human agency and resistance. Their perspective often fails to explore the significance of social interactions in the school setting. Schools do not exist in a vacuum and one cannot ignore their relationship to the society in which they exist. An additional weakness of the existing literature is the failure to connect the social reproduction that occurs in schools with teacher turnover.

One of the contributions of the literature comes from the variety of research methods used. Many quantitative and qualitative studies exist on the topics presented, and there is an ongoing conversation among educators and researchers in regard to many aspects involving teacher attrition. This is currently a subject of much debate, research and theorizing, and many intense emotions are often involved. An additional strength of the literature can be found in the complexity of the relationships involved. Race, class, culture, and language all constitute elements of diversity and all are addressed in the literature.

Gaps and Saturation Points

There seems to be a plethora of information available on many of the aspects involved in this study. The literature offers considerable research involving cultural reproduction, teacher attrition, and teacher socialization. There are numerous studies that allow us to state with confidence what the problems in the inner city are and that they exist. Connell (1994) states that "the evidence of socially unequal outcomes continues to mount; it is one of the most firmly established facts about Western-style educational systems in all parts of the world" (p. 129). Unfortunately, none of these studies directly links the problems to teacher attrition. In addition, there are limited qualitative studies on the reasons that teachers leave the inner city.

Chapter Summary

Chapter two presents the literature that informs this study. Our greatest challenge lies in determining how to retain teachers in urban districts so that reform movements can have enough cohesion to improve the quaility of education. It is a complex challenge, fraught with intricacies but the first step is addressing it as an important issue. We must stop what Freire (2000) called inadvertent "bank-clerk" teaching and what Delpit (1995) refered to as "cross-cultural confusions" and transform modern education in our urban schools. In order to accomplish this goal we need stable, reform-minded teachers. In addition, while the researcher concedes that schools are social and political

enterprises and that reform efforts in the past have not yet been successful, she disagrees with reconceptualists who have argued that "the existing order is static and oppressive" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998, p. 10). Schools can be a powerful catalyst for change in our society, but so far "the relationships between teachers and students and schools and communities have remained essentially unchanged" (Cummins, 1986, p. 18). Listening to the voices of the teachers and understanding their interpretations of their experiences may help develop strategies for lowering turnover rates, which could facilitate reforms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, the methods employed to study the research question are discussed. This chapter begins with a presentation of the methodological approach and illustrates how this research is situated within the broader perspective of qualitative methods. It includes a discussion of the participants involved, the instruments used, and the research design. Following this section, the researcher presents a detailed account of the procedures used for this study and an explanation of the analysis strategy. This chapter concludes with a time frame for the project.

Participants

Population

The population for this study consisted of teachers who left inner-city school districts in the Midwest, Southwest, and on the East Coast. The varied locations were a result of the researcher's own school history; the researcher had family and friends and previous colleagues in the Midwest and Southwest with connections to respondents who were available for interviews. The researcher had recently moved to the East Coast and was able to find limited respondents in the area because of her lack of connections. All of the schools that had been left by the respondents were similar in that they were in poor neighborhoods with diverse students in urban settings; elementary, middle, and

high schools were all represented. One of the schools was a newly opened public charter school that served mainly the community where it was situated. All of the schools had more students of color than White students, with African American and Hispanic being the highest represented populations. All of the schools involved had experienced a rate of teacher turnover of 50% or higher within five years and had difficulties recruiting and retaining new teachers.

Respondents

Data was collected through a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with twelve teachers who had left urban schools. Ten of the respondents had moved from the inner city to suburban districts, and two had left the teaching profession to go to graduate school. In addition, data was collected through document analysis of websites, newspaper articles, and census figures for each school district involved. The respondents all participated voluntarily and were asked to sign human subjects consent forms which specified any possible risks, discomforts, or inconveniences involved with participating in the study. The respondents were difficult to find because of the nature of the study; inner-city districts were not cooperative in supplying permission for interviews and the researcher's personal networks had to be exhausted in order to find respondents.

Method of Selection

The teachers were selected purposefully because they had left an urban school district within five years of their hiring dates. These participants were referred to the researcher through family members, former colleagues, and a college with a teacher education program in the area. The researcher sent e-mail notices to former colleagues, friends, and family members who might know teachers or who were themselves teachers. Overall, 33 e-mails were sent out and 25 initial phone calls were made. The majority of those contacted by e-mail and phone responded without providing any possible connections but one family member in the Midwest knew of a possible respondent. When the researcher called, the respondent agreed to be interviewed and offered to ask three colleagues who also fit the criteria if they would be willing to participate. Three of the respondent's coworkers agreed but only two eventually showed up for the interview. These were the first three respondents.

After this the researcher sent out twenty letters to administrators in an urban area on the East Coast near the researcher's current location. It was hoped that the administrators would provide contacts who had left their district or agree to be interviewed regarding the influence that teacher turnover has had on the urban schools where they work. The administrators were selected because of their affiliation with schools that have the most difficult time hiring and retaining qualified teachers. One of the 20 immediately sent an e-mail to the researcher stating that permission would need to be obtained from the

superintendent of the school district. Letters and follow-up phone calls to the superintendents of the two cities received absolutely no response. Many messages were left for administrators but not one interview was attained through these means. The lack of response from administration in urban areas was seen as reflective of an unwillingness to be examined due to endemic problems with the system.

The largest resource for the researcher in finding respondents turned out to be a local college which offers a master's program for education. The researcher was allowed access to a graduate-level classroom to recruit respondents and to graduates of the program who then provided additional respondents in a snowball effect. One dean at this college provided the names of two teachers who had been in her classes when she taught in the education department. These two teachers agreed to be interviewed and also provided the researcher with an additional contact. Unfortunately, momentum was never gained in the search for respondents. While those who were interviewed were happy to talk about their experiences, finding people who taught in the inner city and then left turned out to be a challenging proposition.

Size and Demographics

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve respondents. All of these respondents were teachers who had left urban districts within five years. Eight of the respondents were female and four were male; one

of the males was Hispanic and the other eleven respondents were White. The ages of repondents ranged from 24-years-old to 70-years-old with everyone self-reporting a middle class background. Seven of the respondents had worked at the elementary level, four at the high school level, and one had been at the middle school level. All of the respondents except one reported that the urban school position had been their first teaching placement. One of the respondents had taught in a private school for two years while earning his master's degree prior to a respite from teaching and then taking the urban position.

The first respondent, Mrs. Lake (all names have been changed), was a twenty-six-year-old White female who taught at a charter school in an urban area for one year and two months. Mrs. Lake left the school mid-year to take a position at a suburban school. Mrs. Lake came from a middle class background and taught second grade in the city. She graduated from a local Midwestern university and the charter school was her first teaching experience.

Mrs. Grey, the second respondent, was a twenty-eight-year-old White female who taught fourth and fifth grades in an urban school district for two years. Mrs. Grey described her background as upper middle class; she graduated from a Midwestern university and went to teach in the same suburban school district as Mrs. Lake.

Mrs. Glass, the third respondent, was a 24-year-old White female who taught English to sophomores and freshmen at an inner-city school in the Southwest. She had graduated from a Midwestern school and moved to the

Southwest in search of a position. She left her position and moved to a suburban school after one year.

The fourth respondent, Mrs. Brown, was a 45-year-old White female who taught science at the middle school level. She had left engineering to get her master's degree and teach. She spent three years at an urban school before moving to a rural district. Her master's and bachelor's were from an Eastern college.

Mr. Spring, the fifth respondent, was a 38-year-old White male who taught Spanish as a permanent substitute for half of a year at an urban high school. He continued to live in the city and send his children to the same urban schools despite their lamentable reputation. He went to college in the West and hoped to give back to his community by teaching in the city but his lax discipline reputation meant that he had to go to a suburban district for a position.

Mr. White, the sixth respondent, was a 70-year-old White male who taught fifth grade. He spent his first year in an inner-city elementary school. After that first year he had moved out of state and worked at a suburban district for ten years before returning to retire from the urban school where he had begun his teaching career. He spent many years as the head of the teachers' union and had his master's from a Midwestern university.

Mrs. Green, the seventh respondent, was a 50-year-old White female who worked for social services for 18 years before teaching. She had been a social worker in the urban district where she first taught for two years before she took

the teaching position. She taught special education at the elementary level for two years before leaving to teach in a suburban district. She was working on her master's degree from a Midwestern university at the time of the interview.

The eighth respondent, Mr. Bond, was a 38-year-old Hispanic male who taught high school math for five years before moving to a suburban district. He had taught at two urban high schools, moving from one to the other because his first school became an Edison school, and he did not like the private sector taking over. He was working on his master's degree from a Southwestern university.

Mrs. Rivers, the ninth respondent, was a 36-year-old White female who substituted for two years before taking a position at an urban elementary school. She taught kindergarten and fifth grade for her two years in the inner city. She then took a position at a suburban school. She had her master's degree from a Midwestern university.

Mrs. Bell, the tenth respondent, was a 43-year-old White female who taught one year in an urban middle school and two years at an urban elementary before being laid off. She was called back in the summer but had already taken a position at a suburban school. She taught special education and was working on her administrative certificate from an Eastern university at the time of the interview.

The eleventh respondent, Mr. Brooks, was a 49-year-old White male who taught for three semesters at an alternative high school in a large urban area.

Mr. Brooks was the only respondent who had taught prior to his urban school position. He spent two years teaching at a private school while earning his master's degree in forensic psychology. After this he worked in test development and owned a small business before deciding that he would teach as he returned to graduate school. Mr. Brooks left the classroom to join the inspector general's office.

The twelfth respondent, Mrs. Waters, was a 48-year-old White female who taught high-school English for three years in the inner city before moving out of state when her husband was transferred. Mrs. Waters would have left teaching after the third year even if she hadn't moved. At the time of the interview she was working on her doctoral degree from an Eastern university.

Researcher Positionality

In qualitative research, the researcher must consider himself or herself an instrument. The researcher "engages the situation and makes sense of it" (Eisner, 1998, p. 34). An adept observer knows what is significant and what to ignore in the natural setting. Guba and Lincoln (1983) list the advantages of using the self as an instrument as "greater insightfulness, their flexibility, their responsiveness, the holistic emphasis they can provide, their ability to utilize tacit knowledge, and their ability to process and ascribe meaning to data simultaneously with their acquisition" (p. 324). In addition, individuals have the perception needed to notice subtleties and the self-reflection necessary to

explore the automatic subjectivity they bring to a situation because of their own histories.

The researcher in this study was a female with eight years of teaching experience; four of those years had been spent working in an urban setting in the Southwest. Three years were spent teaching on an Indian reservation that would fit this study's criteria for poor and minority students but was not urban. The researcher had not taught at an urban school for approximately five years, during which time she had spent one year at a rural school in Montana and the remainder as a doctoral student and occasional adjunct professor. Her education as a doctoral student had included several chances to perform qualitative research, and she was also trained by Dr. David Althide in observations as a part of an action research cadre. She had assisted in gathering qualitative data for a study of the science labs at a state university and had conducted her own grounded theory research regarding professors' preparation for teaching at the university level. Though far from an expert, she was comfortable with the process of gathering and analyzing qualitative data. She also kept detailed logs and recorded any possible biases that were detected. One of the first steps the researcher took was to answer the interview questions on her own so that any overlap in respondent answers could be examined.

As is often the case, the researcher's special interest in teachers who leave the inner city was derived from her own experiences as a new teacher in

an urban district. She left the district to move out of state but continued to be interested in the schooling of disadvantaged students. The researcher's belief that reality is created by individuals as they interact with their social world prompted her to use qualitative research to examine the reality created by teachers in urban schools. People interpret incidents and build their world by making their own meaning out of the experiences they have. This assumption meant that the researcher, as the primary data collector, had to be aware that the information was being filtered through her perspective on reality. She attempted to resolve issues as they presented themselves and remain focused. The researcher also sought to establish intensive prolonged contact with the respondents and the context so she could fade into the background and allow the subjects to behave naturally, minimizing observer bias/effect.

Instrument

The researcher used multiple methods of data collection. The preponderance of the data was gathered from in-depth semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured format was chosen so that the researcher could thoroughly explore the respondents' views. The researcher approached the interivews in an exploratory fashion; some questions were pre-planned but the responses from the participant were allowed to guide the discussion and frequent follow-up questions were asked. In this way the researcher sought "to uncover, make accessible, and reveal the meanings people use to make sense

out of their daily lives" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 15). The interview guide (see Appendix A) was developed in relation to themes that emerged in the literature. Prior to interviewing, the researcher devised notecards with the revised questions written out and consulted them during the interviews to be sure she worded the questions exactly the same each time. Each follow-up question was recorded in the researcher's field notes as well as being audiotaped along with the interview answers. Some demographic information was collected from all respondents as tools for the researcher to use in analyzing the data. These included: age, gender, years of experience, exact positions held during tenure at the school, and race. Each interview lasted approximately two hours.

The researcher used both a field note pad and a copy of the interview guide to record notes as the respondents talked. This approach was not necessary when the interviews were taped but it gave the researcher a guide to follow while transcribing and a chance to really contemplate probing questions that could delve into the subjects being discussed. The interviews were guided by the respondents and the researcher maintained a fundamental attitude of discovery; this curiosity seemed to propel the respondents to talk openly and provide a variety of data that could later be categorized. The researcher also began the interview asking for basic information about the respondent's role in the district if this information was unavailable through other documents.

Upon meeting each respondent the researcher briefly explained that she was a student conducting interviews for a research experiment and thanked the

respondent for taking the time to answer her questions. Only one respondent asked for more clarification during the interview, while most asked for more details about how their answers would be used after the interview had been completed. Clear notes were taken as the respondent answered the questions and then were filled in immediately following the interview. At the end of the interview, the researcher gave respondents a list of the interview questions and requested that they call or e-mail if there was any additional information they wanted to add. None of the respondents called but this could have been because the interviewer regularly contacted the respondents for member checking and new information was added at those times.

In addition, the researcher used anecdotal notes to record data gathered in this fashion. In addition, field notes were taken in each setting describing the place and any conditions that could influence the interview. The mixture of sources helped reduce bias through triangulation. Triangulation occurred during the analysis of data since multiple sources and a preponderance of evidence were considered in establishing the interpretation. Eisner (1998) referred to this as "structural corroboration" and describes it as "the confluence of multiple sources of evidence or the recurrence of instances that support a conclusion" (p. 55).

