

6-2019

Factors Influencing Teachers To Remain At Charter Schools

Tyneasha Banks
National Louis University

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**FACTORS INFLUENCING TEACHERS TO REMAIN
AT CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Doctoral Dissertation Research

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
National Louis University, Chicago Campus
College of Professional Studies and Advancement

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education
Organizational Leadership

By

Tyneasha Le'Shea Rogers-Banks

May 2019

**FACTORS INFLUENCING TEACHERS TO REMAIN
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that contribute to teacher longevity in charter schools located in central and northwest Indiana. Phenomenological methodology was used to collect data regarding charter school teachers' perceptions by conducting in-depth interviews. Charter school teachers who had remained with the same charter school for 2 or more years were asked to provide information about factors that influenced them to remain. Fourteen teachers were interviewed. Results showed that charter school teachers in this study were motivated to remain with a charter school for 2 or more years because of the following factors: (a) building relationships, (b) making a difference, and (c) teacher development. Understanding teachers' decisions to remain in these schools may help charter school administrators improve recruiting efforts, attract more highly qualified teachers, reduce teacher turnover, and improve teacher retention.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Teacher retention is a challenge for many school districts (Bland, Church, & Luo, 2014; Hughes, 2012; Latifoglu, 2016). An estimated 13% of the 3,400,000 school teachers in the U.S. workforce leave the teaching profession each year (Haynes, 2014). Among new teachers, roughly 10% resign before completing their first year (Dupriez, Delvaux, & Lothaire, 2016; Martin & Mulvihill, 2016), and an estimated 50% leave the profession sometime during their first 5 years of teaching (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2016). Mafora (2013) identified the vast number of teachers leaving the profession as a key factor contributing to teacher shortages and school staffing problems.

Concerns over teacher shortages causing school staffing problems have been the focus of educational reform and policy initiatives (Kurtz, 2015). School staffing problems reflect difficulties finding qualified and effective teachers to adequately staff classrooms (Ingersoll, 2001). Various programs have been created to help address staffing problems in schools. Teach for America (TFA), a national teaching program launched in 1990, was designed to address the U.S. teacher shortage (Brewer, Kretchmar, Sondel, Ishmael, & Manfra, 2016). TFA's mission was to attract academically talented college students to the teaching profession through a 2-year commitment to teaching in urban and rural schools (Brewer et al., 2016). However, little has been reported about this program's success and others in addressing the teacher shortage (Swanson & Mason, 2018). Some research has shown that enrollment in teacher preparation programs dropped 10% nationally from 2004 to 2012 (Bruni, 2015; Sawchuk, 2015a). Drops like this can cause additional teacher recruitment challenges.

A 2016 report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) proposed systemic changes to help address school staffing problems in the United States. According to the NCTAF report, a central strategy is needed to improve efforts to retain good teachers. Financial incentives such as tuition reimbursement, bonuses, and student loan forgiveness have been used to aid teacher retention and address school staffing problems (Yaffe, 2016).

For charter schools, teacher retention is an even greater problem. Ndoye, Imig, and Parker (2010) noted teacher attrition rates as being 15% to 40% higher in charter schools than in traditional schools. Vari, Jones, and Thomas (2018) identified even higher attrition rates of 20% to 25% of charter school teachers leaving after their first year than for traditional public school teachers. Vari et al. stated that charter schools tend to have high demands for teachers and exhibit the lowest teacher retention rates. Thus, Vari et al.'s research appeared to validate the view that charter schools have teacher retention challenges greater than those in traditional schools.

Problem Background

Teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. It is estimated that 50% will leave the profession in their first 5 years of teaching. In some low-income urban school districts, they will leave in the first 3 years (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2016). Cooper and Alvarado (2006) found that the turnover rate among teachers is significantly higher than for other occupations. Every year, teachers leave the profession in search of jobs in other professions (Arnup & Bowles, 2016). Finding qualified teachers to fill these vacancies is an ongoing challenge for school administrators (Martin & Mulvihill, 2016).

Near the beginning of each school year, administrators compete with each other across districts and schools to find qualified teacher candidates. Egalite, Jensen, Stewart, and Wolf (2014) stated that schools serving large populations of low-income, minority, and low-achieving students often have a particularly difficult time recruiting teachers. Some teacher candidates avoid working at schools with low-income, minority, and low-achieving students for various reasons such as lower salaries, reported student behaviors, and potentially stressful working environments (Albright et al., 2017). Reported enrollment declines in teacher preparation programs are an added strain on teacher candidate pools (Sawchuk, 2014).

Hiring and retaining highly qualified teachers can be challenging for school administrators. Retaining highly qualified classroom teachers has proven difficult for many U.S. public schools (Kokka, 2016; Torres, 2016). Teaching can be stressful, and the rigor it demands causes some to leave the profession. Levin (2013) noted that teaching is well-documented as being a high-stress profession with significant attrition rates. Teacher turnover is twice as high in low-income urban schools because of the type of work environment often present in these schools (Kokka, 2016). Many working conditions can impact teacher turnover, including teachers' perceptions of their influence in decision-making, student discipline and school safety, administrative support, quality of facilities and resources, other colleagues, community support, professional support, and school culture (Marinell & Coca, 2013; Torres, 2016).

Charter schools have not been exempted from experiencing high teacher attrition rates (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Torres, 2016). High teacher turnover has been a particular problem for low-income urban schools and especially for low-income urban

charter schools (Morettini, 2016; Torres, 2016). Torres stated that teachers in charter schools are 130% more likely to leave teaching than teachers in traditional public schools. Furthermore, about 25% of teachers at charter schools leave after their first year (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013; Torres, 2016).

Although charter schools are becoming more prevalent throughout the United States, these schools struggle to fill classrooms with highly qualified teachers (Knaak & Knaak, 2013; Torres, 2016). Egalite et al. (2014) stated that charter schools have inadequate pipelines of highly qualified teachers. Critical variables that influence teachers' decisions not to work at charter schools are low salaries, large workloads, and the absence of a teachers' union (Hughes, 2012). These variables also contribute to high teacher attrition rates in these schools (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Torres, 2016).

The numbers of teachers leaving charter schools is a growing concern (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Torres, 2016). The demands made of teachers at charter schools are high compared to traditional public schools (Knaak & Knaak, 2013; Torres, 2016). These high demands can result in teacher burnout. Torres found teacher burnout to be one of the main causes of high turnover. Teacher demands described in Torres's study included large workloads, long working hours, and more challenging assignments (e.g., teaching split grades and/or multiple subjects). Because of high teacher turnover, administrators in charter schools struggle to keep the classrooms staffed (Torres, 2016).

Hofstetter (2014) stated that highly qualified teachers are a key component in students' academic success. Retaining quality teachers is vital for school communities. Educational theorists have identified the inability to retain highly qualified, effective teachers as a fundamental reason for deficient academic achievement in charter schools

(Hanushek, Rivkin, & Schiman, 2016). However, some charter school teachers decide to stay (Levin, 2013; Prather-Jones, 2011). Examining the reasons why they do stay could shed light on how to retain more of these teachers.

Purpose of the Study

Extensive research has been conducted on teachers' reasons for leaving schools (Albright et al., 2017; Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Dupriez et al., 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Simos & Fink, 2013; Torres, 2016). Arnup and Bowles found that teachers leave due to the lack of job satisfaction and support. Simos and Fink identified ineffective tutoring by other teaching professionals as one reason teachers leave schools. Workloads and working environments are other factors that can impact the teachers' decisions to leave. A paucity of research exists specifically on factors that impact teachers' decisions to remain with charter schools (De Stercke, Goyette, & Robertson, 2015). Because of this lack of knowledge, this study's purpose was to investigate factors that contribute to teacher longevity in charter schools located in Indiana. Study findings contribute to the literature on teacher retention by focusing specifically on why teachers remain and teach in charter schools for 2 or more years.

Retaining teachers is a significant challenge for most charter schools. Understanding teachers' decisions to remain in these schools may help charter school administrators improve recruiting efforts, attract more highly qualified teachers, reduce teacher turnover, and improve teacher retention.

Research Question

A phenomenological approach was used in this qualitative study to achieve a rich and thick understanding of the factors that promote teacher longevity in charter schools.

For this study, longevity was defined as a teacher with 2 or more years of experience in a charter school. Creswell (2013) suggested that research questions provide focus to the purpose statement. The following research question guided this study: What factors contribute to teachers' decisions to remain working at a charter school for 2 years or more?

Methodology

This study's focus was on exploring K–12 charter teachers' views on factors that have impacted their decisions to remain working in charter schools. The focus was only on teachers at charter schools located in Indiana. Teachers were contacted via email and/or phone to request their participation. A key inclusion criterion was that they had remained with a charter school for 2 or more years. Their participation was voluntary, and their names were not mentioned in this study.

