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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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

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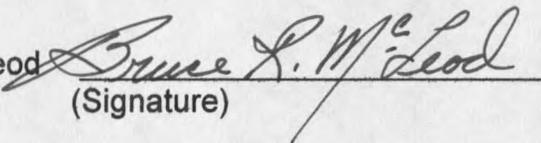## of a dissertation submitted by

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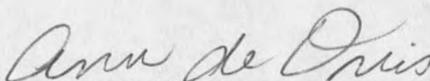
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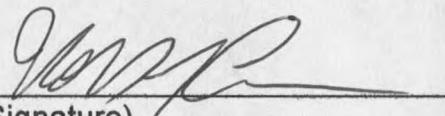
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iv

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# 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

16

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