Function

The purpose of using the in-depth semi-structured interview was to collect

adequate data about why teachers leave the disadvantaged districts. Patton (1987) stated that "the basic purpose of the standardized open-ended interview is to minimize effects by asking the same question of each respondent" (p. 113). This process also makes it easier for future researchers to replicate the study. Even though the researcher did not use volunteers to do interviewing, this format helped her to be consistent. Jorgensen (1989) posited that "in depth interviews differ from other strategies in that they seek to explore particular matters in elaborate and comprehensive detail" (p. 90). Thus, in depth interviews were the selection for this research because the researcher endeavored to examine the teachers' experiences and their specific reasons for leaving. It allowed her to attain a highly uniform set of information from people who were knowledgeable about the reasons teachers leave urban districts. When additional information was needed, the interviewer went back to ask all respondents a similar question instead of varying the interview protocol. Member checking was employed to consult with the respondents either during or after interviews to determine whether the findings were how they perceived their answer or actions to be construed. Negative case analysis was used to understand silence about particular findings that were repeated in the literature review but not mentioned by the respondents.

The interviews also allowed the researcher to contribute to a growing body of literature that values teachers' perspectives on their practice. For years teachers have been the subjects of research studies without considering the

relevancy of their voices in regard to the profession. Patton (1990) defined grounded theory as "an inductive strategy for generating and confirming theory that emerges from close involvement and direct contact with the empirical world" (p. 153). In this study, the goal was to understand why teachers leave urban districts, but it is hoped that the research additionally adds to the recent works that enrich our understanding of teaching in urban districts.

Trustworthiness and Dependability

The trustworthiness of conclusions drawn from data is augmented when a study can "increase the likelihood that an authentic picture of the participant's reality is elicited" (Eisenhart and Howe, 1992, p. 647). Credibility refers to the good experimental design necessary to rule out that other factors influenced the phenomenon being studied. It is determined by "demonstrating that the researcher's interpretations of data are credible to those who provided the data" (Guba and Lincoln, 1985, p. 651) Transferability refers to generalizing the effects to other populations and contexts (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). This research project was designed to minimize biases and maximize responses. The interview questions went through analysis by the researcher's graduate committee before any interviews took place. Pilot interviews were conducted to refine the interview questions. The original questions were asked of two teachers and their immediate feedback on the question was elicited to check whether the question elicited the information requested and whether the

researchers' interpretations were accurate. The revised questions were then analyzed by the researcher's colleagues before another pilot interview refined them for the actual interviews. This final pilot interview was conducted with a qualitative researcher who had experience in a school for juvenile parolees. As the questions were asked and answered, they were analyzed for wording and the content of the answers were analyzed for pertinence. This interview was also tape recorded and transcribed to test the recording device. In order to verify some of the respondents' answers, the researcher checked school district documents and looked for corresponding information from other respondents. As she analyzed the data, the researcher called respondents when there were incongruities or when additional information was needed.

Interpretive verification was used to get feedback from peers who understand qualitative research so that multiple perspectives were considered when analyzing the data. This feedback was recorded regularly in the researcher's journal and gave the researcher more chance of analyzing the data at multiple levels. The researcher also kept an open mind for different interpretations of the data; interpretive verification enabled the researcher to see the data anew through the perspective of others, thus substantiating the results. Eisenhart and Howe (1992) suggested that trustworthiness could be established by using specific techniques to prolong involvement, systematically considering many sources of data from multiple perspectives, and having the respondents review the findings. All of these techniques were utilized.

Field notes were meticulously kept to help demonstrate fidelity. In these notes the researcher kept track of as much information as was possible. Notes on access, the questions and prompts used, the context, verbal, and nonverbal messages were recorded diligently and coded so that there was no threat to the trustworthiness of the study. Another method employed by the researcher was a research log. In this log the researcher recorded her impressions of the interviews, any confounding materials or problems that arose. This journal allowed the researcher to keep an open and honest account of biases in thinking, a daily recording of incidentals and was a place for ongoing formative efforts at analysis. The journal helped the researcher in developing follow-up questions, and it helped the researcher keep a detailed record of events, dates, and times. Also, the researcher mentioned to all respondents that confidentiality would be exercised in the write-up of the information gained. Pseudonyms were used for the respondents in all drafts of this research, and neither the urban schools that were left nor the suburban schools where the teachers relocated were named.

The researcher also took great care to establish a friendly relationship with each of the respondents. She provided food at gatherings, took the time to listen to their stories and thanked them profusely for their time. Jorgensen (1989) stressed the importance of sustaining access once it had been granted and the researcher was able to do so in all cases. "The character of field relations heavily influence the researcher's ability to collect accurate, truthful

information" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 21); thus, the researcher worked hard to build strong relationships with the respondents so that they would be willing to commit to follow-up interviews and so that they would speak feely in her presence. The trust and cooperation that was built at the initial meetings made it possible to include the respondents in member checking activities and in reviewing materials after transcription.

Development

The interview questions were developed by the researcher to be open-ended and to answer the overriding research question-why do teachers leave schools which have a relatively high level of economically disadvantaged students? The original questions were asked of all respondents, but the researcher remained attentive for emerging themes as the data was collected and went back with more specific questions when the need arose. In addition, the researcher used e-mail to solicit clarification on answers.

The development of the interview guide was a long process. The researcher started by recording a long list of questions that could be of interest and that teachers who left inner cities would be able to answer. She then had help from her graduate committee during the proposal phase of this research in focusing and narrowing the questions while also broadening the scope to be less formal. In this way the respondents were allowed to guide the interview process and tell their stories, allowing the researcher to listen and then interpret how the

respondents represented themselves.

The questions were developed in conjunction with the researcher's committee, input from the literature, and input from experts in the field of interview development in order to write questions that would allow the model to emerge from the respondents. The questions were first written in the fall of 2001, but were continuously improved over the course of the 2001-2002 academic year, during which time the pilot interviews were conducted in order to revise the questions yet again.

The questions were then clustered and sorted into general topics so that the interview would flow smoothly. Reminders for probes were placed throughout the guide and a coversheet was added for recording demographic information on each respondent. A fresh guide was used during each interview to jot notes and to keep the session focused.

Research Design

Rationale

This research project utilized the grounded theory method in an attempt to collect a significant amount of data to develop a theory regarding why teachers leave urban districts. Qualitative research was chosen because it is most appropriate for answering the study's research question and because of the unique contributions it affords educational research. Qualitative research

resolves to be nonmanipulative, thus not disrupting the natural processes of the setting being investigated (Eisner, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) posited that "ours is interpretive work...interpretations must include the perspectives and voices of the people whom we study" (p. 274). This ideology led the researcher to choose grounded theory as the framework for this study.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) the major difference between grounded theory and other forms of qualitative research lies in the emphasis on developing a model or theory. As a result of using grounded theory methodology, the theory that was devised in response to this research was largely a reflection of the responses of the teachers who have left the district. The available literature was used to collaborate or provide additional insights but the teachers who left were the primary sources. Eisnenhart and Howe (1992) postulated that qualitative designs can be judged for validity by adapting the measurements to "increase the likelihood that an authentic picture of the participants' reality is elicited" (p. 647). Particular care was taken when analyzing the data to be sure that the theory formed was indicative of the respondents' views. Grounded theory methodology was also selected because it "is designed to guide researchers in producing theory that is 'conceptually dense'" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

"A major element of this methodology is that multiple perspectives must be systematically sought during the research inquiry" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 280). In following with this element of grounded theory, the researcher sought to

understand the reasons that teachers leave the district from as many perspectives as possible. Teachers from a variety of schools and all different levels were interviewed and related documents were analyzed. All members of the district who were considered "significantly relevant" to teacher attrition were sought out to be interviewed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) .

Invalidity and Minimization

The characteristics associated with qualitative research have both positive and negative influences on the readers' perceptions of the materials being presented. The limited number of cases and multiple variables associated with qualitative research leads to some drawbacks. The intense detail required of qualitative research often means that a small sample must be used which is not necessarily representative. It is also not value free. The researcher must filter the information through his/her own life experiences and this can produce bias. The largest threat to validity for this study was the researcher's own background with urban schools. Her own experiences gave her some preconcieved ideas about what a new teacher would experience in an urban district. In some ways this was an asset because she was able to use the language of the teachers and fit in quite easily. Jorgensen (1989) states that "it is not possible to acquire more than a very crude notion of the 'insiders' world ... until you comprehend the culture and language that is used to communicate its meaning" (p. 14). The researcher tried to minimize any negative effects by recording her own answers

prior to conducting interviews and by consciously trying to remain an inquisitive outsider. Jorgensen (1989) refers to this as 'naivete' and calls it a strategic maneuver. To achieve this the researcher did not add stories of her own or talk much at all during the interview process. She listened intently and asked clarifying questions without interjecting any anecdotes or digressions.

Procedural Details

A systematic procedure was used for handling and collecting data (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). The first step that the researcher took toward collecting data was writing regularly in a research log as questions and concerns arose. This process arose almost from the inception of the research project so that detailed records could be kept regarding the procedures involved and any possible concerns could be cataloged and addressed. The next step in the gathering of data involved analysis of the attrition rates at the various schools in the area to determine which schools had the most difficult time recruiting and retaining teachers. The researcher then contacted administrators from those schools as she simultaneously contacted former colleagues, friends, and family members regarding an interest in connections to teachers who left urban schools. The interviewer would often travel to the site where the respondent was working in order to interview the respondents at their convenience. Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed to ensure that the information was accurately recorded and reported. The procedural detail transpired in

conjunction with the analysis of the materials.

Analysis Strategy

Analysis of the data was conducted according to the "constant comparative method" as delineated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Interview questions were not analyzed separately because the respondents often answered two questions with one answer or responded to subsequent questions before they were asked. Instead, the researcher broke down the interview data to the smallest bits of information on notecards and sorted repeatedly. These are the stages followed when analyzing the data:

1. *Comparing incidents applicable to each category:* This stage involved a systematic scrutiny of the data to find patterns and relationships. A thorough examination of the existing literature helped determine some of the main categories, but did not limit the scope. The researcher completed this stage using coded notecards with units of information, constantly comparing the data and arranging it into various groupings. She recorded in her research journal during this stage so that any ambivalent information was recorded and any incomplete categories were noted.

2.*Integrating categories and their properties:* This stage occurred when the process became more rule-oriented and allowed the researcher to test the properties of the categories in order to enhance or redefine their original meanings. At this stage she looked for other commonalities in the groupings.

For instance, if the researcher had grouped ten notecards together because they related to a theme, she also noted if there were other similarities based on gender, department, or position.

3. *Delimiting the theory:* At this stage "the inquirer begins to realize both parsimony and scope in his or her formulation" (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p.343). As the researcher consolidated the number of categories because of improved clarity, the categories became saturated with supporting data.

Assumptions and Limitations

The basis for this research rests on the assumption that teachers who have themselves left urban school districts are the best source for determining why a high teacher attrition rate exists in these communities. This assumption warrants the use of grounded theory methodology because the model arose out of the data collected from interviews.

A limitation of the research involved the limited number of ex-teachers who were available for interviews and the widespread area that was required in order to find enough teachers to interview. The researcher traveled to the Midwest and the Southwest to gain access to respondents. The difficulty in accessing respondents would limit the potential for reproducing the study as well as any attempt to generalize to a certain area of the country but generalization is not necessarily the goal with qualitative research.

An additional limitation could be that "they [grounded theories] are

systematic statements of *plausible* relationships" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 279). The emphasis on plausible represents the fluidity of grounded theories. The significance of the temporary is a key component of grounded theory methodology and a possible limiting factor for this research. Grounded theory develops a theory that is right for the situation under which it was developed at the time it was produced. Each new situation calls for an exploration of how it might fit.

Timeframe

The impetus behind this research project began in the summer of 2001. Over the course of the next academic school year, the instrument was refined, the literature was reviewed, and the focus of the study slowly emerged. The researcher began collecting data in the summer of 2002 and continued to collect data and analyze it for themes during the fall semester of 2002. The categories became saturated by the spring of 2003, and the theory emerged from the data.

Chapter Summary

It can be valuable just to comprehend a situation that was previously perplexing; it is the researcher's hope that this study increases our knowledge base concerning teacher attrition by including the perspectives of those who taught in the inner city and then left. This research project combined grounded theory and content analysis techniques for collecting data. The combination of

these methods enabled the presentation of several different knowledge perspectives, which informed one another and strengthened the study's arguments (Collins, 1990). This chapter has detailed the methodology used for this study, including the participants, instrument, and the research design. The methods that were used were the result of continuous adaptions and were designed to decrease subjectivity while increasing the structure of the research. The outcomes of the research are discussed in Chapter four.

RESULTS

Introduction

This research study focused on listening to the teachers who have left inner-city districts to discern the forces behind their decisions to leave and thus increase understanding of the high attrition rates in urban districts. Analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with twelve respondents are found in this chapter. All twelve of the respondents allowed their initial interview to be audiotaped, and these interviews were later transcribed and then broken down into small chunks of data on note cards. For analysis, the note cards were repeatedly sorted so that themes were allowed to emerge from the data, in accordance with grounded theory methodology. As the data was systematically analyzed, the researcher engaged in member checking to verify the information and asked follow-up questions via e-mail or over the telephone. All twelve of the respondents had worked in the inner city for five years or less. Their experiences and stories, as represented here, can help us to answer the primary questions for this research study: What are the reasons behind teachers' decisions to leave urban schools which have a relatively high level of economically disadvantaged students? What are the experiences of those who leave? How do the teachers who leave interpret their departure? Understanding the reasons why they left urban school might allow some insight into the teacher turnover that plagues these schools.

If a close-ended survey were used to discover why these teachers left their urban placements, the results would likely overlook the many subtleties that their narratives depict. On such a survey, Mrs. Lake, Mrs. Rivers, and Mrs. Grey would probably say they left to teach in a suburban school--the same school that they themselves had attended as children and where their children will go as they grow up. Mr. Bond also left to teach in a suburban school so that he could broaden his experiences. Mrs. Glass and Mrs. Green would say they left because they were concerned about being laid off due to budget problems, and Mrs. Bell actually was laid off and had already taken another position when the district tried to reinstate her. Mr. White and Mrs. Waters would explain that they left to move out of state, and Mr. Brooks left to take an administrative position. Mrs. Brown would say she left because she didn't get along with a new administrative regime, and Mr. Spring would probably not be asked to fill out the survey because he could never get a permanent position due to administration's belief that he was lax in his discipline. These brief explanations provide surface-level, superficial information rather than in-depth, detailed understandings and thus, do not tell the real story of teachers' decisions to leave the inner city. The following analysis presents the experiences of those who taught in the inner city and then left, as told by the teachers themselves, in an effort to understand the circumstances surrounding teachers leaving the inner city.