Given the study focus, a qualitative approach—specifically, phenomenology—was appropriate for this study. This approach facilitates asking different types of questions, eliciting the views of study participants, and identifying common themes in participants' comments (Creswell, 2013). All interview questions were open-ended and aligned to the research questions. Using interviews permits full exploration of a topic through open-ended questions and allows study participants to respond without limitations (Creswell, 2013). Creswell suggested that interview questions have the following elements:

- (a) wording should be open-ended (respondents should be able to choose their own terms when answering questions);
- (b) questions should be as neutral as possible (avoid wording that might influence answers, e.g., evocative or judgmental);
- (c) questions should be asked one at a time;
- (d) questions should be worded clearly (including knowledge of any terms particular to the program or the respondents' culture); and
- (e) be careful asking “why” questions. (p. 16)

Interview questions from a similar study were used to develop the present study.

For this study, 14 teachers with 2 or more years of teaching at charter schools were recruited from charter schools located in Indiana. Interviews were conducted with all participants. The interviews were digitally recorded for later transcription and analysis. A licensed transcriber was hired to transcribe the interviews. Participants received copies of their transcribed interviews to review for accuracy. The interview data were analyzed for themes that indicated similarities and differences in the participants' perceptions. Participants also provided demographic information. The information gathered reflected factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain working at charter schools for 2 years or more.

Study Limitations and Delimitations

Study limitations included the availability of teachers working in charter schools for 2 years or more. Obtaining participants willing to devote the time needed for interviews and follow-up discussions also influenced the study. Only a small number of teachers working in Indiana charter schools for 2 or more years were studied. Therefore, the information gathered is not applicable to all teachers employed at charter schools.

Study delimitations included the following:

- At least 2 years of teaching experience in a charter school.
- At least 2 sequential years of experience at one charter school.
- Licensure as a teacher.
- Teaching at a charter school in Indiana at the time of the study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used in this study:

Administrative support: Administrative support can be defined as behaviors of school administrators that make teachers' work easier and improve their teaching and that lead teachers to believe: that they are cared for, loved, and esteemed, and are members of a network of mutual obligations. It includes various administrative behaviors that positively contribute to teachers' capacities to effectively cope with the challenges inherent in the teaching profession (Hughes, 2012).

Administrative support personnel: These personnel consist of the principal, assistant principal, and anyone else who serves as an administrator for teachers (Hughes, 2012).

Charter schools: Charter schools are self-governing public schools that are held accountable for student education and academic achievement through written contracts with the charter schools' authorizers (Peterson, 2009).

School staffing problems: Staffing problems in schools refer to the inability to adequately staff classrooms with qualified and effective teachers (Ingersoll, 2001).

Teacher attrition: Teacher attrition is the result of teachers leaving the occupation (Ingersoll, 2001).

Teacher retention: Teacher retention is the result of teachers staying in the teaching profession after 1 or more years of experience (Ingersoll, 2001).

Significance of the Study

Teacher retention is a challenge for many school districts (Bland et al., 2014; Hughes, 2012; Latifoglu, 2016). Concerns are growing about the numbers of teachers leaving charter schools as teacher attrition rates are higher at these schools (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Torres, 2016). Because teacher turnover in charter schools is high (Torres,

2016), it is important to understand the factors that influence teachers' decisions to stay (Gomba, 2015). Understanding the factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain at a school may help school-level and district-level administrators reduce turnover and improve teacher retention in their schools. It is critical that school leaders know the factors that promote teacher retention (Engel & Finch, 2015). Study findings may provide this knowledge and help these leaders better understand why teachers remain in charter schools and why they do not. Lastly, these findings may provide school district human resource directors information they can use to help attract highly qualified teachers.

Summary

Teacher retention is a challenge for many school districts (Bland et al., 2014; Hughes, 2012; Latifoglu, 2016). Retaining teachers is an even greater problem for charter schools than for traditional public schools. Compared to traditional public schools, charter schools have higher attrition rates, with 20% to 25% of these teachers leaving after the first year (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Torres, 2016). Retaining highly qualified teachers is a significant challenge for most charter schools. Understanding teachers' decisions to remain at these schools may help charter school administrators improve recruiting efforts, attract more highly qualified teachers, reduce teacher turnover, and improve teacher retention.

Chapter One introduced the study and its focus on exploring the factors that influence teachers' decisions to continue working at charter schools. The background of the problem and the study purpose were presented as well as the research question, the study significance, and limitations, delimitations, and definitions. Chapter Two is a

review of the literature on teacher retention, specifically teacher retention in charter schools. Chapter Three is a detailed explanation of the qualitative phenomenological methodology used in this study. Research findings are presented in Chapter Four, including a thematic analysis of the participants' views on the questions asked. Conclusions, implications, and recommendations are presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that encourage K–12 teacher retention in charter schools in Indiana. This study addressed the characteristics of teachers who stay at charter schools for 2 or more years and analyzed the factors teachers provided for choosing to stay. The research question that guided this study was: What factors contribute to teachers' decisions to remain working at a charter school for 2 or more years? Identifying why teachers remain at a charter school for 2 or more years may help school administrators better address the challenges of retaining effective teachers.

The following literature review has three sections. The first is a discussion of teacher shortage problems in U.S. schools. The second section is an examination of the factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain at a school. The third section focuses specifically on teacher retention in charter schools and its importance.

Theoretical Framework

Motivational theories reflect factors that link to employee satisfaction and job satisfaction (Grund, Brassler, & Fries, 2016). Herzberg's motivational hygiene theory highlights factors people consider when deciding whether to remain in or leave their jobs or professions (Larkin, Brantley-Dias, & Lokey-Vega, 2016). This theory proposes two factors—satisfaction or dissatisfaction—that affect employees' perceptions of the workplace. Herzberg's theory identifies the following attributes as motivational factors or satisfiers: (a) recognition, (b) the work itself, (c) responsibility, (d) achievement, and (e) growth (Herzberg, 1968; Islam & Ali, 2013). If delivered, these motivational factors or satisfiers will enhance employee satisfaction or motivation, but their absence does not necessarily create dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1968; Islam & Ali, 2013). Likewise,

Herzberg's theory identified the following attributes as hygiene or "maintenance" factors: (a) company policy, (b) pay, (c) working conditions, and (d) supervision. Dissatisfaction occurs when hygiene factors fall to an unacceptable level and will negatively impact the intent to stay, leading to turnover (Woodworth, 2016). Therefore, it is essential for hygiene factors to be present for workplace satisfaction (Islam & Ali, 2013; Woodworth, 2016). School administrators should know the factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain at a school and should strive to create a work environment in which teachers feel valued and have job satisfaction (Vari et al., 2018).

Teacher Shortages

Many researchers have focused on the question of why teachers leave the profession (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Hanushek et al., 2016; Larkin et al., 2016; Torres, 2016; Vari et al., 2018). Results from these studies have shown that teachers leave the profession at high rates (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Hanushek et al., 2016; Larkin et al., 2016; Torres, 2016; Vari et al., 2018). According to statistical data, 25% of the nation's teachers leave the classroom in their first year and almost 50% leave in 5 years (Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Dupriez et al., 2016; Haynes, 2014; Martin & Mulvihill, 2016; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2016). Most teacher attrition occurs during the first years of teaching (Arnup & Bowles, 2016). Mafora (2013) affirmed that teacher attrition is the highest among new teachers. Berry and Shields (2017) reported that the current rates of new teacher entry will not meet the forecasted demand, therefore adding to the teacher shortage problem.

Reflecting rising student enrollment rates, U.S. school districts reported increasing demands for teachers as well as teacher shortages (Berry & Shields, 2017). In

2015 and 2016, 48 states reported a teacher shortage of approximately 60,000 (Cowan, Goldhaber, Hayes, & Theobald, 2016). Teacher shortages were expected to increase over time, resulting in an estimated shortage of 100,000 teachers by 2018 (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016).

In contrast, Aragon (2016) asked if teacher shortages really existed. Aragon suggested that the teacher shortage data were not as daunting as reported by others. In fact, Aragon believed the current data on teacher shortage were unreliable. Aragon reached this conclusion based on federal data showing that approximately half of the teachers who leave the profession were expected to return because they left for personal reasons such as changing residences, pregnancy, and child-rearing. Thus, Aragon argued that teacher shortages were confined to certain subject areas and to schools with specific characteristics. Staffing challenges for schools had actually lessened, but staffing challenges in math, science, and special education had failed to improve (Aragon, 2016). In addition, low-urban, rural, high-poverty, high minority, and low-achieving schools faced persistent staffing challenges due to low salaries, larger workloads, and overcrowded classrooms (Aragon, 2016).

All 50 states are going to experience teacher shortages (Berry & Shields, 2017). In a 2018 editorial, Tekolste stated that Indiana ranked among the bottom five states for teacher recruitment and retention and that 92% of Indiana's schools reported facing teacher shortages during the 2017–2018 school year. Indiana's leaders took steps and provided solutions to address its teacher shortage problem, including enacting the New Generation Hoosier Educators Scholarship. The scholarship provides college tuition

assistance to high-performing students to encourage them to enter the teaching profession and work in low-income schools (Tekolste, 2018).