Themes

Getting the Position

To ease the respondents into the topic of their encounters at urban schools, the researcher asked them to tell about how they secured the position. Eleven of the twelve respondents reported that they took the position as a last resort or simply because it was easy to secure. For half of the respondents, there was a defininte lack of interest in working at an urban school, and some even expressed a hesitancy about taking the position after being interviewed and offered the position. Mrs. Grey acknowledged that she took the position "as a last resort; no one else was calling and the school year was about to begin". Mrs. Lake put it simply that "they were the only ones to call me back so that is where I ended up; it wasn't like it was a choice or anything". Mrs. Grey claimed that after substituting for two years, she was excited about having her own classroom "even if it was there". Three of the respondents expressed that family members did not want them to take the position because they thought it would be dangerous, and most mentioned that other districts would not consider them without prior experience.

The remaining respondents took their positions in urban districts because they were easy to obtain. Mrs. Brown was in Yellowstone National Park when she received a call. The district hired her over the phone because she wouldn't be returning until after the deadline for the position had passed. Mr. Bond took

over his position as part of his student teaching, so he had the job before he finished his degree. Similarly, Mrs. Bell was allowed to do her student teaching as part of her teaching assignment. Mr. Brooks was recruited while he was installing an alarm system for a district administrator and noted that many of the other new teachers were "hyphenated teachers" because they "were teaching as a way to pay the rent but had other interests such as writers, artists, and graduate students and were on their way to another career". Mr. Brooks also noted that he and others were unlicensed but got temporary certificates through an alternative licensing program. Still others got their positions without a formal interview, over coffee, or through friends. Mrs. Green was a social worker for the district when a position came open, and she "asked about the job and was hired instantly, without ever turning in a resume".

Only Mr. Spring expressed any specific desire in working with urban students, and he was the one candidate to not get hired for a full-time teaching position. The position that he applied for went to a candidate who was unable to pass the required Spanish test. Mr. Spring believed that he was not hired because the district was concerned about his lax disciplinary style and "they were uncomfortable with my unorthodox teaching methods". Yet, of the twelve respondents he was the only one who talked about the inner city as a desirable place to teach. Mr. Spring had specifically gone into teaching because he saw it as a way to give back to his community. He grew up and continued to live in an

urban district troubled with the obstacles that face most urban schools. Mr. Spring had gone to Spain on a mission, had a natural talent for Spanish, and thus had pursued a degree in teaching Spanish so that he could "teach the English speakers about the rich heritage and the value that those who are coming to America from Spanish-speaking countries bring with them". He saw this as a way to revitalize a community that was increasingly Hispanic. He had substituted for half a year for that district and then applied when a full-time position opened up. After the interview, the district did not call him back until two days into the school year, at which time he had already taken a position in another district.

Stress

The most common theme relating to why the teachers left their positions was stress. Feeling overwhelmed and frustrated was expressed by all twelve of the candidates in a variety of manners, and a variety of magnitudes. Some of their statements were very clear: "A typical day was crazy, unsettled, you never knew what to expect because of what kids were bringing to school with them"; "the worst part was the stress, especially the first year, basically my day consisted of keeping them under control"; "I always felt unorganized and like I was barely holding it together"; "at the end of the day you dragged yourself out of there and you'd almost be enervated somedays"; "you never knew what each

day was going to bring and it could bring, literally, a weapon, a drug addict, anything into your life on each given morning"; "it was a full day of my emotions getting pulled every which way; it was so stressful".

Five of the respondents mentioned physical symptoms relating to their stress: regular crying bouts and exhaustion. Mrs. Glass thought that the worst part of working in the urban school was how she felt; "I just never wanted to go. I was so exhausted and I would count down the days until each vacation and some weeks I was counting down just trying to make it to the weekend." Mrs. Grey admitted "I felt physically ill and would often throw up in the morning at the thought of going back there for another day". She relayed that her physical symptoms were the worst in the morning as she showered and prepared for the day ahead. Mrs. Grey had a difficult time expressing any positives regarding her experience in the urban school. Even her attempts to think of positive memories show her unfavorable inclination:

> Some of the kids were fun. It wasn't all bad. It can be hard to think of good things though because most of it was so negative. I remember field day as being really fun and the kids acting playful instead of resentful and sullen for the day. I guess there were some other nice teachers despite my isolation too.

She considered quitting mid-year but was afraid that she would never get a position in a "desirable location" if she quit. Other respondents also expressed

the desire to withdraw from their positions mid-year and the possible consequences of being sued for breach of contract.

The stress communicated by the respondents was a theme that ran throughout the respondents' interviews. It varied in intensity from minor annoyance and the realization that teaching in the urban school would not leave the respondent with the energy necessary to complete his doctoral work, to feelings of failure and demoralization. Also, the range of how the teachers reacted to the stress was great. Some felt debilitated while others exhibited the ability to minimize the disorder that they found. Some overcame the stress, such as Mr. Bond who felt stressed when he learned that his classroom had been vandalized but then organized students to help him clean it up and repainted a wall with a mural. Stress connected with or was created by all eight of the major themes: the threat of violence, the unruly and needy students, the inabilty to teach, the unsupportive administration, the uninvolved parents, the cold school climates, the disheartened coworkers, and the lack of resources--and can be seen as an overriding issue. For some of the teachers it can be easily linked to their decision to leave the inner city, for others the correlation was less clear and their decision to leave held more nuances.

Violence

The threat of violence in the urban schools was a factor that greatly contributed to the stress level for many of the teachers. When asked what stories they tell about their time at the urban schools, ten of the twelve respondents chose to tell about violent episodes that happened during their time in the inner city, and one told about the difference it made when he cleaned up his classroom of gang-related graffiti. The final respondent told about a student who had tremendous potential as a basketball player and wasted his chances because he was never academically eligible. Some of the respondents merely related stories that they had heard from others, while others' perceptions of violence were their lived realities and profoundly influenced their attitudes regarding urban schools. Mr. Brooks thought his story represented just how hard it was to work in the inner city:

> Probably the one I tell a lot because it illustrates how difficult it is to teach at some of these schools is the story that was told to me and I related to you about the teacher being hung. That was related to me by a fellow teacher who had come to our school because he was so unsettled by that. This fellow was a Jamaican and he was teaching English in one of the major high schools in the city and he was walking down the hall and heard a blood curdling scream and he ran to see what it was and when he got to the classroom there were three boys who were about to execute a teacher. He had failed them on a quiz so they were punishing him. They had him up on the desk and they had a noose around his neck and it was an old building so they had exposed pipes in the ceiling and they had the noose around

> the pipes. They were literally going to hang him. The fellow I worked with had intercepted that and so he very shortly got out of that school and came into the alternative system because he didn't want to be in that environment anymore. He couldn't deal with it.

Yet, Mr. Brooks did not feel directly threatened by violence at his school because the alternative school held the power to expel students and would do so if a student was a danger to others. Mrs. Waters told stories about gang fights where:

> There seemed to be two large groups of students warring in the courtyard at lunch. They were ripping ten foot poles out that were staking trees and swinging them around and throwing rocks and soda cans and, of course, doing hand to hand combat. It was just this mass of students and many of the teachers were trying to gain control but it was pointless.

The fights escalated into racial conflicts in her school and required classrooms to be under "lock-down" status for hours. She related that she felt scared but also somewhat enthralled by the ensuing tensions and police presence. "The police in full riot garb showed up and sprayed pepper spray to disperse the crowd. There must have been 40 or 50 police officers in full gear and then the helicopters started hovering about. It really got the adrenalin going." Others also told stories of guns, shootings, and threats to their personal safety. Mrs. Rivers told about being pinned up against the blackboard by an exceptionally large fifth grader while she was pregnant. Even Mr. Spring, who tried to downplay the

violence because he felt it was overplayed in the media and in outsiders' expectations, told about being knocked down and mugged.

It was common for the respondents to voice fear about the neighborhoods where the schools were located. "This place was in the middle of the ghetto. Your life wasn't worth ten cents outside the door"; "I didn't even like driving there during the day and I bought a cell phone just to feel a little safer"; "it spooked me out to sit alone in my classroom after hours in that neighborhood and I'd practically run to my car if it were dark out and no one could walk me out"; "they found bodies in the park next door to the school"; " I had to drive past this place where a bunch of vagrants hung out and drug dealers were selling". Some of the teachers noted that these factors limited them because they were unwilling to take kids outside of the school, even when a lesson might be enhanced by a field trip or outdoor component. It also limited the after-school involvement of some teachers. Mrs. Lake did not try to put on a play at night because she felt that no one wanted to come out in that community at night, and Mrs. Glass never tried to start any clubs because "it wasn't that kind of place; even the kids who lived there were scared to go out after dark".

The violence was not limited to the streets. One of the teachers' stories involved a student who had to hide in her bathtub because there were gunfights in the apartment building where she lived. Mr. White told of a visitor who interrupted his class looking for a certain student. When the visitor left because the student was absent that day, the other students told him that the man had a

gun and was planning to kill the absent boy. Mr. White called security and while they could not find the perpetrator, Mr. White was still relieved that "at least the kid wasn't in class. Who knows what I might have witnessed". Mrs. Brown told of an altercation in the school hallway:

> During the passing periods the teachers were suppose to supervise the hallways. Many of the older teachers refused to because they didn't think they should have to, but I would try to stand in my doorway and greet my students. So, one day I'm standing out there and this whirlwind of students comes barreling down the hallway. I run over and there are two girls and one is on top of the other and she is grabbing the other girl's hair and pounding her face into the ground. I didn't even hesitate. I jumped on the girl and pulled her off. Luckily, another teacher was right behind me and he grabbed the girl's legs. The girl was possessed or something because a security guard came and had her middle and it took all three of us to try to subdue her. She was trying to claw her way out to get at the girl some more. Then, when I went to the lounge that day a bunch of the teachers told me to never get involved with a fight like that again. They told me about how one teacher had tried to stop a fight and the crowd had turned on him and he got beat up before security could get there. So basically they would just let the girl beat the other to a pulp because they were afraid to step in. I mean, wow, how could a teacher just watch that happen and not do something.

Another described an incident where a student who was being beaten in the hallway took out a gun and shot it into the ceiling during school hours. Many of the incidents of duress related by the respondents were further supported by stories told by veteran teachers that reinforced the image of urban schools as

violent. Thús, when one incident occurred in an urban school, it appeared to be the impetus for many stories to be rehashed regarding the history of violence at that particular school. Mr. Spring noted that the public expected violence in urban schools and "when it happened in a suburban school it is viewed as an aberration that won't happen again. If it happens in a city school the underlying thought is 'well, of course, you got all those poor people and those Black and Hispanic people, of course that is going to happen. We better work on a way to fix it to keep those people from doing what they would naturally do.' You can just feel the attitude." Despite his protestations of the violent reputation being unwarranted, Mr. Spring did not paint all of the city schools the same color. He retained "veto power" over his daughter's choice of high schools "in case she chooses one that I would not feel comfortable sending her to. Mine is not a situation where I rolled the dice. I went and visited all the schools ahead of time because I wasn't going to send my kid to a toilet. Some of the schools are physically deteriorating and that is indicative of what is going on inside of them as well."

For many of the teachers, the world that the students came out of was seen as being violent and drug ridden. Mr. Bond told of "a carpeting of crack bottles that would crunch under your feet as you approached the building" when he went to a project building to visit a student. Mrs. Glass remembered driving students home and being "shocked at the filth and squalor and shacks where

some of these students lived." Yet, Mr. Spring resented the assumption that he had witnessed violence because he taught in the inner city and had to constantly defend his decision to send his children to the city schools. When he started his career in the suburbs he had to break up three or four fights right away and "other teachers would say 'you must be use to this because you taught in the city for a while' and I would tell them that I had only witnessed one fight my whole time there. I liked telling them that and letting people know it is not what they think. I mean, my kids go to school there." Mr. White also felt that people in the suburbs had the wrong impression that the city schools were rough; "I didn't find it that bad and I was at one of the schools that was considerd the hardest." So, while many of the respondents did not hesitate to tell stories of violence, some of them realized that their stories could have added to the stereotypes that perpetuate negative views of urban schools; and, though the abundance of stories told about the inner city involved violence, it wasn't always clear how much of a stressor it played in teachers' daily lives in the urban schools.

The fears expressed by some about being at their school building at night were not noted by others. Mr. Spring claimed, "I was born and raised here and went to school here and it's never been intimidating to me." Mrs. Brown described the neighborhood surrounding her school as "a pretty quiet part of the city. It's surrounded by a cemetery and a big pond and there is a healthy buffer between the school and the neighboring communities." Mrs. Waters was

particularly aware of getting " a real rush out of some of the excitement." She remembered:

> One day when I was driving out of the parking lot a big white car backed up at an angle and two men got out and started shooting at the car in front of me. They were hunched down behind the hood and trunk of the car. The car they were shooting at sped off, driving over the curb in the process. All the kids around me we were sprawled on the sidewalk one minute and then back up and walking to the bus stop the next. It was surreal. This was a major event for me. I went home and called all my family and friends and yet it never even made the paper and no one was talking about it the next day. It was just business as usual. I sometimes wondered if anyone even bothered reporting the incident to police or administration.

While Mrs. Waters admitted getting a surge out of events like these, she noted that it was a guilty pleasure because she realized that she could go home to her safe neighborhood while her students were forced to live in different circumstances. Still other respondents reported episodes of violence in a very matter-of-fact fashion. Violence was a strong theme that surfaced in every interview and acutely strained some of the teachers, yet the responses of the teachers ranged from fear to indifference and only added to the stress of teaching in the inner city in a peripheral way for some.

Students

The students were a source of great joy and tremendous frustration for the teachers who were interviewed. A few of the teachers could barely hold back tears as they spoke of kids who would sing "Achy Breaky Heart" on cue and who shook hands and hugged their teacher even though they failed a course because they knew that the teacher had cared and tried his best to teach them. "I absolutely loved the kids" was said by one respondent but echoed by many in their warm smiles as they recalled some of the tender moments of teaching in the inner city. Mrs. Green recalled an outing to a park in winter, with students where:

> This kid came over and held my hand to help me down the stairs because they were slippery with ice. Once we got to the pond we were crossing I thought he'd let go but he wanted to make sure I was fine the whole way across, so here's this sixth grader holding my hand to help me cross a pond. You'd think he wouldn't get caught dead holding the teacher's hand but he wanted to make sure I was alright. It was stuff like that, you know, everyday. There was always something.

The students were described as loving and happy, although these often came with qualifiers such as "it was amazing that they could come from where they come from and be so happy and loving" and "if you were direct and honest you could have fun with the students because they knew you cared". Two of the respondents compared their students favorably to the suburban kids, with Mrs.