Teacher shortage concerns date back to the 1980s when teachers were leaving the profession due to low salaries and poor working conditions. According to Kagler (2011), teacher shortages started to gain national attention during the 1980s. A number of other researchers shared concerns about teacher shortages, including Arnup and Bowles (2016), Hanushek et al. (2016), Larkin et al. (2016), Torres (2016), and Vari et al. (2018).

In 2016, the U.S. Congress addressed teacher shortages with legislation that made it easier for educators to have their higher education loans forgiven. The legislation also allowed teachers to apply their classroom service time to two federal loan-forgiveness programs simultaneously, thus making it easier for teachers to remove their college-loan debts (Ujifusa, 2016).

Online learning, which allows students to receive educational instruction delivered via the Internet with access to teachers from different geographical locations, has helped to address the national teacher shortage in K–12 education (Dwinal, 2015). Dwinal (2015) wrote the following about how online learning holds the potential to unlock solutions to teacher shortage problems in the United States:

By allowing educators to reach students from anywhere in the country, online learning creates a new degree of flexibility among current teachers, while also making the field more attractive to teachers who have left and to non-teachers who have considered entering. (p. 2)

Schools use online learning to fill positions that would otherwise go unstaffed. According to Dwinal (2015), approximately 40 states have used online learning to address the teacher shortage problem.

Alternative teacher preparation (ATP) programs such as Teach For America (TFA) have been a national response to teacher shortages (Brewer et al., 2016). ATPs typically allow teachers entrance to the classroom by postponing or bypassing many of the criteria required by traditional teacher preparation programs. Participants in ATP programs lack the necessary educational courses needed to obtain a teaching license. However, they may hold a bachelor's degree in the subject area they will teach. In general, ATPs involve a short period of intensive coursework, supervised on-the-job training, and a certification exam (Uriegas, Kupczynski, & Mundy, 2014).

Sawchuk (2014) stated that teacher preparation programs experienced a 10% decrease in candidate enrollment from 2004 to 2012. In 2014, enrollment was down more than a third from 2012 (Sawchuk, 2016). ATPs like Teach for America experienced steep drops in their teacher candidate enrollment (Sawchuk, 2016). The state of Indiana experienced a decline in the number of students enrolled in teacher preparation programs, from 15,115 in 2009–2010 to 7,222 in 2013–2014 (McNeil, 2016).

Compensation, working conditions, administrative support, school climate, and school culture are several factors in teacher attrition (Dupriez et al., 2016). Ndoye et al. (2010) cited lack of teacher mentoring programs, student behavior, and lack of administrative support as factors influencing teachers' decisions to leave. Other factors cited as influencing teachers' decisions to leave were types of school communities and level of involvement in school decision-making.

Arnup and Bowles (2016) suggested that lower resilience levels and lower job satisfaction were other factors influencing teachers to leave a school or the profession itself. Simos and Fink (2013) reported that teachers do not receive adequate

administrative support. Dupriez et al. (2016) found that poor working conditions attributed to teachers leaving. Torres (2016) also determined that a school's culture impacted teachers' decisions to leave. These main factors are further reviewed in the following sections.

Working Conditions

Working conditions refer to work environments, which are influenced by certain factors as workload, administrative support, work hours, stress levels, and safety (Raza & Ahmed, 2017). To resolve low teacher retention rates, Dupriez et al. (2016) stressed examining the workplace environment. Simon and Johnson (2015) explained how working environments influence teachers' decisions to remain at their current employment and stated that it is imperative that educational stakeholders understand how working environments influence teachers' decisions to leave. Dupriez et al. (2016) found that the work environment was one of the major factors in teachers' decisions to leave schools or the profession. Various researchers have directly connected teacher retention and turnover to specific factors, including stressors that cause teacher burnout (Fusco, 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017), lack of administrative support (Hughes, Matt, & O'Reilly, 2015; Torres, 2016), and teacher mentoring programs (Hallam, Chou, Hite, & Hite, 2012; Morettini, 2016).

Teacher Burnout/Stress

Teacher or staff burnout is defined as emotional exhaustion caused by work-related stress (Wong, Ruble, Yu, & McGrew, 2017). Most teachers view teaching as a highly rewarding profession. At the same time, many teachers experience severe stress and symptoms of burnout (Fusco, 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Many researchers

have attributed teacher attrition to teacher stress and/or burnout (Fusco, 2017; Wong et al., 2017). Approximately 40% of teachers may experience burnout; thus, these teachers are at higher risk for leaving the profession (Wong et al., 2017). Wong et al. (2017) recommended that school administrators pay attention to teacher stress and teacher job satisfaction because both influence teachers' decisions to remain or leave the profession.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) found the following factors leading to stress in their study participants: (a) discipline problems, (b) time pressures, (c) low student motivation, (d) lack of autonomy, (e) lack of shared goals and values, (f) problems and conflicts related to teamwork, and (g) lack of status. Protective factors were: (a) supportive relations with colleagues and supervisors, (b) collective culture, and (c) autonomy/working to adapt teaching to students' needs. Participants rated six categories: (a) discipline problems, (b) time pressure, (c) low student motivation, (d) supportive relations with colleagues and supervisors, (e) collective culture, and (f) autonomy, on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from *completely disagree* (1) to *completely agree* (6).

The purpose of Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2017) study was to explore the experiences of job demands and job resources among teachers in senior high schools. They also looked at how teachers' perceptions of job demands and job resources related to their teaching self-concept, burnout symptoms, job satisfaction, and motivation to leave the teaching profession. Data analysis showed that the strongest predictors of teacher stress and motivators to leave the teaching profession were time pressure and low student motivation. Teachers become stressed when faced with multiple tasks and knowing that their work performance is tied to student outcomes (Skaalvik & Skaalvik,

2017). Skaalvik and Skaalvik noted that the challenges of teacher burnout and teacher attrition are global issues.

Administrative Support

Administrative support is frequently associated with teacher dissatisfaction and satisfaction (Hughes et al., 2015; Torres, 2016). Hughes et al. suggested that the two variables were concurrent and directly related. This means that the levels of administrative support provided to teachers should directly influence satisfaction with their current positions.

Hughes et al. (2015), Ndoye et al. (2010), Prather-Jones (2011), and Torres (2016) found that administrative support was essential in retaining teachers and that it affected teachers' decisions to remain in their current position and in the education profession. According to Ndoye et al., administrative support greatly influenced teachers' decisions to remain or leave a teaching assignment. They argued that teachers only decide to remain at their current teaching assignments or the profession if administrators provide support (i.e., mentoring programs, resources, observational feedback) and are effective in their roles. Job dissatisfaction arises when these things are not present.

Ndoye et al. (2010) examined working conditions in schools to understand their influence on teachers' decisions to remain or leave their schools and the profession. The factors studied were: (a) time allocation, (b) facilities and resources, (c) empowerment, (d) leadership, and (e) professional development. Ndoye et al. indicated that leadership was the strongest predictor for teachers' intent to remain or leave their current schools or the profession. Teachers tended to remain in education or their current assignment when they receive the right amount of support from administrators. Ndoye et al. showed that

teachers value administrators who support both their professional and personal growth. The common theme was that teachers need to know that there is an administrative support system for them when facing school-related challenges and an identifiable collective approach for addressing these challenges.

Torres (2016) suggested that the presence of a strong leader, one who can form expectations to meet goals, fosters a positive learning environment that is conducive for learning. Torres looked at administrative support, teacher workload, and team cohesiveness as work environmental factors and found that administrative support was the strongest predictor of teacher retention. Torres emphasized how school administrators influence teachers' decisions to leave and emphasized the need for administrators to build relationships of trust coupled with administrative support. Teachers accept administrators' support when their competency and actions are trusted (Torres, 2016).

Hughes et al. (2015) supported the notion of a direct relationship between administrative support and teacher retention. These researchers found that administrative support for teachers significantly impacted teacher retention and that teachers need frequent communication, instructional feedback, and a sense of value, especially in hard-to-staff schools. Hughes et al. asserted that communication is school administrators' main advantage in improving teacher support and creating a positive culture. In addition to communication, building a relationship of trust is also key. Both factors improve teacher retention, especially in hard-to-staff schools.

Teacher Mentoring Programs

Teacher mentoring programs are a form of administrative support that influences teachers' decisions to remain at their current assignments or leave them, especially new teachers (Morettini, 2016). Mentoring programs can provide new teachers various types of administrative support needed to grow in the profession. Much of the administrative support needed for new teachers focuses on teaching practices. Schools with effective mentoring programs increase retention of beginning teachers (Bland et al., 2014; Hallam et al., 2012; Simos & Fink, 2013). Effective teaching practices should be shared between experienced and novice teachers. Having mentors support mentees who teach in the same content area is effective (Morettini, 2016).