Bell remarking that "there is a flavor to inner-city kids; they have a personality that is lacking in the suburbs" and "as soon as they figure out you are on their side, they'll do anything for you". Mr. Spring loved the interactions with urban kids but noted that working with them was more of a challenge in comparison with the suburban kids. He thought it was because "they have more issues and are less likely to passively show you respect".

All twelve respondents mentioned that the students in urban schools seemed to really need them. Some saw this as positive while others were overwhelmed by what they saw as additional responsibility. Many of the elementary teachers spoke about taking care of students' basic needs. Food and clothing were issues that had to be dealt with before lessons could be started. Mr. Spring told about substituting in a kindergarten classroom:

> I tried to do a simple math lesson with the crackers I had brought for my lunch but I realized very quickly that the students really couldn't be expected to sit there and count the crackers when they all seemed to be hungry. So we ate my crackers and then I ended up sharing my whole lunch with them because they seemed to be starving.

Mrs. Lake expressed anger about a student in her classroom who did not seem to eat except at school and considered it abusive of the parents to allow such a thing to happen. She spent the mornings taking care of students' hunger and clothing needs. A few respondents made the mistake of getting angry with students for not wearing winter clothing without realizing that the students did not

own the warm gear teachers wanted them to bring. They had since realized their mistakes and felt poorly for not understanding the situations sooner. It was also noted that students would often come to school in dirty, tattered clothing. Mrs. Grey remembered "there were students I didn't want to kneel down next to and help because they smelled so bad with the dirty clothes they'd be wearing". She and others observed that when this happened it was often because students were unable to afford a complete wardrobe. Mrs. Lake was thankful that the school she worked at demanded that students wear a uniform and she would keep spares in her classroom and sometimes have students change and take their uniforms home to wash for them.

Taking care of students made many of the teachers feel more responsible for them and "more like a part of their life". Some "had a good feeling about being needed", "knew it meant something that I was there", and thought "the inner-city kids are much more appreciative of things you do", while others bemoaned that "the kids are so needy" and "it was too much to be the only person in their lives they could rely on". Mr. Spring noted that "the kids in suburbia like me and appreciate me but there are very few who need me. They are validated at home and in many other ways". That feeling was lacking in the inner city and led teachers to feel like what they were doing "was as important as anything in the world" and gave them "a sense that this was the last hope for

many of these kids". Mr. Bond knew that the students did not have much consistency in their lives and tried to provide that:

> There was not a lot of structure. So, when I came in they were thinking 'how long will this person be here for?' It was neat that I had my own room but it was graffittied on the boards. My wife came in and we spent the weekend sprucing up the room so there was a big change physically for the kids as they came in and I told them I would be their math teacher and I was planning on staying. A few weeks later they mentioned they knew I was staying when I brought in pictures of my family to put on the desk. I developed a nice rapport, but I realized teaching in an urban environment that the stakes are high and it can make you a better teacher if you rise to the challenge.

However, it also led some respondents to think of the students as "damaged" and the feeling of hopelessness could be too overwhelming if the teachers took it upon their own shoulders. Mrs. Lake said, "These kids here (referring to suburban kids) go home to loving homes but those kids...they were mine."

Sometimes the respondents were surprised by the nature of the students' prior experiences. Some teachers were amazed that most of their students had never been to a museum and many were bewildered at how students would be so pleased about a simple trip to the park. Mrs. Rivers noted that "the kids didn't know that a hat and a cap were the same thing but they knew that to 'cap' someone was to shoot them". They told of a student with "scars covering most of his body", "a kid who watched a prostitute drop her baby out of a window", and

"fifth graders who sucked their thumbs but were streetwise". It was shocking to many of the teachers what some of their students had endured, and Mrs. Grey voiced that "the students had lost their innocence because of where they were growing up".

Mrs. Bell believed that her students were good kids and "if you give them a choice they would want to do the right thing"; she also felt that many of the other teachers didn't understand that academic and home issues impacted their behavior at school. Two of the respondents thought the worst part of teaching in the inner city was "watching the kids everyday and seeing how they were growing up" and "seeing where the kids were coming from and realizing just what they were missing". Only one respondent voiced any appreciation for the cultural background of his students:

> The best thing was the mix of students. One of my kids was David, a young black male going through all the stereotypical issues a young black male would have--poverty, welfare mom, father was gone. He's friends with a middle-class White boy, the son of a postal worker, and the son of a federal judge. Plus, the former mayor's son. This group of boys is all working together in my classroom and they are learning how to get along and don't seem to notice that there are these major differences between them.

Unfortunately, the respondent did not feel that the same mix of students would still be integrated in urban schools.

The circumstances of students' lives led many of the teachers to wonder about why the students bothered to come to school. They expressed their feelings with a mix of reverence and dismay; they were genuinely astounded that the students had the perseverance to get out of bed and come to school when their worlds were out of control in the perspectives of many of the teachers. "Who can care about math with their worries?" and "Why bother?" were two of the questions that respondents voiced. Mr. Brooks thought that the students came to his school because "it was the one point in their day when they didn't have to worry about being shot". He also felt that some of the students showed up because they still bought into the American dream and "hadn't burned their bridges entirely" in case they decided to give up the life of crime. Although the teachers were surprised the students showed up, they were also frustrated when they didn't. Attendance problems, tardies, transient populations, and students who had given up all added to the obstacles the teachers felt in teaching urban students.

Mrs. Waters considered her students "the good ones" because she wanted to believe they were different than the general population of the school. "I even went so far as to try to believe that the gangs my students were in were just groups of friends. I didn't want to think they could be involved in the pointless violence reported regularly in connection with gangs."

There appeared to be no intermediate ground when reporting about encounters with students. Combined with the affectionate recollections were many reports of "aggressive kids" and "disruptive kids" and the disciplining of the students was seen as one of the major contributors to the stress the teachers felt. Obnoxious and mean were words chosen by some when asked to describe the students. The respondents expressed all of the following: "most of the kids were so mean, you had to be on them constantly"; "students didn't have proper learning behaviors; they didn't pay attention or listen"; "it was hard to put limits on the kids; and, "discipline was a big problem". Mrs. Grey told a story about discipline in her classsroom:

> I would have ideas for playing games in my classroom or fun activities that I had learned in my classes and they would just turn out of control. The kids would literally be running and screaming around the room. There was this one game where the kids were suppose to move from seat to seat and they ended up pushing each other around and trying to hurt each other. They would get so competitive and yell at their teammates and I would go home exhausted and crying and feeling like a miserable failure.

Mrs. Grey felt that it was a combination of her lack of experience and the unruliness of the students that caused such mayhem. She realized that the students "just weren't use to teachers trying to do new things with them" and thought that she would be able to work through it if given another chance. Mrs. Brown rationalized the students' behavior by explaining that "the kids are

disrespectful because they are at a loss. They're looking for anybody to have some kind of reaction". Mrs. Rivers blamed a silent hallway policy at her school that caused students to "get into your classroom and explode" because "students could not talk in the halls or the lunchroom. It was not allowed. We wonder why they were so violent and vocal when given the chance? The school was run like a military zone. They were getting screamed at non-stop", and Mrs. Bell thought that "they just don't realize they're saying the 'F' word because it is part of their vocabulary". Even though some tried to explain it, many of the respondents admitted that they associated bad behavior with inner-city students.

Mr. Bond and Mr. Spring were the exceptions. Mr. Bond explained that "I had some disciplinary challenges but I met those and students knew my expectations. Mine wouldn't be another of the many blow-off classes, so to speak. The students respected that and were too busy working to be much of a problem." Mr. Spring credits much of his disciplinary success to working with another teacher:

> She was unbelievably organized and the type of teacher who disciplined in such a way that you didn't even notice it. She felt so much sincere compassion for kids that they would never do anything to hurt her feelings. She never yelled but she would say that it hurt her very much if they misbehaved and it was sincere. She went to mass every morning, lived at home with her father, lived to teach. There was never any trouble because I was in her classroom, so my easy-going manner made them comfortable but there was always that power floating over and around us. Plus, I never made a pretense. I never

> tried to pretend that I was as streetwise as they were. I made it clear that I was just a goofy White guy who liked them and who liked to teach. That was enough for them.

Mr. Spring qualified his story by explaining "I realize now that I am a horrible disciplinarian. The fortunate thing is that I'm such a good teacher that it doesn't come up very often." In a variety of ways the students caused stress for these teachers. For some, it was because they felt frustrated at their meager impact, for others the students would simply not sit still and listen. Some were overwhelmed by the futility of their mission and still others never entangled themselves fully because they sensed it would take over their lives. The students had an impact on all of the teachers; for some the memories will warm their hearts, while others feared and misunderstood the students they tried to teach. The complicated relationships these teachers built with their students influenced the pressures they felt and had a significant impact on the experiences that were recounted.

Classroom Performance

The lack of time for academics and the low level of students' academic performance was a regular contributor to the frustrations that many of these teachers discussed. There were numerous observations that students were far below grade level. Some saw this as the product of a system that has passed on students "just to be rid of them". Such was the case for Mr. White who

recalled a "guy who was on paper in high school and he literally did not know the alphabet past the letter G. He didn't have any cognitive deficits. He was a big, threatening kid, and the teachers had passed him along even though he rarely showed up to school". Others admitted that they gave up trying too hard because of the resistance that education met in their classroom: "I gave up and did worksheets or whatever. I just had to survive"; "sometimes being liked and getting along was more important than teaching"; "we tried to get some work done but mostly worked on their social behavior"; "if they did it fine, if they didn't fine" (referring to the students' homework). Mrs. Grey seemed particularly confounded by her first year when she taught in a combined fourth and fifth grade classroom:

> I guess I was suppose to keep two separate classrooms running. Luckily, it didn't matter because they all needed special help except a few. I had fourth graders who did better than the fifth graders and they were all at such varying levels that I just taught them as one big class. I didn't have an aide or anything so I didn't really have a choice. They were all so mixed up as far as levels anyways and it was not like I got much time to teach with how chaotic it was.

While some gave up on academic goals, others adjusted more readily and understood that the academics could be addressed once the students learned that the teacher cared about them and wanted the best for them. Mr. Brooks adapted his expectations to meet the circumstances of the alternative school where he taught:

> Success was measured in small quantities and less dramatic goals. Some days it was simply getting them to come to school. It might be getting them to learn to read or reading a book or seeing the value in an education. In very rare cases, I mean like once in a blue moon, you'd get a kid to go to a two-year college. That was like finding the philosopher's stone; that didn't happen too often. The goals were often limited to developing some survival skills. A lot of what we did was teaching them to survive in society, fill out forms, get a driver's license, get citizenship, court papers, family stuff, pay a bill.

Sometimes it wasn't the goals that needed adjusted but the misplacement of students that made academics difficult. Mrs Lake realized that many of her students should have been in special education but simply adjusted her curriculum within the classroom. Mrs. River reported similar difficulties:

> I had been telling them [administration] all year that this kid shouldn't be in my classroom. They finally had him tested and he was LD and ADHD and had all kinds of learning problems. Then I had another girl who was a crack baby and she was ADHD and she would just throw fits in the middle of the classroom. I mean like screaming fits. Then I had a girl who would always be crying because her belly hurt. The academics were often lost because my students' needs were too demanding and when they were misplaced there was no way I could attend to all of them.

The respondents conveyed a range of responses to students' academic motivation. Mrs. Glass commented that "you need kids who know how to cooperate to make creative activities work" and Mrs. Brown said "I handed out papers on the first day, and the kids couldn't even read it to fill it in. I had to make some major adjustments". Mrs. Bell noted that "the emotional stuff took up

so much time that we rarely got to academics"; others indicated that personal matters were more important than school work. Mr. White maintained a very non-confrontational attitude regarding academics; "I would tell students right up-front that I wouldn't hold their grades against them. They might be failing but I would still treat them well and smile and wouldn't yell at them. I wasn't going to be jumping all over them to get their homework turned in and pull their grades up. I tried to put the responsibility on them, where it belongs." Other teachers were baffled that students would talk non-stop even if instruction were being delivered and words like 'chaotic', 'hectic' and 'loud' were used to describe teachers' lessons. While Mrs. Lake mentioned a "wide array of levels", many of the respondents talked about the educational deficits that students brought with them to the classroom and how that made it much harder to teach.

Administration

While Mr. Bond reported that he received strong support from administration, and Mr. Brooks dismissed the administration as "screwy" and "a different breed", the rest of the respondents saw administration as a problem. Administrators were seen as incompetent and even malevolent in certain situations. Administrators were faulted for a wide range of school problems from discipline to disorganization.

Mrs. Brown affixed blame for her departure from the urban district on an inability to work with the administration. During her third year a new principal took over and proceeded to "shake things up." She tried to question approaches that had not worked and was told "that's how we've always done it so just shut-up and keep doing it" by administrators. Mr. Spring felt that he was not hired by the city school where he wanted to teach because:

> The foreign-language world is small and I think the message had gotten out that I was not someone they wanted to have in the classroom. My reputation, to be blunt, was that I was a real popular teacher in the school. Kids loved me and that's not a good way to be popular in some places with other teachers and administration. Some administrators don't understand that you can be amicable with the students and not have an inappropriate relationship.

Mrs. Bell had to stage a walkout in order to get the support she needed from her administration. "My counselor had quit in December and it was February and he hadn't been replaced. Most of my kids coming in were bilingual and I don't speak Spanish. The supplies I ordered in August still hadn't arrived. There were a lot of things that just weren't in place." While she was out the administration attempted to cover her classes and the results had been disastrous. A huge fight had broken out, a first in her classroom. and administration quickly appeased her by hiring an aide and ordering her supplies. She returned to better conditions after five days but felt it was "preposterous that I had to strong-arm them into doing what it took to meet the needs of the students." The

adminstration was also responsible for Mr. Brooks leaving mid-year. He did not want to because he knew that it would be difficult for his students to adjust. "I wanted to stay through the semester but they were sending me to a training program that started in April and I had to leave the classroom. I didn't want to do it that way. I felt really bad, but the administration didn't take the kids into account." He agreed to go because it was his only chance to join the attorney general's office and move to a less stressful position.

The discipline problems with the students often developed into problems with administration. Mrs. Rivers believed that the administration was lax about discipline because they excused the kids based on their poor home lives. Administration was often not seen as being supportive of teachers in the classroom, and thus administrators were characterized as not respecting the professional judgments of the teachers. Mr. Brooks realized how complicated discipline issues were and remarked that he "would not have wanted to be involved in the discipline of students because it is fraught with power and violence". He believed that "the disciplinary function of the educator has been truncated and transferred to the police for anything beyond very minor offenses." Others were less empathetic toward administration. Mrs. Waters called her principals “a joke” and said “we got the rejects from other campuses, you know, the ones who couldn’t hack it elsewhere, because we were the poorest community.” Mrs. Glass thought it was “a little funny and a little sad that my

administrators wouldn't have recognized me walking down the hall." Mrs. Grey reported that her admistrators were "useless" and never around, while Mrs. Lake bemoaned "you could never get a straight answer from an administrator" and the false promises they made.

Many of the comments regarding administrators portrayed administrators as negative but harmless. Some said "administrators were just out for themselves" and "they didn't understand the give and take of the classroom." Some even expressed dismay that "we were getting troubles from everywhere else; you really needed administration to be on your side and back you up." Two of the portrayals of administration showed them as out to get teachers. Both of these accounts dealt with administrators who were not pleased with contrary ideas being presented and used their power to keep the teachers quiet. In one case the administrator did a random evaluation of the teacher and in the other case the administrator threatened to fire a teacher who questioned why they kept using procedures that did not work for the students. Mrs. Waters described the faculty at her school as "decidedly anti-administration" and others thought that certain teachers were treated better than others by administration. Moreover, the administration was seen as supportive by some, uninvolved by others, inconsistent in some situations, and even potentially harmful. The only time teachers seemed united with administration appeared to be when dealing with angry parents.

Parents

The parents were a significant source of stress for respondents and were described as uninvolved, uncaring, and were considered oppositional in the teachers' attempts to educate. None of the teachers felt that the parents were involved at the urban schools to any significant degree. Mr. Bond thought that his school, which was located next to the public library and a museum, attracted more parents than other urban schools but still didn't feel that the parents were directly involved in their children's education. Many respondents felt that attempts to contact parents were thwarted by disconnected phones, unanswered notes home, and absent parents. Meanwhile, Mrs. Waters placed some of the blame on teachers, saying that a program at her school, designed to involve parents, was discontinued "because none of the teachers really made any sincere efforts to track them down," and Mrs. Brown was not comfortable with the manner in which her fellow teachers would try to tell parents what to do:

> We'd have team meetings and the parents would come in when it was arranged and some of the teachers would try to tell them 'you've got to do this and that' and I was never comfortable with it. I would not get overly involved in that respect and I had teammates who would. They'd tell people how to raise their kids, but I didn't feel that was my place. Actually, we had one parent who spoke Spanish as the home language and we could see her daughter was struggling. In the conference we asked the parents to speak more English at home. 'No, absolutely not, we want our daughter to keep her heritage or culture or whatever' was their response. Yeah, but she's here. I had other people step up and

go real nuts over that but, again, that's not a line I'm going to cross.

Other teachers felt that the fact that "there are no parents out there with enough knowledge to make a complaint" kept the schools from meeting the needs of the students. Mrs. Lake described a contradictory situation in which the school wanted parents to come in and volunteer but did not want the school to be disrupted. Tensions rose because administration "didn't want them [parents] always busting into classrooms in the middle of the day. They had to have a pretty good reason, not just 'oh, she forgot her lotion' or 'she forgot a barrette for her hair'". She described parents who would be screaming "you can't keep me from my kids" but administration felt they could if it were for their own safety and to produce continuity in the learning environment.

Conferences were repeatedly described as "no-show zones" for parents, and Mrs. Glass thought that many of the veteran teachers no longer bothered staying either. Mr. Bond attributed the lack of involvement to less emphasis on education, conflicting schedules, and lack of transportation. Mrs. Brown thought that many of the parents were too young to know how to handle their children, while others thought that the parents were intimidated by teachers because of their own lack of education. The most positive characterizations of parents showed them as poor and overwhelmed with life in general. Mrs. Green believed that the parents would verbally support the teachers and say "education is

important" but that "they sent mixed messages by not getting kids to school on time, taking kids' side in a disagreement, or other counter-intuitive ways."

While some justifications were offered for the parents' lack of involvement, many of the reflections portrayed the parents as uncaring or worse. Mrs. Green commented "you have to wonder just how much they care. I know it's hard but this is your kid and they are suppose to require some work." Others voiced concerns about whether the parents cared enough given their lack of contact. The parents were branded "drug addicts," "alcoholics," "criminals," "prisoners," and "predators" and blamed for everything from moving around too much during the school year to abuse and neglect. They were seen as not understanding the importance of school and blamed for students' regular tardies and absences as well as the misbehavior of their children. Mrs. Grey told a story about a student who kicked a scared dog on the playground and compared it to how the parents treated their child. One teacher remembered:

> There was one instance when a parent came to pick up their kid after school and she had done something like not turn in her homework or something and the parent took her by the arm and starting to beat her right in front of everyone in the office. The principal snatched her up and ran down to her office and held her. The security guard grabbed the mother. The principal said the little girl was just shaking. She said she had never felt a child shake like that. She was shaking so hard and they called the cops and they came up and said 'oh yeah, we'll turn this over to special services' and they let the kid go home with her. How could they let her go home? She was going to get into even bigger trouble because we protected her.

Mrs. Lake thought that "all my work is undone when I send them home each night" and called it "sending them back to the dark side." Although the view of parents as the enemy was widespread, and added to the pressures for many of the respondents, the high school teachers seemed less concerned about parents than the elementary school teachers. Mr. Brooks never really expected interaction with the parents because many of his students were adults. Mrs. Waters explained that parents were more involved in the earlier years and was happy not to have much involvement. Mr. Bond thought that he could have gotten in touch with parents if necessary but preferred to deal directly with the students; "by high school it is time for them [students] to take responsibility for themselves."

Climate

The general atmosphere at some of the urban schools was depressing and dismal. Test scores were often noted as a factor in the emotional climate; because they were so low the teachers often felt pressured to raise them without feeling like they received support in their efforts. Race was a catalyst for Mrs. Green's feeling of being an outsider but was not mentioned directly by any of the other respondents. She felt she was "literally ignored" and could not penetrate the "closed society" of the school. The atmospheres in some of the high schools were marred by metal detectors and "a prison-like atmosphere". Mrs. Glass

described the climate at her school as "pretty awful". She explained that "You go through metal detectors to get in and there weren't any windows or natural light. The halls were crazy. Passing time was so loud and crowded. It was this throng of motion in dark tunnels". Additionally, the atmosphere at several places was marred by emotional hopelessness, with feelings like "the kids were too far gone to really help anyway" and "we just keep perpetuating the same problems and no one seems to care or do anything about it."

In contrast, Mrs. Glass described her school as "run down but nice looking" with a fairly warm climate. She described a lively school decorated with posters and student work. Mrs. Waters said that her school looked like a community college campus. "It was pink stucco and brick exterior with carpeted rooms and halls: very big and impressive" and Mr. Brooks asserted that his school took up the top floor of a high-rise building in a very desireable area. "It got me in a premo location. It was where all the artists were. The kids had to travel in by subway to this area. It was mostly commercial but there were lots of artist studios and famous people around like movie stars and J.F.K. had his loft down there."

While some of the respondents described their classrooms as warm, inviting places and tried to "bring a positive outlook and be a good role model," many felt like they were unable to do a good job. This exacerbated the stress for half of the teachers, making them feel like they failed. "I came into this

profession with such ideals but whenever I tried to experiment, it blew up in my face and was so frustrating" was how Mr. White felt about his first year. Mrs. Glass said, "I was so vulnerable and really felt like I was failing as a teacher." Others mentioned feeling like their efforts or careful planning were wasted and that they were not prepared to teach under the pressures or conditions of the inner city. Frustration was not as evident for three of the teachers who had started their teaching later in life. Mrs. Brown, who had been an engineer after her bachelor's degree, realized that "If I would have gone straight into teaching, those kids would have eaten me alive" but felt that teaching was her calling and that she had managed to make a positive impact in her school. She felt that "most teachers were there for the kids and supportive of the environment we were trying to create and supportive of myself as a team member." Mrs. Green understood that her prior experience as a social worker in the system helped her to "cope with the daily hassles." She didn't claim to flourish but did say she was "managing better than many around me." Mr. Brooks, who started teaching so that he would have time to work on a doctoral degree, relied heavily on his education in psychology when talking to students and thought he could get through to some of them because he "left my middle-class expectations at the door," which he learned to do while working at a camp with disadvantaged youths.

Co-workers

The anecdotes and descriptions pertaining to co-workers were extremely varied. Some were viewed as supportive friends while others were "terrible gossips and back-stabbers who engaged in daily student bashing in the lounge." Mrs. Waters described her co-workers as a high point in her time at the urban school but also told of a teacher who would fall asleep in class and one who let students "ride her like a pony around the classroom" at the high school level. She told of wonderful seminars with teachers who worked together and a teacher who never got up from behind her desk and "handed out mindless worksheets day after day." She said, "I loved the union and believe strongly in them but I saw how they can protect the weak and unskilled teachers who shouldn't be in the classroom." Mrs. Brown believed that "Some of the teachers were just riding their time out until retirement" but "the majority of the teachers were supportive and there for the kids." Many reported that they saw "lots of burnout among teachers" but felt "there are good teachers there that get a bad rap" in the inner city. Some chronicled "a definite us-them mentality" regarding the students. While Mr. Spring thought "you know the stakes are higher and that makes teachers strive to compensate," only Mr. Brooks felt he worked with truly dedicated teachers and even he contrasted them with the typical teachers:

> Public education is filled with people who take a civil-servant mentality. Which is to say they punch a clock and they resent

> what the system doesn't give them and they do the minimum and then they walk out the door.

While some of the respondents grew close with colleagues, others did not feel they got to know their colleagues because of their limited stay in the urban school. Mr. Brooks was quite sentimental regarding those he worked with:

> The people I taught with were wonderful. They were an interesting assortment too. Some were seasoned educators who were like the lunatic fringe. They were like people who swim with sharks for fun. It wasn't easy to find them but they managed to recruit idealists, especially among artists. There were those who learned to survive but they were highly unusual. They were Earth mothers and Earth fathers of the education world. The people who just had an unending supply of good will and energy. It renewed my faith in human nature.

Mrs. Bell also spoke fondly of the teachers she worked with and the friendships that were formed, and Mrs. Lake talked about a close friend who she continues to keep in contact with and who keeps her updated because she still works at the urban school. Three of the respondents noted that the regular turnover of new teachers made it difficult because they weren't really expected to be there for long. This was greatly contrasted with the suburban schools where they felt welcomed and the teachers worked together right from the start.

Resources

Another consideration that resulted in very mixed interpretations were the available resources in the urban schools. Many of the respondents noted that the physical facilities were deteriorating, with leaking roofs, maintenance problems, holes in the walls, and flooding. There were mixed results concerning supplies; equal numbers reported "miserable" supplies and "excellent" supplies. Mrs. Waters reported:

> The resources were exceptional because of federal desegregation monies. They had magnet schools within our school with fancy equipment for aerospace and a full courtroom for the law magnet. There were video monitors in every classroom, digital cameras before they were common, computers for school and for the teachers to take home. Every room was linked to the web and you could project the computer screen up onto this display for the whole class to see. Plus, they had a technology guru who ran workshops so that we could understand how to use it in our classrooms.

In the same district one teacher reported "textbooks and materials were in great shape and fairly new" while another told of "terrible books and no computers to speak of" and still another related how "everyone had to carry around their own bottle of ditto fluid and take it to the machine with them and when you ran out it was almost impossible to get it replaced". An additional consideration was the limited space. Many of the schools were described as overcrowded, and

teachers reported ridiculous class sizes, shared classrooms, and a lack of room for libraries or computer labs.

One of the factors that was influenced by the available resources and corresponded to the pressures teachers felt was the constant fast pace. Mrs. Brown summed it up by saying "it was just go, go, go, go, go". Others mentioned a lack of help, feeling like they were on their own, and having no down time. Mr. White stated "there just really weren't any breaks. If we were lucky enough to have a special, then there was always a room that needed a substitute for an hour". Similarly, Mr. Bond thought that the low point of working in the urban district was "the extra work placed on the teachers to take care of so many things other than teaching. The whole time you were just 'on' constantly." At the alternative school, Mrs. Lake was expected to proctor exams in other classrooms whenever she had a non-teaching period. Being tired or feeling rushed added to the stress of their situations for many of the respondents.

Leaving the Urban District

When the respondents were asked about leaving their urban school positions, the reactions were extremely complex and the cognitive process that went into the decision was different for each individual. Even those who never wanted to teach in the urban district in the first place expressed some remorse regarding abandoning their students. Many compared the encounters in their

new positions with the urban districts, and all of the respondents, even the one who was laid off, believed that the move they made was a good choice for them.

Teachers' regrets involved leaving the students. Mrs. Green stated, "I had a sense of obligation to the kids that I worked with;" Mrs. Lake also expressed "the kids seemed so much like they needed me and all but the whole situation was just too hard; it was so mixed, so hard." Mr. Bond said, "My heart didn't want to leave. I knew I would be missed because I was a key component for those kids." Even Mrs. Waters who "couldn't wait to get out" and Mrs. Glass who stated "I am so lucky that I got out" felt bad that they had not made more of a difference for the students. Two of the respondents who left mid-semester talked extensively about the emotional good-byes they had with their students, with both students and teachers crying and hugging.

Despite their regrets about leaving the students, there was plenty of excitement expressed regarding their new positons by all but two of the respondents. Mr. Bond seemed quite ambivalent about his suburban school experience and there was a definite sadness in his tone about leaving the urban district that was missing in the other interviews. He stated that "it was not an easy decision to leave. I was in a comfortable place, teaching a subject that I liked but I needed to get experience in a suburban school for my own development." The only positive that he noted in comparing his new position with his old was that there are less discipline hassles where he is now. Mrs.

Brown found the rural school she moved to "boring" and found herself thinking "couldn't someone call me a bitch or something to spice things up?" She felt that her talents were wasted because "anyone can teach there; that's not true in the inner city." While these two left for diverse reasons, they both indicated that it was partially to check out a new situation and indicated that they might be willing to return to the inner city.

The other respondents were quite passionate about their changes in position. Mrs. Green stated "I felt like I died and went to teacher heaven." Others call it "a refreshing change" and "a relief" and claimed "this is where I wanted to teach my whole life." For four of the respondents, the researcher noted their enthusiasm and hushed, excited tones when they talked about "landing their positions;" it was in direct contrast to their responses to getting the urban school positions. Mrs. Lake's reaction to the call from the suburban school was, "Oh, thank God! Thank you so much for thinking of me!" Mrs. Grey recounted how she jumped around the house and "practically did somersaults" when she got the call. Mrs. Rivers stated, "When they called, I was here! This is where I've patiently been waiting to teach."