Hallam et al. (2012) found higher teacher retention rates in schools with mentoring programs that provided effective administrative support and maintained strong positive relationships. Schools that used one-on-one mentoring experienced even greater teacher retention rates (Morettini, 2016). Hallam et al. suggested that principals provide direct support as early as possible to teachers, especially beginning teachers, and that they should select effective mentors. Mentoring programs provide teachers with social support, general encouragement, and instructional support. This support increases the chance of teachers remaining in their current teaching positions and the profession (Hallam et al., 2012).

Charter Schools: Teacher Retention

In the early 1990s, charter schools began to emerge as a new idea for public school reform (Levy, 2010). This emergence was partly due to U.S. government officials wanting to give parents the right to determine their children's educational pathways

(Garnett, 2017). Not only does the charter school movement promote parental choice, it also includes the ideas of school innovation and increased school accountability (Garnett, 2017). Vergari (2002) described charter schools as:

Legally and fiscally autonomous educational entities operating within the public school system under contracts or charters. The charters are negotiated between organizers and authorizers. The organizers may be teachers, parents, or others from the public or private sectors. The organizers manage the school, and the authorizers monitor compliance with the charter and applicable state and local rules. (p. 2)

Betts and Hill (2010) provided another definition of charter schools:

Semi-autonomous public schools that receive renewable charters to operate, typically from a host school district or university. Charter schools typically do not follow to the local district's collective bargaining agreement, nor do they strictly follow the district's curriculum and pedagogical approach. In return for the semi-independence, charter schools are accountable to the host district for academic results. The host district has the option of closing down a charter school or deciding not to renew its charter agreement. (p. 1)

Based on these definitions, charter schools are self-governing public schools that are held accountable through written contracts with the charter schools' authorizers for student education and academic achievement (Peterson, 2009).

Data from the noted studies tend to support the finding that charter schools experience the highest teacher attrition rates (Ndoye et al., 2010; Torres, 2016; Vari et al., 2018). Stuit and Smith (2012) concluded that charter school teachers are 130% more likely to leave the profession than their traditional public school counterparts. Ronfeldt et al. (2013) and Torres found that attrition rates in charter schools were much higher than in traditional schools. According to Torres and Oluwole (2015), the attrition rate for charter schools was 20%-25% , while the attrition rate in traditional schools was 15%. Torres and Oluwole noted that despite the differences in attrition rates, the reasons

teachers gave for leaving both types of schools are similar, including poor working conditions and student performance.

Torres and Oluwole (2015) reviewed literature on charter school teacher retention that portrayed these teachers as overworked and underpaid. Sawchuk (2015b) stated that charter school teachers have larger workloads, significantly lower salaries, and longer work hours compared to traditional public teachers. Schools that set out to improve these working conditions increased the possibilities of attracting and retaining teachers (Torres & Oluwole, 2015). There is evidence of direct relationships between teachers' perceptions of working conditions and decisions to remain at their current schools (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Torres & Oluwole, 2015; Torres, 2016).

Teacher retention is a challenge for many school districts (Bland et al., 2014; Hughes, 2012; Latifoglu, 2016). For charter schools, teacher retention is a greater problem than for traditional public schools. In comparison to traditional public schools, charter schools have even higher attrition rates, with 20% to 25% of the teachers leaving after the first year (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Torres, 2016). Retaining teachers is a great challenge for most charter schools. Understanding teachers' decisions to remain at charter schools may help charter school administrators improve recruiting efforts, attract more teachers, reduce teacher turnover, and improve teacher retention.

Summary

Chapter Two was a comprehensive review of the factors that affect teacher retention. I also explored Herzberg's (1968) motivational theory, which helps to explain why teachers decide to leave the teaching professions as well as factors that influence them to stay. Factors that impact teacher retention were identified in the literature (Bland

et al., 2014; Hughes et al., 2015; Morettini, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Chapter Three presents the methodology for the qualitative phenomenological approach that was used in this study to determine the factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain at a charter school for 2 years or more.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three presents the present study's methodological framework and procedures as well as rationales for choosing these approaches. Sampling procedures, participant selection methods, data collection and analysis, and ethical and validity considerations are discussed. The chosen conceptual framework supported the research question that guided this exploration: What factors contribute to teachers' decisions to remain working at a charter school for 2 years or more? A qualitative phenomenological approach was identified as appropriate for this study. This approach allows for different types of questions to be asked and answered and for eliciting the views of study participants while uncovering common themes in a particular subject (Creswell, 2013).

The research goal was to provide an overall picture of charter school teachers in terms of their commitment and the consistency of their attitudes toward their jobs over the duration of their careers. Extensive research has been conducted on teachers' reasons for leaving schools (Albright et al., 2017; Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Dupriez et al., 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Simos & Fink, 2013; Torres, 2016). However, few researchers have focused specifically on factors that impact teachers' decisions to remain with charter schools. It is critical that school leaders understand the factors that promote teacher retention. Knowing the factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain with charter schools can also help district human resource directors attract highly qualified teachers.

The literature review informing the study focused on several possible theoretical explanations for high teacher attrition rates in charter schools (Ndoye et al., 2010; Torres & Oluwole, 2015; Torres, 2016; Vari et al., 2018). Extrinsic factors that influence teacher retention include working conditions and administrative support. Intrinsic motivators

include personal beliefs and job satisfaction. While research suggested that certain intrinsic and extrinsic motivators contribute to teachers' decisions to remain at a charter school for 2 years or more (Grund et al., 2016; Larkin et al., 2016), using a phenomenological approach in the present study helped to achieve a rich and thick understanding of the factors that promote teacher longevity in charter schools.

Methodological Approach

Qualitative research focuses on things in natural settings and on making sense and interpreting the meanings of these things or phenomena related to people's perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2015). Of the various possible qualitative approaches (case study, narrative, ethnography, grounded theory, etc.), phenomenology was identified as the best fit for the present study.

Unlike quantitative research, phenomenology provides insights into the lived experiences of a group or person (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Merriam and Tisdell stated that the purpose of phenomenological research is to derive the essential or universal meaning of an experience and its structure in order to form a comprehensive description of it and that "the understanding of meaningful, concrete relations implicit in the original description of experience in the context of a particular situation is the primary target of phenomenological knowledge" (p. 24). Phenomenology was appropriate for discovering factors that influenced teachers' decisions to remain at their current charter school for 2 or more years as it allowed these teachers to recall and put a voice to their particular experiences and to describe their lived experiences and the phenomenon of charter school teacher retention.

Sampling Procedure

The sample size for this study was 14 teachers who had worked 2 or more years at a charter school in Indiana. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), findings are not generalizable when the sample group is too small. Likewise, too many participants will also render gathered data impossible to accurately interpret (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Since the intention of qualitative research is to determine how participants assign meaning and understanding to their world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), a sample size of 14 participants allowed for identifying emerging patterns of behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes regarding factors that impacted their decisions to remain at a charter school for 2 or more years. The sample included K–12 teachers across various disciplines who varied in gender, ethnicity, years of experience, and educational background. Since the school names were not used and the participants' names did not appear in the study results, permission from the superintendent and principal of the schools was not needed to contact teachers.

Snowball sampling, a type of purposeful sampling, was used to recruit the participants. Purposeful sampling entails identifying study participants with certain traits or qualities (Benoot, Hannes, & Bilsen, 2016). In this sampling method, research participants help to recruit other participants who fit the study criteria. Snowball sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to identify participants who are unknown to the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Snowball sampling uses the identified participants' social networks to build a sample (Emerson, 2015). A key advantage of this approach is identifying individuals from unknown populations beyond

any known segments of a given population (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Using this strategy also tends to increase study credibility (Emerson, 2015).

Recruitment Procedures

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain insights from teachers on their thoughts surrounding factors that impact teacher retention in charter schools. I conducted this study with teachers who willingly consented to participate and who were each employed at charter schools in Indiana for 2 or more years. I first obtained written permission to conduct this study from the institutional review board at National Louis University, Chicago Campus. After obtaining approval, I began contacting potential candidates to solicit their participation. Using the contact information on school websites, I sent recruitment emails (see Appendix A) to 30 potential candidates. The recruitment email also explained the research purpose. Of the 30 potential candidates contacted, 10 replied and agreed to be part of the study. These 10 participants were asked by phone or email if they could refer other teachers who fit the study criteria. Five recommended other potential candidates. The other participants' information was recorded, and the same recruiting process was followed with them to seek their consent to participate in the study. Four more teachers were added to the study for a total of 14 participants.

I contacted participants either by phone or email to schedule an agreed-upon interview time. Each participant was emailed a consent form (see Appendix B) before their scheduled interview to give them time to review it and a reminder of their interview time and day. The informed consent contained the study's purpose, description of research, risks, benefits, acquisition of new information, confidentiality, withdrawal

abilities, and researcher and dissertation chair contact information. The signed consent forms were collected before the interviews began.

Teachers were asked to participate until data saturation was reached. Saturation occurs after a certain number of interviews are conducted and the researcher determines that no further new information is being obtained on the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). Interviews are one method used in studies to obtain data saturation. Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested that interview questions be structured to facilitate asking multiple participants the same questions, otherwise data saturation will not be achievable. Failure to reach data saturation impacts the quality of the research conducted and hampers content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Data Collection

Once the study participants were identified, I scheduled in-person or phone interviews with them. The chosen locations allowed for privacy. The interviews were scheduled based on the participants' availability. Interviews were either conducted by phone or in-person.

Data were collected through open-ended individual interviews with all participants relaying their experiences as teachers at charter schools and the factors that impacted their decisions to remain working at charter schools for 2 or more years. All participants were asked the same questions.

Before the interviews began, study participants completed a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C). This brief questionnaire was used only to identify demographic and individual participant information including gender, age group, grade level taught, and years of teaching experience in a charter school. This information was

not used in data analysis. I also reminded the participants that their participation was voluntary, and they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

All participants received an overview of the interview protocol (see Appendix D) for this study prior to their interviews. All participants were asked to return their consent forms to me before their interviews started.

Each participant participated in one 45- to 60-min interview. I used open-ended questions (see Appendix E) from a previous related study to conduct the interviews with the study participants. All interviews were audio recorded for transcription and coding purposes. Audio recording ensures accurately preserving everything that was said (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). All participants were notified that the interview session would be recorded and were given the choice not to be recorded. All participants agreed to be interviewed and recorded.

Data Analysis

A licensed transcriber transliterated the recorded interviews. Numbers were assigned to each participant to protect confidentiality and anonymity. After the interviews were transcribed, all participants received a copy of their interviews to review for accuracy. No changes were made after the reviews.

I used NVivo to organize the data and to assist in coding them to uncover common themes and patterns. In qualitative research, data analysis requires the researcher to find themes, trends, or relationships in the acquired data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). For the present study, trends were identified by analyzing each question and searching for themes that indicated similarities and differences in the participants' perceptions. The data were organized into categories. Common themes were derived

from a coding system in which I used various words to represent certain phrases or statements that were common among the participants' responses. This coding process included grouping parallel responses in order to recognize patterns uncovered during the interviewing process. I used the following six-step data analysis process described by Creswell (2013) to identify the themes related to the phenomenon of teacher retention at charter schools:

1. Organize and prepare the data analysis. This included transcribing interviews, typing field notes, and arranging the data into different types.
2. Read through all the data.
3. Start coding the data and organizing it by bracketing chunks and writing words representing categories in the transcript margins.
4. Use a coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis.
5. Determine how to represent the descriptions and themes in the qualitative narrative.
6. Interpret the findings and results.

I used thematic data analysis to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative approach that helps to identify, evaluate, and provide patterns in the collected data (Creswell, 2013). This approach helps to solidify qualitative research findings as it yields meaningful and useful results from the data gathered.

Validity

To ensure study validity, participants were given an opportunity to review their questionnaire responses and interview transcripts for accuracy. They also had the

opportunity to review and provide feedback regarding the completed study's findings. This member checking approach helps to ensure data accuracy and researcher accountability (Creswell, 2013). With member checking, the researcher uses thick, rich description when recounting the process, results, and analysis of the interviews, questionnaires, and document review (Creswell, 2013). This detailed description improves the transferability of the findings because it allows the reader to apply the findings and/or descriptions to his/her own experience. Thus, participant or member checking documented throughout the study also enhances transferability and confirmability (Creswell, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

Anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy were established for all participants. Safeguards of participant confidentiality included number coding the interview transcripts, obtaining consent before beginning the interviews, audio recording the interviews, conducting the interviews at a location that assured participant privacy and protection, and informing participants that no individually identifiable information would be reported in the research results.

All study information was available only to me and the professional transcriber, who signed a confidentiality agreement. All data and results were referenced by the assigned numbers. No names or other personally identifiable information, including school names or locations, were used. Participants were informed that they could choose not to comment on answer any question that made them feel uncomfortable. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point without penalty of any type.

Participant privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity were further protected by keeping all data and results in a secure location and locked file cabinet. All audio recordings, transcripts, and notes will be destroyed 3 years after study completion.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the factors that influenced teachers to remain at a charter school for 2 or more years. This chapter detailed the study methodology, including participant selection, data collection and analysis, steps taken to ensure credibility and transferability, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four is a discussion of the study findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Factors that impact teachers' decisions to remain at charter schools were explored in this qualitative phenomenological study. Study participants were teachers with a minimum of 2 years of experience teaching in charter schools. Fourteen charter school educators teaching at elementary through secondary levels participated in extensive face-to-face or telephone interviews about their jobs with specific emphasis on factors associated with retention. This data collection method afforded the participants the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences as charter school teachers and the factors that impacted their decisions to remain at charter schools. Thematic analysis was used to identify emerging themes from the participants' responses to the interview questions.

The 14 participants worked at 12 different charter schools located in central and northwest Indiana. They were interviewed over a period of 31 days in December 2018. They were asked seven interview questions to gain their personal perspectives on the factors influencing teacher retention. The interviews were no more than 60 minutes in length and were audio recorded. Participants' responses were transcribed verbatim and coded. NVivo software was used to identify common themes in their responses.

Chapter Four presents study results and is organized by the interview questions. The data presented begin with a description of each study participant. Next is an analysis of the recurring themes that emerged from the interviews. These themes reflect the factors that contributed to each participant's decision to remain at a charter school for 2 or more years.

Study Results

For this study, 14 teachers who had 2 or more years working at charter schools

located in Indiana were interviewed. Participants taught in charter schools located in urban areas in central and northwest Indiana. Eighty-six percent of the participants worked in charter schools located central Indiana, and 14% of the participants worked at charter schools located in Northwest Indiana. Twenty-one percent of the participants were elementary school teachers, 43% were middle school teachers, and 36% were high school teachers. All participants were certified teachers. Of the 14 participants, four (29%) were male, and 10 (72%) were female. Two participants were Caucasian (14%), 11 were African American (79%), and one participant was multiracial (7%). Their ages reflected a broad range, but all were in middle adulthood. Five participants were in their 20s (38%), four were in their 30s (31%), and four were in their 40s (31%). Four participants held a bachelor's degree (31%), and 10 held a master's degree (69%). Table 1 details the participant demographics. Following the table are brief descriptions of each participant's educational background and experience. The participants' school profiles were located on Indiana Department of Education website.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Participant #	Gender	Age (in years)	Ethnicity	Degree earned	Years in education	Years in charter school	Subject and grade level(s) taught
1	F	28	African American	Master's	8	5	Math 9–12
2	F	38	African American	Bachelor's	6	6	English 5–8
3	F	29	Caucasian	Master's	8	5	English 9–12
4	F	36	African American	Master's	11	6	English 7–8
5	F	25	Caucasian	Master's	4	4	English 9–12
6	F	48	African American	Master's	24	10	Math 8
7	F	48	African American	Master's	10	8	Elementary 6
8	F	27	African American	Master's	6	6	Special education 6–8
9	M	31	African American	Bachelor's	4	3	Science 7–8
10	F	29	African American	Bachelor's	4	2	Social studies 7–8
11	M	44	African American	Bachelor's	18	12	Physical education 4–8
12	F	38	African American	Master's	15	14	Music 9–12
13	M	34	Multiracial	Master's	11	4	Math 10
14	M	32	African American	Master's	8	2	Math 7–8

Participant 1

Participant 1 was an educator for 8 years. Five of these years were in charter schools. She had a master's degree in education and taught high school math. In her interview, she stated that she wanted to become a teacher since she was a young girl. She worked at an urban charter school located in central Indiana. The school is a high school serving Grades 9 through 12. Three hundred and sixty-three students were enrolled, with 87.1% Black, 6.1% Hispanic, 3.6% multiracial, and 3% White.

Participant 2

Participant 2 had 6 years of teaching experience. She worked at a charter school for all of these years. She taught at an urban charter school located in central Indiana that serves Grades K through 8. The charter school had 509 students (89.2% Black, 4.9% multiracial, 3.9% Hispanic, and 1.8% White). She had a bachelor's degree in education. Participant 2 taught English to middle school students.

Participant 3

Participant 3 worked as an educator for 8 years. Five of these years were in charter schools. She had a master's of education degree and taught high school English. She worked at an urban charter school located in central Indiana. The charter school is a high school serving Grades 9 through 12. Enrollment was 363 students (87.1% Black, 6.1% Hispanic, 3.6% multiracial, and 3% White).

Participant 4

Participant 4 had 11 years of teaching experience. She taught for 6 years at an urban charter school in central Indiana that serves Grades 7 and 8. The charter school

enrolled 262 students (88% Black, 3% Hispanic, 7% multiracial, and 2% White). She had a master's degree in education with certification in elementary and secondary education, and she taught English.

Participant 5

Participant 5 had 4 years of teaching experience, all at an urban charter school. This school is located in central Indiana and serves Grades 9 through 12. Enrollment was 234 students (67.2% Black, 14% White, 13.1% Hispanic, and 5.6% multiracial). She had a master's degree in education with certification in secondary education. She taught high school English.