While the urban districts were easy places to get positions, the suburban schools were very difficult. Many of the respondents had to rely on connections or make concessions to get their positions. Mrs. Rivers noted that "they hadn't hired in years" when she was finally called. The suburban districts were seen as

being very competitive and demanding of candidates. Mrs. Lake had to be willing to leave her position in the urban school and substitute for a full year, at a "substantial loss in pay" in order to guarantee a position for the following fall. Mrs. Bell felt "lucky" to get hired and remarked "it was weird because at the urban school there were so many of us who were hired together and I was the only new teacher in my whole school the year that I moved." Even Mr. Brooks, who left the classroom to join the Attorney General's office, noted that "It was a positive change. I got to see the entire school system from such an interesting perspective."

Many of the respondents contrasted their new positions with their previous ones. Mrs. Brown's story of lunch duty was an example of this:

> In the urban school for lunch duty you had two or three waves and they had free lunches and they would always have kids beating up on each other and taking their tickets or they'd be handing them off or trading them or whatever. Your job was to try to keep everything under control. It was very chaotic. My second day in the rural school I had lunch duty. I round the corner to the cafeteria and they have round tables and there are all the kids sitting at the tables. No one is running around or anything. People in line would just come out quietly and sit down at the table. It was so strange. I'm watching and I'm not sure what I'm suppose to be doing. A bunch of kids started raising their hands as they were finishing and a little kid comes over and tells me that they are waiting to be excused. I'm like, what?! So I start nodding at tables and they get up with their trays and their tables are all clean. The principal came running around the corner apologizing profusely for leaving me alone with lunch duty. I looked at him and said, "You call this duty? Where I come from they would call this a reward!"

She also noted that it was nice to be in a smaller school because you could get to know the students. Others recalled amazement at the parental support differences, the positive feedback and respect from administration, and the teamwork of the staff. Mrs. Rivers explained, "I have a better appreciation for where I am when I think back to where I was." Two of the respondents specifically called the transition "culture shock" and one said, "It was like going to another world because I went from the poorest to the richest community." The students were generally viewed as easier to teach in the suburban schools and the community was seen as more supportive.

Pay scale and Benefits

The number one reason for teacher turnover, according to much of the research, is related to pay scale and benefits (Certo & Fox, 2002; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Gritz & Theobald, 1996). Yet, none of the respondents mentioned pay as a motivating factor in their decision to leave the urban districts. Mr. Bond was adament that the increase in pay was minimal and had no impact on his leaving the urban district. Mrs. Brown said, "I took a fifty percent pay cut to go into teaching so losing money wasn't a top priority" in response to advice from a fellow teacher that she get out before the money makes it too hard for her to leave the urban district. Mr. White, Mrs. Green, and Mrs. Rivers all took pay cuts when they left their urban positions, and Mrs. Lake was willing to take a

substantial pay cut to get out but didn't end up needing to because her substituting position turned into a permanent position which paid equal to her urban position. Mr. Spring was the only one who mentioned pay as a motivating factor for staying at his current job. He took a position out-of-state that paid much more than he would have been paid in the urban district. He stated, "The increase in money makes it a career now" when originally he had thought of teaching as an altruistic way to give back to his community. Even when teachers were asked what might have kept them in the urban district, none of them mentioned increased pay.

Discussion of Meaning

Significance

The findings reported here are significant in that they give us a chance to listen to and interpret the accounts of those who left the inner city. Unlike the previous research, the voices of those who left can be heard, and their complex experiences can be analyzed to explore reasons why teacher turnover is excessive in urban districts that serve disadvantaged communities. This is significant for a variety of reasons. One reason is that it can inform those who work at the university level concerning areas that should be addressed when preparing students to serve in urban schools. This task should be the burden of the whole department because it is clear that many students who do not plan to

teach in urban communities arrange to when jobs are not available elsewhere. Another reason these findings are significant is that they can be used by urban school districts to address issues relating to teacher turnover. Each of the themes found to add to the stress of beginning teachers could be topics for in-servicing and workshops for both beginning and veteran teachers. More needs to be done to empower our urban teachers and to lower their frustrations and pressures. An additional reason that these findings are significant pertains to the ongoing efforts made to improve conditions at inner-city schools. Reform movements cannot succeed if the conditions are not improved so that urban schools can retain teachers who can subsequently be educated about the needs of their students. In sum, our societal views of disadvantaged youth lead to low expectations, and little value being placed on the lives of the poor. The teachers who go into these schools without a vigilant attitude of reform become marginalized and, in turn, manage to further marginalize the youths with whom they come in contact.

Negative and Positive Findings

The negative aspects in these teachers' accounts far outweighed the positives. The few stories or comments that were positive were often used as a way of making negative points. For example, Mrs. Bell talked about the comradery of the teachers in her school to show the damage that was done

when massive budget cuts forced layoffs and many of the teachers took positions elsewhere before they could be called back. Mr. Brooks talked about the bond that formed with his colleagues because "you literally had to rely on these people for your own safety many days." Mrs. Lake's story about an administrator who "really cared" involved the administrator protecting a child from her own mother's beating and calling the police just to have to send the child home "where I know the poor girl paid for ever trying to get help." The negative tone of these findings is not a bias on the part of the researcher. Every effort was made to discover positive findings, but no themes emerged that could be solidly supported, with the possible exception of their caring about students. This is not to say that all the respondents had negative views of the urban schools in which they taught. There were a wide range of views and for each of the themes the intensity of the stress created varied significantly. None of the themes produced stress for all of the respondents. As mentioned earlier, Mrs. Brown and Mr. Bond both seemed to have positive experiences and to consider the urban schools a place where they might return, but even these two reported more negative than positive features. This could simply be reflective of the beginning experiences of teachers. Many new teachers, regardless of their location, have difficulty adjusting to the demands and pressures of the position. Yet the themes were often directly contrasted with the respondents' suburban encounters. Whether reflective of the urban school experience or beginning teacher experience, the negativity does not reflect directly upon the respondents.

The respondents were all compassionate, caring teachers who were victims of a system that did not permit them to flourish in the urban schools.

Weaknesses in the Data

There were factors influencing the data that were not controlled during this research. Of particular interest to the researcher was that Mr. Bond's and Mr. Spring's responses were often inconsistent with the other respondents. Both of these respondents reported attending school in urban districts. If more respondents would have been available, it would have been beneficial to have interviewed more minorities to see if Mr. Bond's responses could be related to his Hispanic background. Many of his responses might have been the result of his education in the urban district or the result of his "fitting in" at the school because of his familiarity with the students. Mr. Spring's responses tended to be based more on his background as a parent in the urban district than on his brief substituting position. This brought an interesting perspective to his stories and views, but the researcher thought his answers were often influenced by his feelings that he must defend his decision to send his children to the inner-city schools. In his desire to deny that the city schools were violent he went so far as to blame a counselor who was recently murdered by a student as a way of dismissing this incident:

Unfortunately, there was that incident last year where a counselor was

> killed in an alternative school. It was an alternative school, which to me says the child was properly identified as having issues, and secondly, the eyewitnesses said that the teacher did feign a punch at the kid. Now, judging his reputation, he wasn't really going to fight the kid or hit the kid. He was being playful but anyone whose in education knows that is just idiotic. He was a pastor, he worked in outreach but he made a big mistake and I think to paint the city schools with a brush of being a violent place is ridiculous.

The inability to resolve some of the contradictions in the data stems from the complexity of the narratives that were related to the researcher. Although these contradictions could be seen as weaknesses in the data, the researcher reported them to provide authenticity to the voices of the teachers and to demonstrate the complicated mix of thoughts and feelings that many of the respondents shared. The contradictions had to be thoroughly explored to understand the full range of teachers' perceptions.

Chapter Summary

The findings, communicated in this chapter, provide insight into the reasons why teachers leave, at staggering rates, urban districts serving underprivileged populations. The findings yield an in-depth understanding of how teachers who leave interpret their leaving and what leaving the inner city means to those who do it. Stress for these teachers was intensified by the threat of violence, undisciplined and low-performing students, uninvolved parents, unsupportive administration, gloomy school climates, mixed feelings toward

colleagues, and a lack of resources. This stress, coupled with the fact that most of the respondents had no burning desire to teach in the inner city, led these teachers to leave their positions within five years. In the following chapter these factors are discussed in relation to the literature, and a model is advanced for inservicing teachers to be responsive and informed when dealing with students from other cultural backgrounds.

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Particularly lacking in educational research have been qualitative studies which investigated teacher turnover in urban districts. In other words, we haven't examined what happens that makes new teachers leave these schools at a much faster rate than suburban schools. We know the surface story- going to another school district, moving, not fitting in- but we have not analyzed the stories told to truly listen to the voices of those who left and explored their interpretations of their experiences.

In part, this was meant to be a descriptive study, intended to document the stories told by teachers who left urban districts and their reasons for leaving; it was also intended to analyze the stories told for continuation of social reproduction. How the teachers authored themselves and described the inner city was seen as advancing the notion that the inner-city students are deficient, violent, and deserve little support. The families and students were blamed for the conditions at their schools rather than our unequal social system. The researcher's intent was to integrate a qualitative investigation with theory development. The underlying reasons these teachers left needed to be addressed.

This dissertation explored the interpretations of twelve teachers who taught in urban schools and then left their positions. The ordeals and narratives

of these teachers have been captured and grounded theory methodology has been used to extrapolate themes and analyze the materials. This final chapter begins with the researcher relating the findings presented in chapter four with the available literature and interpreting each of the themes that were observed from analysis of the data. Next, a formal model is presented and the broader implications of the findings are discussed in terms of their theoretical and practical impact. Recommendations are made for further research as well as for implementing policies as a result of these findings.

Interpretation of the Results

Getting the Positions

The interviews indicated that eleven of the twelve respondents expressed no desire to work in urban schools; the researcher was both amazed and dismayed at this information. They took the positions either as a last resort or because they were easy to secure. From the mid-1980s until the present, there have been constant discussions about a shortage of teachers in North America's schools, and yet these have never really surfaced except in urban areas and extremely rural areas. Teachers are recruited into education programs with a false sense of optimism about getting positions upon graduation often to learn that the districts where they want to teach require them to have experience prior to hiring. Thus it happens that every year unprepared and unmotivated teachers

are hired to teach in urban districts; most have good intentions but lack the training or the attitude to create student-centered learning environments for culturally diverse students. "Expanding the workforce means hiring more inexperienced and less productive individuals. Pressure also exists to retain marginal teachers and to relax certification requirements to meet the higher demand. Both of these tendencies lower workforce quality" (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987, p. xix) and yet these practices have been used for years in urban districts to fill positions due to the paucity of applicants. While Grissmer and Kirby (1987) claim that "local attrition that leads to teaching in another school or district is less disturbing than attrition to other occupations" (p. 7), this research contends that the damage done in inner-city schools by the revolving door of teachers makes this local attrition more disturbing than any other kind. The students who need the most help, the most consistency, and the most experienced teachers to provide them a quality education are in the schools that are used as proving grounds for beginning teachers.

According to Gordon (1999), "Creating human intellectual capital through a system for selecting and developing great teachers is the most important requirement for creating great schools for the 21st century" (p. 307), and yet urban schools often must rely on universities to prepare their students because they cannot be as selective in their hiring practices. Most universities spend little time specifically preparing students to work with urban populations. While suburban districts get many applicants for positions and can benefit from the

training of their applicant pool garnered from inner-city schools, the inner-city schools have fewer applicants. This is further complicated by uncertain budgets. The one teacher who really wanted to teach in the urban district was contacted two days after school started, when he had already taken a suburban position. Three of the teachers left urban districts because of budget constraints and the insecurity caused by pending budget problems.

In addition, many suburban districts are known to advertise and hire much earlier than their competing urban districts, making it easier for them to select the top candidates from the pool of available teachers before the urban districts get the budgetary approval to hire. More efforts need to be made in urban schools to recruit and retain quality teachers with a social conscience, and more effort needs to be made at the university level to prepare future teachers to work with underprivileged students in urban conditions. Gordon (1999) noted that "many school districts take a very unsystematic, unfocused, and unorganized approach to what is the defining activity of a school district: identifying those who should be invited to join the district as teachers" (p. 304). This situation was definitely supported by the respondents in this study. Until this situation is recognized as a problem and hiring quality teachers is prioritized enough that districts find a way around budgetary concerns, only then will inner cities cease to have turnover problems. The unorganized approach leads urban schools to lose their chance to hire the best candidates and causes poor timing in regard to hiring any teachers.

It is unknown whether hiring candidates who indicated more of a desire to teach in urban districts would result in less turnover because "almost none of the existing research on teacher socialization has taken into account patterns of socialization into teaching that are related to the characteristics that segment the occupational group" (Zeichner & Gore, 1990, p. 334). Thus we can only state with certainty that the teachers who were hired and did not express any desire to teach in the inner city left the urban schools in this particular study. What is also known is that "there is a pervasive, fundamental, irreconcilable difference between the motivation of those who select themselves to become teachers and the demands of urban teaching" (Ayers & Ford, 1996, p. 121). In order to succeed in urban schools teachers need to feel a sense of commitment to disadvantaged youth and retain high expectations for their students. The respondents in this study felt varying levels of commitment to their students and schools, but they were too overwhelmed with the stress of the position to continue.

Stress

It is not surprising that the demands of teaching in an urban school were stressful for the respondents. As noted by many of the respondents, urban students have special needs and brought the gamut of urban woes into the classroom. Ayers and Ford (1996) explained:

The problem for teachers is to figure out what and how much to take

> into account when inventing teaching in city schools. There is the danger of not taking enough into account– poverty is significant for kids who are unable to acquire the basic sustenance for a healthy life; race matters in a society that structures rewards and privileges in part on the hierarchies of color and background. Hungry children can't learn; hurt children can't learn; frightened or distraught children can't learn; upset children can't learn. There is a lot that city teachers need to take into account. (p. 212)

To take these factors into account without lowering expectations takes special training and a true understanding of the youths they will teach. Thus it is that teachers need to be better prepared to face the challenges of urban teaching. Stress for the respondents in this study was intensified by the threat of violence, undisciplined and low-performing students, uninvolved parents, unsupportive administration, gloomy school climates, mixed feelings towards colleagues, and a lack of resources. This stress, coupled with the fact that most of the respondents had no burning desire to teach in the inner city, led these teachers to leave their positions within five years. In the following sections the major factors that contributed to respondents' stress are examined and further interpretations are offered.