Participant 6

Participant 6 had 24 years of teaching experience with 10 years at a charter school. She had a master's degree in education with certification in secondary education. She taught middle school math. The central Indiana urban charter school she worked at served 185 students (96.2% Black, 2.7% multiracial, 0.5% White, and 0.5% Hispanic) in Grades 6 through 8.

Participant 7

Participant 7 was in education for 10 years and a charter school teacher for 8 of these years. She had a master's degree in education with a certification in elementary education. She taught fifth and sixth grade classes at an urban charter school in central Indiana. The school served 534 students (83.7% Black, 9.9% Hispanic, 4.3% multiracial, and 1.5% White) in Grades K through 6.

Participant 8

Participant 8 worked in education for 6 years, all at a charter school. She was

certified in special education and secondary education. Participant 8 had a master's degree and taught middle school students. The urban charter school she worked at is located in central Indiana. It served 276 students (90.9% Black, 4.3% multiracial, 4% Hispanic, and 0.7% White) in Grades 6 through 8.

Participant 9

Participant 9 had a bachelor's degree in secondary education. He had 4 years of education experience with 3 years at a charter school. He was a middle school science teacher. He worked at an urban charter school in central Indiana that served 293 students (42.3% Black, 37.9% White, 13% Hispanic, 5.5% multiracial, and 1.4% Asian) in Grades 7 and 8.

Participant 10

Participant 10 was a teacher for 4 years, with 2 years at an urban charter school in central Indiana. She had a bachelor's degree and taught middle school social studies. The charter school served 132 students (88% Black, 3% Hispanic, 7% multiracial, and 2% White) in Grades 7 and 8.

Participant 11

Participant 11 was a physical education teacher with 18 years of teaching experience. He worked at an urban charter school located in northwest Indiana for 12 years. He had a bachelor's degree in physical education and taught Grades K through 8. The charter school served 701 students (89.9% Black, 6.7% Hispanic, 2.4% multiracial, and 0.7% White) in Grades K through 8.

Participant 12

Participant 12 had a master's degree in education. She taught for 15 years at various K–12 grade levels. Fourteen years were at one charter school. She was a music teacher at the time of her interview. She worked at an urban charter school in northwest Indiana. The school served 720 students (90% Black, 5% Hispanic, 4.3% multiracial, and 0.7% White) in Grades 9 through 12.

Participant 13

Participant 13 was a high school math teacher. He had 11 years of educational experience, with 4 at an urban charter school in central Indiana. He had a master's in education degree with certification in special education. The school served Grades 9 through 12 and enrolled 889 students (59.6% Black, 23.5% White, 9% Hispanic, 6.4% multiracial, and 1.2% Asian).

Participant 14

Participant 14 had 8 years in education. He was employed at his current charter school for 2 years. He held a bachelor's degree in secondary education and taught middle school math. The urban charter school was located in central Indiana. It served 695 students (90.9% Black, 4.3% multiracial, 4% Hispanic, and 0.7% White) in Grades 7 and 8.

Reasons for Teaching

The study participants shared many similar experiences of working in a charter school. For instance, the participants shared the challenges of working with limited resources and experiencing the rewards of seeing their students grow. As they shared their experiences, differences and similarities to what the literature shows about factors

that influence teachers' decisions to leave charter schools became apparent. In this chapter, evidence surrounding the factors impacting teachers' decision to remain at a charter school for two years or more are presented.

To understand why these teachers chose to remain at a charter school for 2 years or more, it was helpful to frame the interview questions around two categories that helped to determine descriptive details for each participant's lived experiences: (a) reasons for teaching and (b) current experiences working at a charter school. The first two interview questions asked participants to share their personal reasons for becoming a teacher and choosing to teach at a charter school.

Interview Question 1

Interview Question 1 was, What were your reasons for becoming a teacher? The 14 participants spoke of the extrinsic and/or intrinsic factors that served as their purpose in life and as motivators for planning a full career in teaching. Some teachers indicated that they knew from the beginning of their career selection process that they wanted to become a teacher; others maintained their commitment to giving back to their community to increase the societal value of their students' lives or a life experience led them to teaching. Participant 1, a high school math teacher, expressed her belief that she realized her life's purpose to teach at a young age:

Well, I had interest in teaching when I was really young, and I played school a lot with my siblings. When I went to college out of high school, I knew I wanted to do something math related . . . I went for the transitional teaching program my senior year.

Participant 12 also felt her call to teaching was there from her childhood:

I've always enjoyed people. I used to talk to my stuffed animals when I was a child and pretend that I was a teacher in front of my closet. I always wanted to become a teacher and so in fifth grade I started to write on a chalkboard for my

class assignments. I graduated from high school; I wanted to become a teacher and that's what I went to become.

Participant 9 indicated that his purpose for becoming a teacher was to impact the lives of young people. Participant 10 also referenced her own personal motivations that contributed to her desire of wanting to become a teacher. Participant 10's convictions on her purpose in life led her through 15 years of experience in the classroom. Her response indicated the presence of an intrinsic foundational belief of helping others that led to teaching, a trait also exhibited in Participants 4, 11, 13, and 14.

Participant 4, an enthusiastic middle school English teacher with 11 years of teaching experience, showed that her desire to serve children of her race led her to teaching. She stated, "I mainly became a teacher because I wanted students in the community I served to see someone who looked like them." Similar reasons were expressed by Participants 11, 13, and 14. With 18 years of teaching experience, Participant 11 stated, "One of my most important reasons for becoming a teacher is basically to give back to my community." Participant 13 stated, "I wanted to make a difference in the world, mainly by trying to get students, especially those who are underprivileged, a better education, and to make a difference in their lives." Participant 14 stated, "My reason for becoming a teacher was to be able to interact and help educate those in urban education. Being an inner-city male myself, I could identify with the kids in my community and help elevate them."

Five participants were led into teaching by a life experience. Participant 2 shared how working at school as an assistant led her to becoming a teacher. She stated, "Once I finished high school, I actually ended up in special needs department in a school as an assistant, and I liked it. When I went back to school, I majored in education to become a

teacher.” Participant 3 shared her life experience that led her to teaching:

So, I became a teacher almost by accident. I went to college initially to be an environmental science major, and it didn't feel right, so I transferred schools. When I looked at all the jobs I ever had, I've been a camp counselor for a number of years tutoring kids. So, I figured it made sense for me to try education. So, I took courses in education and was hooked. I said at that moment I was supposed to do with my life.

Participants 6 and 8 also described them becoming a teacher as accidental.

Participant 6 stated:

My reasons for becoming a teacher was a total accident. Out of college, I started off as classroom assistant which led to a permanent sub position at a local school. While serving as a substitute teacher, I was asked to become a permanent teacher. This led me to go back to school to become a teacher. It was totally by accident and was not on purpose.

Participant 8 shared:

Honestly, it happened by accident. I wanted to become an attorney, but I was late applying to law school my senior year of college. When I graduated, I didn't have a job. My father was the Superintendent of a local school and offered me a job as a teacher. I accepted the offer and went back to school to become a teacher. So, it initially just started as a job but later turned into a passion.

Lastly, Participant 7 served as a volunteer at a local school in her community.

During her time there, she built positive relationships with the students. It was those relationships that led her to become a teacher.

Interview Question 2

Interview Question 2 was: What were your reasons you chose to teach at a charter school? The emerging themes from this interview question included smaller school setting, first opportunity offered, recommended for the job, interaction with a charter school principal, and familiarity with charter schools. Three participants cited previous experience with charter schools. Participant 2 said, “The school that I started at I decided to teach there because of the mission. My brother had graduated from there, I knew the

students who had went there, and my children had gone there.” Participant 7 said:

That was the opportunity, one of the first opportunities that came my way. My children attended charter schools, so I was familiar with it and just stayed with the charter schools. I liked the family atmosphere and the small setting.

Participant 8 said:

I went to a charter school, and I graduated from a charter school. So, it was a lot about going back to the place that I called home. I think that was probably the biggest influence in me going to a charter school was that I saw the benefits of it through everything that it allotted to me. So if I could help kids get the same education that I got I was down for it.

Several participants noted the structure of charter schools, including their size, as factors in their decisions. Participant 5 said, “I liked the structure of charter schools. I choose a charter school because it has a small school setting. Public schools have more students in a classroom than a charter school.” Participant 9 said:

I felt like charter schools allow for flexibility in terms of what you teach and how you teach. Charter schools eliminate a lot of the bureaucracy that you find in education whereas a public school you have a lot of checks and balances which are good checks and balances. However, I feel like charter schools allow you to speak directly with the principal and with game changers, rule changers, which help to expedite changes a lot faster than you would have hoped for.