Violence and the Community

The fear that was voiced by respondents came from their belief that the violence of the inner city was a tangible threat to their safety. This view is supported nightly in our society by the evening news and for the respondents by

the stories told by colleagues and the myths circulated. Many of the stories of violence that respondents recounted were indirect; they had been told of violent happenings by other teachers and students, and yet these were the stories they remembered and continued to tell. Meier (1995) suggested that "life threatening violence is not part of the daily routine in the vast majority of schools and fear of violence has always been a part of the urban education scene" (p. 72). Violence clearly occurs at urban schools and it is intolerable and should be taken seriously, but the widespread fear of violence is partially a result of its exaggeration. It also indicates that this fear has had generations of stories to grow upon and that nothing has been done to lower the expectation of fear that many feel when they enter disadvantaged urban neighborhoods.

The respondents voiced a general distrust of the community in which their schools were located. They told of drug proliferation, 'shady' characters on the street corners, and of run-down buildings. Zeichner and Gore (1990) posited that "members of dominant cultural groups often view the structure of society from a culturally privileged perspective" (p. 156). Accordingly, the respondents who were all from middle-class backgrounds, viewed the poor communities where the students came from as inferior and predatory. In response to drug trafficking in the street, visible to children, Kozol (1991) noted that "you couldn't permit this sort of thing unless you saw these children and their parents as a little less than human" (p. 191). Although the teachers had some structural insights regarding the population, their descriptions showed that the teachers did not

respect the parents. This theme came through very clearly, with the parents being characterized as the enemy. The respondents bemoaned the mistreatment of students by their parents and the lack of involvement even though these led the teachers to feel needed, a feeling that was valued despite its draining effects. The teachers, like their own descriptions of the parents, felt overwhelmed by the complex relationships that developed with their students, and yet they never made substantial efforts to form partnerships with the parents. They did not value the parents enough to find ways to engage them. These disconcerting conceptions showed that the respondents had limited knowledge of social reproduction or chose to ignore the possibility that society played a role in the failure of those living in these communities. They did not envision that there were other possible ways for parents to interact with schools, different than the ways in which their own middle-class parents had interacted, and yet valuable. In many instances the community members were looked down upon as though they were to blame for their circumstances. This lack of compassion could not help but surface in the teachers' interactions with the students, given that "no teacher is truly student-centered who is not at the same time family-centered" (Ayers & Ford, 1996, p. 213).

Students

Although there was some tenderness and concern expressed for the students, there were also many uncomplimentary narratives involving students.

Similar to the parents, students were occasionally blamed for their own situations without regard to other possible factors. Brady (1995) postulated that "teachers must be conscious of their own gendered, classed, and raced subjectivities as they confirm or challenge the lived experiences of their students" (p. 98), yet the respondents were rarely introspective regarding their failure to make positive gains with the students. Race, class, and gender were seldom mentioned by the respondents, and when they were discussed, it was in relation to the students or administration, not their own subjectivities. This could have resulted from the teachers being unaware of their own preconceived notions, or a misconception regarding the importance of their own background.

The inexperience of the teachers and their lack of preparation led them to function without recognizing that "education has been structured for a particular child with a specific background and a stipulated set of experiences or attitudes and when a kid who doesn't fit that description shows up the schools simply malfunction" (Ayers & Ford, 1996, p. 4). Instead, the respondents often thought that the students were the ones malfunctioning. Irvine (1999) proposed that "teachers need to adopt the same spirit of learning that they adopt when they go to Europe, to Argentina, when they learn about the cultures of other children. But if they don't think there's anything to learn, or to appreciate, of course, they don't learn" (p. 31). These teachers had minimal understandings of the conditions of their students' lives and did not value the experiences that the students brought with them to the classroom. The teachers did not have the

training necessary to delve into their students' histories and use their knowledge as beneficial learning tools in the classroom. A more thorough understanding of the school's role in reproduction, coupled with a sense of commitment to minority and disadvantaged youth could have allowed the teachers to be more successful with their students.

An understanding of resistance theories would also have helped the teachers in their attempts to deal with discipline problems. Certo and Fox (2002) found that "teachers are more likely to leave the profession if they believe that student motivation and discipline are problems in their school" (p. 58). It might have been less of a stressor for the respondents if they understood more of the determinants for the discipline problems in their classrooms and realized that urban students often have complex issues regarding authority. Instead of labeling the students as behavior problems, they might have understood the factors involved in the students' lack of decorum in the classroom. "Students who appear to be unable to learn are in many instances choosing to not learn...choosing to maintain their sense of identity in the face of what they perceive as a painful choice between allegiance to 'them' or 'us'" (Ayers & Ford, 1996, p. 205). While some of the respondents expressed an understanding of the difficulty and the importance of earning respect in the urban classroom, none seemed aware of the complications associated with resistance and their need to address those complications. Weiler (1988) pointed out that "official classroom discourse is dominated by the intentions of the teachers" (p. 129) and while

these teachers had good intentions they lacked any true understanding of what it meant to teach in the inner city. Both of these must be in place before reforms can be enacted.

Classroom Performance

The respondents for this dissertation all had concerns regarding the level of instruction in the urban schools. Most were frustrated by students' lack of skills and low test scores. One of the major themes of reform in the United States has been a tension between concerns for "excellence" and diversity and equity; unfortunately, the concern has been low profile. The standards movement imposes a cultural consensus that does not value diversity. Brady (1995) affirmed that the 'common culture' view of multiculturalism defends the dominant culture and supports current power structures in the United States. The reform movement has been driven by economic motivation as the United States competes with other countries in the global marketplace and was not truly intended to equally educate all students. Tozer, Violas, and Senese (2002) argued that "the school reform proposals are intended to do little more than prepare minority children for a series of dead-end, low-paying jobs" (p. 457). One of the reasons that urban students are unprepared for more is referred to as the pedagogy of poverty.

Ayers and Ford (1996) claimed that "the pedagogy of poverty requires that teachers who begin their careers intending to be helpers, models, guides,

stimulators, and caring sources of encouragement transform themselves into directive authoritarians in order to function in urban schools" (p. 121). Many examples of this were found in the responses of the teachers. They were more concerned about and spent more time trying to gain control of their classroom than they did actually teaching. The pedagogy of poverty undermines any reform efforts. Using it means that learners can "succeed" by doing as told without any thoughtful process. These teachers felt that their students were best served by directive, controlling pedagogy after they tried other methods and beheld their failure. "The students accept the pedagogy of poverty to such an extent that any teacher trying to break the mold will be quickly crushed by the students themselves.

Examples abound of inexperienced teachers who seek to involve students in genuine learning activities and are met with apathy or bedlam" (Ayers & Ford, 1996, p. 122). If the beginning teachers in this study had known why their methods were failing, they may have tried harder or learned techniques to improve progress. Instead they let the students gain control of the classrooms to their own detriment. Ayers and Ford (1996) explained that "students reward teachers by complying and punish with resistance; this leads teachers to believe that some activities 'work' in the classroom and others do not... teachers are hostages responding to the possible threat of disruption" (p. 124). So, in giving up their efforts to introduce new methods or creative lesson plans, the teachers reverted to the pedagogy of poverty and continued to reproduce the marginalized

status of their students. Pedagogy is more than teaching; it includes the entire realm of cultural politics (Brady, 1995). If teachers could be retained in urban schools, then inservicing could provide strategies for overcoming the resistance met in the classroom and instruction requiring higher level skills could be implemented.

Administration, Co-workers, and School Climate

The lack of support from administration and colleagues was a theme that was well supported by the literature. Certo and Fox (2002) found that many teachers mention lack of administrative support as a key factor in their decision to leave school districts. This was viewed as particularly undermining for beginning teachers because "leaving the support to which they were accustomed may shatter the goals, diminish the spirits, and destroy the self-confidence of first-year teachers" (Certo & Fox, 2002, p. 59). Most universities and field placement experiences offer preservice teachers multiple chances to work with others, and this might lead to turnover at urban schools when new teachers feel they are not in a similar environment. "Teachers who feel overwhelmed by the system, who feel isolated in their autonomy, and who work in an environment that is dull and lifeless will be bound for other systems, one where employees can feel their work has value" (Angelle, 2002, p. 15). Such was the case with this study's respondents. The lack of support contributed to their decision to look elsewhere for employment. This support needs to come from administration as

well as veteran colleagues. Discerning that they were not valued as professionals by colleagues or administration contributed to the dismal climates that many of these respondents encountered.

Angelle (2002) stated that "a school that is more effective or less effective breeds itself. Principals, mentors, and the naive beginning teachers did not set out to poorly lead, poorly mentor, or poorly teach. The health or illness of the school culture in which the novices found themselves, transferred that health or illness to the members of the community who work there" (p. 27). Thus, when their colleagues appeared to be burnt out, it influenced the climate. When the administration did not value their input, it influenced the climate. When teachers were not backed in their dealings with discipline problems, it influenced the climate. All of these factors conspired together to form negative impressions of the inner-city schools for the respondents. Weiler (1988) noted that "teachers are actors and agents in complex social sites where social forces powerfully shape the limits of what is possible" (p. 148). These respondents felt constrained and destined to fail because of the systems they entered and because of their own lack of preparation.

New teachers need to enter urban schools with knowledge and a sense of mission, and they need to be supported in a new environment that provides them with the knowledge and motivation to flourish. Currently, they enter urban schools to find "the presence of a culture of contempt for city kids, distant from communities and families" (Ayers & Ford, 1996, p. 87), and their lack of

knowledge leads them to perpetuate these conditions. In order for teachers to understand that "teaching in public schools, although more profoundly bounded by institutional constraints, also contains the possibility of transformative work" (Weiler, 1988, p. 52), they must be given the support to feel powerful and create liberating environments for their urban students to learn and develop and for themselves to learn and develop as professionals.

Resources

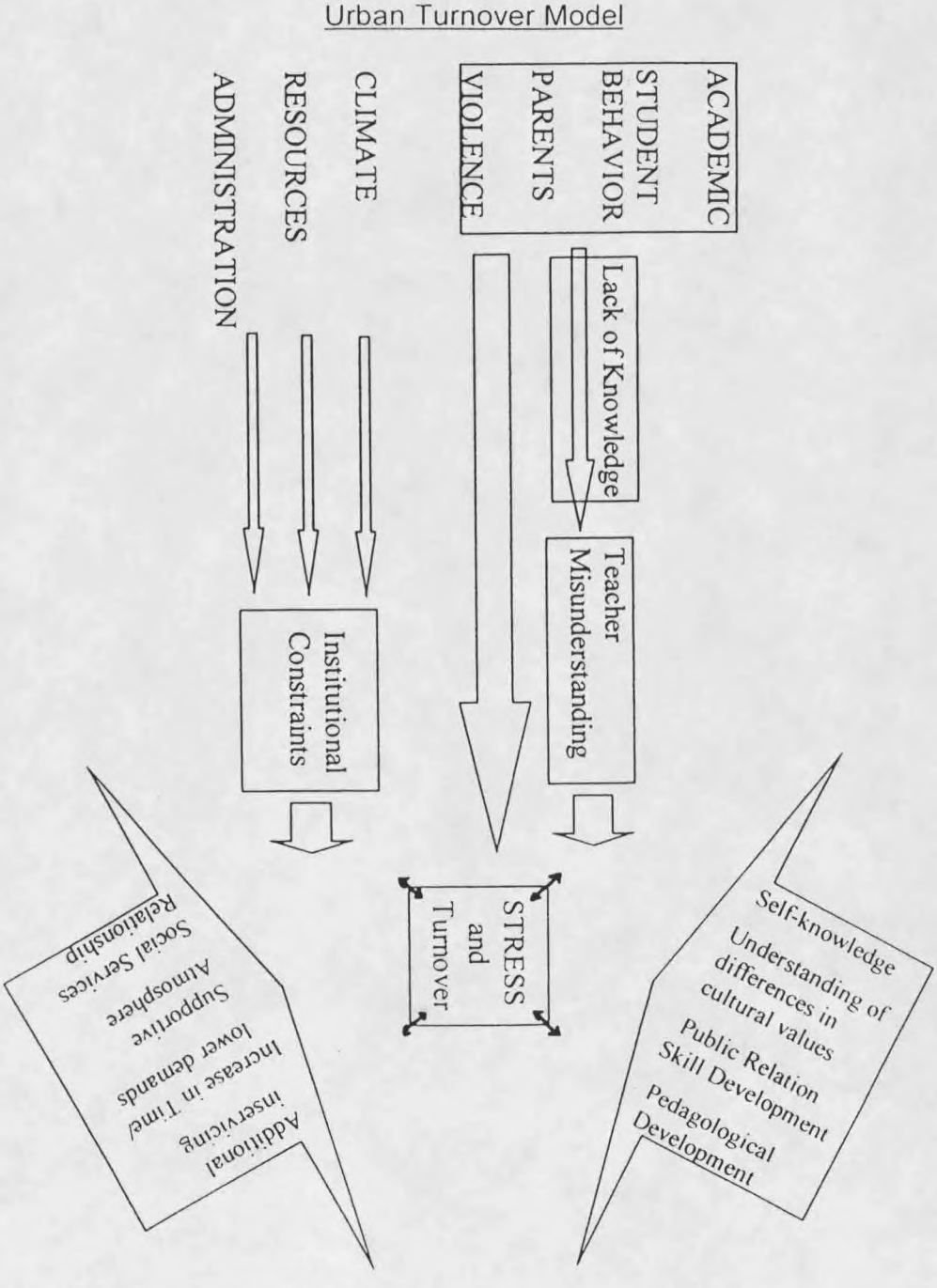
The most valuable resource that the respondents all mentioned as missing in urban schools was time: time to plan; time to teach; time to make contact with parents; time to collect oneself during the day so that the next lesson could be invigorating. The demand for time came from a lack of personnel in many cases. Substitutes, "special" teachers, aides, and nurses could lower the demands placed upon the urban teachers as could reading specialists, counselors, and involved administrators. One of the main complaints stemmed from the absence of time to deal with all the needs that students brought with them to school. These teachers never saw these issues as springboards for lessons that could benefit their entire classroom, which would be a possibility if they had more time to prepare and plan units based on the needs and interests of the students or if they had curriculum specialists to work with the teachers in planning such units. If teachers had support staff that they could rely upon to meet the basic needs of the students, they would have more

time to teach. If teachers could count on regular periods during their day for preparation and planning, then the teachers could be more effective in their classrooms. The lack of time manifested itself in many of the negative aspects of the urban schools and contributed greatly to the respondents feeling overwhelmed, overworked, and stretched to their limits.

While Certo and Fox (2002) found that "teachers reported that their colleagues left primarily because the complete package of pay, benefits, and other incentives was inadequate" (p. 61), the teachers interviewed for this study did not list salary as a top reason for leaving. Instead this research supports the findings of Norton (1999), who reported that job satisfaction correlated with favorable conditions and that school climate, student behavior, and parental support are more important than salary and benefits in regard to retention issues. We must do something about the fact that "beginning teachers are placed in the most demanding situations where they are left to sink or swim. In addition, beginning teachers are placed in the least favorable situations and receive minimal resources" (Cleveland, 2002, p. 1).