Participants 4, 6, 10, and 13 stated that they had no specific reasons for their choosing to teach at a charter school. Participant 4 said that a charter school was the first to hire her. Participant 10 said, “It just happened that way. I just wanted to work with youth in general. Someone I knew recommended me for a teaching opening at a charter school. I went in for the interview and landed the job.” Participant 13 said, “More or less, it was because the first charter school I was at, I had met the principal there, and she and I got to talking, and I actually enjoyed her vision of her school.” Participant 6 said:

Actually, I just kind of fell into a charter school. My intention was not in charter schools. I started off in a public school setting, and then it just transitioned into a position because one of the schools I was working at had closed. I called one of my fellow colleagues for a position. They were able to give me a teaching job at

a charter school. So, that's the first charter school that I started at, and I've been in charter schools ever since. I fell in love with the small school setting. Public school was too big.

Participant 11 said that the choice was not necessarily a choice:

It was probably an opportunity in between me being hired at what would be considered a public school versus a charter school. I was in between certifications at the time. It was hard to get a job with the public school because I wasn't completely certified as a teacher. The opportunity came up for me to teach at a charter school as a substitute teacher. From that position of being a substitute teacher while waiting to complete my certification program, I had the opportunity to teach in a classroom. And then another opportunity opened up for me to get on as a physical education teacher as well. I worked on an emergency permit as a physical education teacher. Later that same year, I became a certified teacher.

Participant 12 said:

When I moved back home from college, the city that I lived in they were not hiring at all. So, I had to find any open positions in the area and so a charter school had started in a nearby community. So, I applied, and I got the job.

Participant 1's comments reflected a number of factors, including the chance to be involved in a new school and knowing the principal and his work ethics:

There's probably two big ones, probably three I would guess I would say were big factors. The first one was that this was a new charter school. So, I like the idea of being a part of a team that started something new and to see how successful we could be. Another reason was because of the fact the principal was my friend. He had a lot to do with me transitioning over to here. I knew him as a friend, as a teammate, and as a person. I knew that his work ethic was very strong. So, working under him was idea because I was moving from a school where we did have a very good leadership and then it switched over to not so great. So, I had to get out of that environment while I had the chance.

Then the last reason was because I enjoyed the financial mindset behind the charter school. I don't really agree with your typical public school set salaries just based on your typical years of experience and your level of degree. I believe that if people work really hard they should get paid for what they're worth. I like the idea of being in an environment where my pay wasn't set and where I could negotiate my based on my abilities and I could work harder to be paid more and not give you some sort of motivation. Every person would be lying if they say money wasn't some type of motive for them and so, I feel that the charter schools' idea understands that and you're able to get paid what you're worth.

Participant 3's comments also reflected the principal's influence on her choice:

My interaction I had with a principal of a charter school made me realize that I needed to step into a charter school. The principal of the charter school made me realize that students at his school needed an advocate like myself. So, I started working for the charter school.

Finally, Participant 14 said:

The reason why I chose a charter school was because a friend of mine asked if I would join her team and help move students academically. Plus, my school was restructuring, and my position was in question. I went to work with my friend at the charter school.

To recap, four participants chose to become charter school teachers because these schools offered smaller school settings than public schools. For this study, smaller school setting referred to small class sizes of no more than 25 students and the school's enrollment of less than 1,000 students. Three participants shared that it was not their intention to work at a charter school. They needed a job, and someone close to them had recommended them for a teaching position at a charter school. Two other participants chose to teach at a charter school because of their positive experiences with charter schools and their familiarity with the operations of charter schools gained from attending a charter school as a student or they had close family members who attended a charter school. Having a positive interaction with a charter school principal led Participant 3 and Participant 13 to work for a charter school.

Participant 1 stated that the salary she was offered was another motivator to work at a charter school. She shared how public schools were not able to offer what she thought her worth was as a teacher. This finding differs from findings in the literature that charter school teachers were underpaid in comparison to public school teachers (Sawchuk, 2015b; Torres & Oluwole, 2015).

Charter School Experiences

Interview Questions 3 thru 5 allowed participants to share their lived experiences

working as a charter school teacher.

Interview Question 3

Interview Question 3 was: What were your experiences working in a charter school over the years? I examined the responses from each of the participants to identify collective themes regarding their experiences working in a charter school as a teacher.

The developing themes consisted of workload, smaller school size, turnover, development, and limited resources.

Workload. When asked about their experiences working at a charter school, Participants 1 and 2 found that their workload in comparison to working in a public school was greater. Participant 1 explained how she was hired as a math teacher but was later asked to fill in for the Spanish teacher opening. She stated that having significantly high workloads is expected in charter schools:

Working at a public school, your teaching assignment was your only job, this was the description of your job, and you didn't really steer out of it. In a charter school, your job has a description, but you are required to do things that are outside of your job description. For instance, I was hired as the math teacher, but since they couldn't fill the Spanish teaching position, I became the Spanish teacher as well. Don't get me wrong, I expected that in a charter school, but your duties are immensely [a significantly higher amount], but it allows you to develop as a teacher and a professional.

Participant 2 had similar feelings about charter school teachers having higher workloads than public school teachers:

I would say my experience in charter schools is having a large workload. I know that my workload at my charter school is more than the teachers I know at public schools. Also, from my experience, charter schools like to promote from within. If you want to advance in your position, then a charter school is the place to be. I was able to advance.

Findings of earlier studies agree with these findings that charter school teachers have higher workloads. Torres and Oluwole (2015) reviewed literature on charter school

teacher retention that portrayed charter school teachers as overworked and underpaid.

Sawchuk (2015b) argued that charter school teachers have larger workloads, significantly lower salaries, and longer work hours compared to traditional public teachers.

Smaller school size. Other participants shared how the smallness of a charter school has allowed them to be, as Participant 5 described it, “hands on” with students.

Participant 6 described it as being “workable.” Participant 5 said:

I was able to be hands on with all of the current seniors like helping them choose their profession, I wouldn't be able to do this in a public school—it will be too big for me to reach all of them and be hands on.

Participant 13 shared:

From my experience, charter schools can seem more intimate than public schools. This is because charter schools have a smaller staff, smaller school, and smaller class sizes than the public schools that I've been at. Charter schools allow teachers to more in tune with what the students' needs academically and behaviorally.

Turnover. Staff turnover was another shared experience about being a teacher in a charter school. Three participants experienced significant staff turnover during their time as charter school teachers. Participant 1 described the staff turnover while working at a charter school as a bad experience and stated that it is a constant issue. Similarly, Participant 3 experienced “huge” staff turnovers while working at a charter school and said, “I think it's the nature of the start-up charter school” as well as part of the highs and lows of being employed at these schools.

Participant 12 shared that the staff turnover she had experience with was with leadership. She stated the “major hiccups” in charter schools right now are the inconsistency of leadership. She further shared, “I've always had an in-and-out type of boss working atmospheres, always been somebody new, a new direction, a new person leading the team every year. I haven't had consistency while working at a charter

school.”

Training and development. Five participants identified the training and development they received while working at charter schools. This included the training administrators provided to teachers, feedback received from administrators, and teachers growing by learning new skills. All five participants attributed their development to their administrators supporting their professional growth. The participants shared how they were able to learn new things as a teacher in a charter school. When asked about his experience working at a charter school, Participant 11 gave the longest answer. He talked about his professional development opportunities he had while at a charter school:

One of the experiences coming into the charter school that really made me decide to join them was because at the beginning of the year, they had these intense professional development seminars. At these seminars, pretty much the teacher had an opportunity to learn the curriculum and to be proficient with getting training so that they would be able to use that curriculum in a classroom. My experience as a physical education teacher was them sending me to San Diego, California. several years to learn how to teach kindergarten through 12th grade physical education. Having that opportunity to travel and to go to conferences, and not only learn at the conference, but learn from those people who attended the conferences who had been in education for years, made me appreciate my craft and really take it seriously. In terms of teaching students about their bodies physically and health-wise.

The other four participants echoed the same sentiments by clearly stating that they felt they had developed as a teacher when working at a charter school. Participant 9 noted that having direct feedback from his principal allowed him to grow professionally in areas such as curriculum development:

I feel like I’ve grown significantly as a teacher because I chose to work at a charter school. I’ve talked to some of my peers who work at public schools, and they didn’t have same experience at me. They felt like they didn’t personally grow as a teacher, and they don’t have as much poured into them from the leadership. I did feel like leadership developed me as a teacher.

In the literature reviewed for this study, previous research findings showed that

administrative support was frequently associated with teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Hughes et al., 2015; Torres, 2016). Hughes et al. and Torres found that teachers only decide to remain at their current teaching assignments or in the profession if administrators provide support (i.e., professional development and observational feedback) and are effective in their roles. Thirty-six percent of the participants in this study shared positive experiences as a charter school teacher due to having administrative support. The administrative support participants valued was the feedback on their performance as a teacher, which moved them in a direction to maximize their overall effectiveness and created an environment where teachers felt comfortable to ask their administrators for assistance and the professional development/training offered. Participant 11 shared how attending a professional development conference for physical education teachers his administrator afforded him had deepened his understanding of his curriculum content, which allowed him to be more effective as a teacher.