Although some of the respondents told of dismal building conditions and tight supplies, none of them mentioned these factors as reasons for their leaving the inner-city schools. In fact, most of the respondents took spending their own money on school supplies in stride and dismissed it as something that all teachers do. The resource that was mentioned as a factor in their decisions to leave was time. Somehow we must provide urban teachers with time to work

together; time, resources, and the knowledge to plan meaningful lessons for urban students; and time to teach.



As can be seen in the urban turnover model, the components discussed as contributors to teachers' decisions to leave urban schools can be generally divided into two categories. The academic level of the students, student behavior problems, uninvolved parents, and violence in the community, when filtered through the teachers' lack of knowledge regarding urban students and disadvantaged communities, contributed to teachers' misunderstandings and had the potential to produce stress. The other major source of stress for the teachers pertained to institutional constraints and many of these developed due to a negative school climate, unsupportive administration, and deficient resources. The institutional constraints could be deflected through changes in policy, while the misunderstandings could be decreased with educational interventions. Either of these could be seen as lowering the amount of stress the teachers endure, and thus decreasing the turnover rates. The large arrow in the middle of the model represents the reality of the situation in which the teachers find themselves. The factors that teachers discussed are direct contributors to the amount of stress they feel and the fact that they left the urban schools. The misunderstandings and the institutional constraints simply have the ability to intensify the stress and increase the amount of turnover.

The two large arrows that are shown reducing stress and turnover represent educational interventions and policy changes. Certo and Fox (2002) posit that "reasons for staying and reasons for leaving often acted as inverse variables" (p. 60); accordingly, the variables that lead to stress and turnover

could inversely lead to less pressure and more teachers who persevere in urban schools. These interventions, which would be reforms in themselves, would then allow for new teachers to become increasingly reform-minded.

Most graduates of typical teacher-education programs know little about the cultural traits, behaviors, values, and attitudes that different children of color bring to the classroom and how they affect the students' responses to instructional situations (Groulx, 2001). This lack of awareness can lead educators to misinterpret students' actions as deviant and to treat them punitively or to lower expectations (Delpit, 1997). The educational suggestions for diminishing teacher misunderstandings include self-knowledge, understanding of differences in cultural values and behavioral codes, the development of public relation skills, and the development of pedagogical skills (Gay, 2001).

The first area delineated by Gay (2001), self-knowledge, involves an attempt to make teachers conscious of cultural values and beliefs and how these affect their attitudes and expectations for students of color. This area also considers how values and beliefs are habitually exhibited in school behaviors. Gay (2001) calls this process 'cultural therapy' and defines it as "bringing one's own culture to a level of awareness that permits one to perceive it as a potential bias in social interactions" (p. 217). This aspect would have elements of self-reflection, monitoring, and transcendence and provide teachers with the chance to analyze reasons they may find the values and behaviors of ethnically different students objectionable or annoying.

Once teachers understand their own prejudices and are willing to confront them, then it becomes valuable to understand differences in cultural values and behavior codes (Gay, 2001). This knowledge would permit teachers to comprehend how instructional processes can be restructured to accommodate students of color and allow teachers to obtain knowledge to replace racial myths and stereotypes. This is beneficial because cultural connectedness has been shown to improve the achievement of students of color (Ladson-Billings,1994).

Another salient element that would need to be addressed is teachers' development of pedagogical skills. New teachers must learn how to diversify teaching strategies so as to create more culturally diverse, supportive environments for learning and reduce tension and conflict in ethnically pluralistic classrooms. They should also be prepared to select materials that have high-quality interest appeal to diverse students and develop and use learning activities that are meaningful, involving, enabling, and empowering for students of color. According to Gay (2001) the approach to this training should be four-dimensional, including diagnosis, development and implementation, analytical debriefing and reflection, and refinement.

The last area that Gay (2001) suggested be covered is public relations skills development. She considers it necessary to reform how educators are prepared to communicate and interact with parents of color and to teach new educators to mobilize community resources. This aspect would include putting a stop to blaming the families and home life for students' problems in school and

the adversarial posturing that is present when families are approached only when there is a concern. It is up to educators to develop novel, culturally-sensitive strategies to overcome these obstacles. The arrow on the model shows that these educational interventions could decrease the amount of stress, making the box smaller, and thus misunderstandings would no longer add to the turnover rates. The opposite would also be true though, if educational interventions are not in place, the stress and turnover box would expand and the misunderstandings would continue to increase the amount of stress and raise the turnover rate.

The policy changes that are suggested include additional inservicing, an increase in time/lower demands on teachers, development of a supportive atmosphere, and the development of social service relationships. These policies are examples of possible approaches, reflective of the concerns voiced by the respondents in this research. In order for each inner-city institution to adequately make policy changes, the teachers and administration at the individual school should be involved in deciding what changes need to be made and implementing them. Inservicing is fundamental to any policy changes that are affected because "the goal of providing excellence in teaching calls for an orientation process for novices, which will provide the needed social and professional support to keep new teachers in the system" (Angelle, 2002, p. 17). In addition, the teachers must be involved from the beginning, and their ideas must be valued in order for reform to be successful. We must be sensitive to the

institutional and discursive elements that constitute the urban schools as a workplace in order to reduce turnover and make reform a possibility.

The four arrows at the corners of the box labeled "stress and turnover" show that these two elements work together and can be increased or decreased by the other components of the model. The seven themes that were expressed by the respondents are real and play a large part in increasing stress, but these are compounded by their misunderstandings and the constraints they felt from the school itself. "Teacher retention and attrition is complex, with reasons for staying or leaving often related to individual factors, yet common themes and patterns are evident" (Certo & Fox, 2002, p. 60). The model presented here shows how the themes interact with other factors to increase stress and turnover and suggests some potential theories for reducing that stress and turnover in urban schools that serve disadvantaged populations.

Limitations of the Study

There were two areas that the researcher regarded as limitations to this study. One was the lack of respondents. One would believe, given the literature on attrition rates at urban schools, that there would be an abundance of possible candidates. Yet, finding respondents was extrememly difficult. One reason for this was the researcher's failure to limit her geographical area and concentrate efforts on one area. In attempting to rely on past acquaintance and contacts, the researcher spread herself too thin. Monetary constraints prevented the

researcher from making numerous trips back to the cities where she was able to interview respondents unless a group of respondents could be gathered or numerous appointments made. This rarely materialized and so some possible respondents were not interviewed. A snowball effect was expected but never materialized and the school districts in the researcher's area were uncooperative regarding any possible contacts.

Another limitation of the study stems from the researcher's positionality. After listening to the teachers, it was necessary to dissect their stories, analyze their motives for leaving, and attempt to understand the negativity that was expressed. The researcher's own positionality as a former urban school teacher sometimes made it difficult to temper the critique. The study sometimes served as a catharsis for the researcher because she felt guilty regarding her own biases and failures as an urban teacher. While respondents did contribute to social reproduction, they were neither unintelligent nor intentionally destructive during their period of teaching at urban schools. In fact, the respondents were thoughtful and honest, and the stress they felt often stemmed from their desire to make a difference and their inability to do so. Bolster (1983) posited that "people must be considered as both the creators and the products of the social situations in which they live" (p. 303) or in this case, work. Many of the teachers inadvertently became 'bank-clerk' teachers and served to dehumanize their students and in doing so, they dehumanized themselves. A definite limitation of

this study could be seen as the researcher's difficulty separating herself from the respondents.

Areas for Further Inquiry

Gaps in the literature are areas in which there is a need for further inquiry. Even though teacher attrition is an area of intense research, there is still the need for further inquiry because of the impending teacher shortages that will affect the inner cities quite drastically. This area has been neglected for many years and there are many avenues that need to be explored. In addition, there is a dearth of research available that links suggestions for retaining teachers in the inner city to the reasons that teachers leave. The model formulated for this study does that by relating the reasons teachers leave to ways that schools could prepare new teachers for urban districts.

In addition, as a result of this study many questions arise that could add to the existing body of knowledge on teacher attrition. One area that warrants extensive research is the potential link between inner-city districts and administrator turnover. The leadership at the urban schools involved in this study had a high rate of administrator attrition. This could influence the lack of success in reform efforts and the attrition of teachers. Just how administrator turnover pertains to teacher turnover is an area that could help us to understand the problems that face disadvantaged urban schools.

Recommendations

"Research on attrition can be characterized generally as sporadic and piecemeal" (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987, p. xiii). More must be done to understand attrition at urban schools and to determine ways to stop the present cycle. Currently, new teachers are hired and then leave so quickly that they cannot effectively advance efforts for reform. Yet, the reasons the teachers leave are frequently the very reasons that reform is so desperately needed in the city schools. This paradox makes turnover in urban schools an enigmatic problem to solve but continued efforts must be made so that the students in these schools can have the equal opportunities that would stem from superior educations. Equal educations are not enough. "Justice--the notion that all children deserve a decent life, and that the greatest need deserves the greatest support--must be our guide" (Ayers & Ford, 1996, p. 90). The students in these schools often have the greatest needs and thus they deserve the best educations and yet the opposite is true given the current conditions. Social reproduction is already an area of intense scrutiny but more needs to be done to establish the links between teacher turnover and the failure of inner-city schools. More research needs to be conducted to determine how to improve the conditions for both teachers and students at these schools. There have been virtually "no continuing efforts to analyze attrition consistently over time in any locality" thus "there exists little sense of learning or building from previous studies" (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987, p. xiii). This lack of a clear agenda for research stems from the

oversupply of teachers in suburban districts. This topic has been neglected because it doesn't affect the schools where middle-class and affluent students attend; this trend must be reversed.

In addition, personal experience is an area that needs to be explored and expanded as a valid way to know about the world. "Voice is related to the means whereby teachers and students attempt to make themselves present in history and define themselves as active authors of their own worlds; voice questions the way experiences are ignored or included, affirmed or marginalized" (Weiler, 1988, p. xii). However, teachers' voices have been ignored in much of the research on attrition. Lee and Burkham (2002) stated that "teachers are not automatons and a perspective that strips them of their biographies, dispositions, and affective orientations misses much of what breathes life into classroom interaction patterns" (p. 67). Listening to the teachers may be inconvenient, time consuming, and complicated, but it is the only way to truly learn about why attrition occurs. Listening to the teachers might eventually tell us how to keep teachers in urban districts long enough to implement meaningful reform efforts. For these reasons, more qualitative research is needed in this area.

This project answered the major question but it also prompted additional questions: How can schools initiate the reforms necessary to keep teachers with the current attrition rates? Who should take on the burden of educating teachers so that they are prepared for urban experiences and how would this best be accomplished? Why are so many administrative teams seen as incompetent or

unsupportive in urban schools? How much more prevalent is violence at urban schools and what can be done to control the violence? What are the major determinants that influence a teacher to remain teaching at an urban school? How can urban school districts prevent budget problems that lead to turnover, especially when the teachers would be recalled almost immediately? How can hiring practices be transformed to screen out those who have markedly low desires to teach in urban schools? These questions and more ensued after conducting the current research project. Answering these questions in further research will add to our body of knowledge, but we also need actions to be taken based on the current literature and findings. The educational needs of inner-city students are imminent and the challenges that face these schools have been identified so every effort must be made to implement policy changes and educate teachers to improve the current system. "All the structure of privilege and oppression apparent in the larger society are mirrored in our schools" (Ayers & Ford, 1996, p. 88); this is a travesty that must be acted upon and researched further and continuously confronted.

Chapter Summary

This dissertation set out to determine the reasons behind teachers' decisions to leave urban schools which have a relatively high level of economically disadvantaged students. The answer to this question turned out to be quite complicated, but seven general themes were discovered that all

compounded an intense feeling of stress. These seven included low academic levels and performances, student discipline problems, uninvolved parents, the threat of violence, unsupportive administration, a lack of resources, and demoralizing school climates. These factors were heightened by the teachers' misunderstandings of the students and their communities as well as a general lack of knowledge regarding social reproduction theories and resistance theories.

As research increases our knowledge about the role of schools in social reproduction, it becomes negligent to continue an education system that maintains the status quo and teacher turnover in urban schools contributes to a system that does just that. "These processes are what ultimately determine which students are educated for intellectual rigor, personal self-determination, and social empowerment, and which ones are trained for a life of institutional compliance, economic dependence, and the social underclass" (Gay, 2001, p. 210). The inequities between urban schools and their suburban counterparts are inexcusable in a country that prides itself on fairness and equality. Schools have been a powerful catalyst for change in our society and it is only with educational support that we can strive to equalize opportunities and combat oppression. Haywood Burns (1998) states that "teaching is never solely about how the oppressed have become victims, though it is about that; it is also always about how people individually and in concert have made a difference and changed their situations" (p. 48). It is up to educators and communities to ensure that attending inner-city schools is no longer a significant barrier to educational

attainment, and this can only be achieved if attrition at these schools can be reduced enough that reform efforts can be successful. It is hoped that this dissertation provides additional understanding that will help in those efforts.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Facesheet

Date:

Location:

Name:

Code name:

Phone Number:

E-mail:

Sex:

Age:

Ethnicity:

Education:

School:

Number of Years:

Subjects:

Grades:

First Teaching Position:

Class

How would you describe your own social class when you were growing up?

Background:

How did you start working at the school?

(why, what it meant to them)

What were your class sizes?

What was a typical day like?

What were the high points of working there?

What were the low points of working there?

How would you describe the following:

Your experience in the classrooms at the school.

The community in which you worked.

The students at the school where you taught.

The parents of the students and their involvement in the school.

The school itself, including resources, climate, administration, etc.

-any examples?
-could you tell me more about that?

How did you decide to leave that school?

Probe

How did you feel about leaving?

Probe

Was there anything else significant about your leaving the school?

What stories do you tell about teaching at the school?

What experiences of yours particularly stand out for you?

What else should I know?

Who else should I ask about this?

APPENDIX B

Definition of Multicultural Education

Definition of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education means different things to different people. For the purposes of this dissertation it is defined broadly, encompassing three major components. The first is a concept that meritocracy is a myth; the idea that all students should have an equal opportunity to learn in school but that currently some students have a better chance. The second component is an educational reform movement hoping to change schools so that students have parity. This aspect of multicultural education recognizes that it is a process with the realization that there is no end in sight. The third component is a total school reform effort designed to increase educational equity for a range of cultural, ethnic, and economic groups. Multicultural education needs to be broadly defined so that teachers from various disciplines see it as relating to them (Banks & Banks, 2001).

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