Limited resources. Four participants stated that their charter schools had limited resources in comparison to public schools. Participants 3, 4, 13, and 14 shared that they did not have the resources needed to support their students academically. All four participants wished their charter schools had the funding to provide the needed resources for students.

Interview Question 4

Interview Question 4 was: What is challenging about being a charter school teacher? The major factors study participants deemed challenging when working at a charter school were lack of financial resources, turnover, and workload.

Lack of financial resources. Participant 8 said, “I would definitely say resources. Like being a special education teacher and knowing all of these resources that you know your kids need but I don’t have the money for it, so you’re going to have make do.” Participant 13 simply stated, “Definitely having to be creative in regards to obtaining resources, especially when your school don’t have the money to provide it.”

Participant 2 stated:

I would say the previous charter school was lack of resources. Money is always an issue. I think that affects a lot of things, that affects your teachers and how much you pay them. It affects your students because like what resources are you able to provide for them. I think the biggest thing is funding.

Turnover. Four participants said the staff turnover that they experienced while in charter schools was challenging. According to the participants, the staff turnover created instability in the schools. Participant 11 shared:

One of the challenging things being a person that grew up in the community and teaching students in the community that I grew up in that you see the huge turnover in teachers coming in and out of the school. And because of that, I think that sets the reality of instability.

Similarly, Participant 12 felt that it had been a challenge working at her charter school because of the staff turnover. She stated that her school had significant staff turnover every year, which caused inconsistencies in the school. Participant 12 pointed out:

Because staff and leadership change year after year, the demands on the teachers and students change as well. One year the teachers are working on data and students are expected to do a certain thing. Then the next year it changes because staff and leadership has changed which cause inconsistency all around. I think one of the biggest challenges in charter schools I’ve experienced is staff turnover because it causes inconsistency with school culture and expectations for staff and students.

Two of these four participants discussed how not having a union contributes to staff turnover. Participant 1 said:

I know the biggest challenges about charter schools are teachers can come and go very easily, whether it's because they choose to or because they are forced to. There is no contract or union that holds you not being able to lose your job. For that reason, I feel that people who struggle to be effective dislike the idea of working at a charter school. Every year I have been at a charter school, I've experienced teachers getting fired because they are ineffective or just leaving because they couldn't handle the demands of a charter school teacher. Both leaves vacancies in the classroom having the ones left to fill it therefore working harder.

Participant 7 stated that a challenge for charter school teachers was that not having a union in these schools made teachers easily disposable, and it was hard for them to fight for themselves when things did not go right. She noted that she had seen many teachers get let go year after year for various reasons and/or teachers leaving because they did not like how administration treated them and the negative effect this treatment had on the school culture. These findings also supported previous findings on the reasons for high student attrition rates in charter schools (Ndoye et al., 2010; Torres, 2016; Vari et al., 2018).

Workload. Two participants stated that the large workload was challenging for them as charter school teachers. Participant 3 simply stated, "Probably the hardest part of being a charter school teacher is the workload. Sometimes the workload could be so much that it can be challenging to get things caught up." Participant 9 said that his challenge as a charter school teacher was having too much on his plate and not having a lot of time in the day to complete it. He said, "Despite working longer hours than teachers at public school, I still don't have enough hours in a day to complete all the demands that are placed on the teachers."

Interview Question 5

Interview Question 5 was: What is rewarding about being a charter school teacher? All study participants felt working at a charter school had some rewards and

some challenges. When sharing about what was rewarding, the teachers were unanimous about the rewards of being a teacher in general being the same whether in a charter school or a public school. Building relationships and making a difference were the major factors they identified as rewarding working as a teacher. Participant 1 said, “The rewards are kids, their experiences, their interactions with you, the relationships, the skills that they learn throughout the time that you teach them. The rewards of teaching are same across all types of schools.” Participant 3 shared:

I absolutely love my students. They are the people who made me who I’m today. I’m no way the person I was before, and that’s a good thing. They give me just as much as I give them. So, I really enjoy the idea this is where the need is, and I’m part of the need. It has been rewarding. There’s an opportunity to make a difference for somebody else, and I can’t put to words what that mean to me.

Participant 4 simply said, “Just seeing your kids accomplish goals, and they didn’t think they could . . . it’s rewarding, and you have a kid who thanks you for what you did.” Participant 6 stated, “Being able to get close-knit with the families. Getting to really understand and know families and working with families to educate their children because it’s like providing a service for families.” Participant 8 stated, “I would say seeing kids succeed.” Participant 9 said:

I think the number one thing is seeing kids realize their gifts and talents. I love that. You know not every student is science-inclined or gifted in the sciences or the math, but I believe that all students have a gift, and when you’re able to see that gift and unlock it and nurture that gift, kids are more apt to learn. And so I think that’s the biggest reward is seeing growth, not only in their test scores but in their personality and in their social construct as well.

Six participants felt that charter schools allowed them to build relationships and make a difference more than public schools because the smaller environments in charter schools gave them the opportunity to be more hands on with students. Participant 2 described charter schools as being “smaller, more personal, and family oriented.” She

added, “It is important for me to see the growth of my students and be in a family-like atmosphere. Charter schools allows that because they’re smaller than public schools, more personal, and more family oriented.” Participant 4 shared the same perspective as

Participant 2:

My school gives each student an advisory. An advisory is basically a cohort that remains the same during their four years in high school. A teacher is assigned to them for those four years to help navigate their academic journey and hold them accountable. Because of this, I am able to know my students’ families and help guide them through their high school academic school academic journey. I have one student who’s 20 years old with 14 credits who was bringing his grades to me and I assisted him. He now has passing grades. It is very rewarding to track their growth and be a part of those victories. Charter schools are small enough to make that happen. You don’t find that at public schools.

Participant 8 echoed the same thoughts about the rewards of a charter school. She said:

As a teacher, seeing students succeed is rewarding. To see them graduate, go through a rigorous curriculum, and go off to college, I think that’s super rewarding. I also like the relationships I built with my students. I think that the whole family-oriented atmosphere aspect is rewarding. Because our charter school is significantly smaller than your bigger traditional public schools, we can have those relationships.

Lastly, Participant 13 shared that since his charter school was smaller than a public school, it gave it a more “family” feel, which was rewarding because he enjoyed working in this type of environment.

Interview Question 6

Interview Question 6 was: What were your motivations for teaching for (length of service) in a charter school? Responses to this interview question reflected motivational factors including chances for advancement, camaraderie with other teachers, and simply wanting to make a difference in students’ lives. Many participants’ responses reflected

changes in motivation over time. Participant 1 said that her initial motivation was financial, but it changed to the students.

When I got here as a fourth-year teacher, I was making slightly more than a fourth-year teacher was making. After being here for a year and a half, my principal saw my value and increased my pay significantly. It was enough to where probably for the next 2 ½ years—I wouldn't be able to find my pay anywhere else, so why not stay. My motivation is now the kids.

Participant 3's initial motivation was professional growth, which grew to include bonding with the other teachers:

During my second year, I had the best professional growth and coaching I ever had. Um, it was intenseDon't get me wrong, it was work every other day. It was very, very difficult . . . at the end of that I came out a very better teacher. I felt like I can do that, I can really do this. I think that kept me through year three through five is this is something I've started, to be honest it was about our original group of teachers who had been here. We bonded like a family and even though we added people throughout the years, I've really enjoyed the work that we do together.

Similar themes were expressed in Participant 8's comments, who also emphasized the support she received from her administrator:

When I first started teaching, I did not know what I was doing. My administrator gave me support by providing me with feedback on my performance. She also had me in many professional developments that helped me become more skilled in my position. Plus, other teachers in the school helped to develop me as a teacher—almost like they were my mentors. I really appreciate it, like the small, close-knit feel of the charter school.

Comments from Participant 14 also echoed administrator support:

I received a lot of feedback whether it's good or bad, and a lot of motivating feedback from my administrator. Anything that I didn't know I was able to ask my principal, even if she didn't know she found out for me. She also allowed me to do what I felt would benefit my students within my classroom, which was great. I wasn't able to do that in a public school because everything had to be approved by higher ups other than the principal.

For Participants 2 and 4, it was simply about making a difference and feeling needed. Participant 2 said:

I got to know that I'm making a difference. I saw those students when they came in, what their scores were when then came in, and I know what they were when they left. I know I had a part in it.

Participant 4 said:

Feeling needed was the most important part to me. I need to know what I'm doing is making a difference. It's important that I know my students know that I care about them, and I want the best for them. Um, and just building a relationship, it's hard to leave after you've built a relationship with people from co-workers to students as well.

Participants 5 and 10 said it was all about the students and making a difference in their lives. Participant 5 said:

I probably would have left my school because I was there in its founding year and they opened too quickly. It was very chaotic and unorganized. The director didn't have a background in education, so the school was set up to fail. The second year, I got attached to the students. You don't want to disappoint them by leaving. Some of my students have mental health issues; some feel like they aren't getting the support needed. They get attached to the teachers that care about them. For this reason, I can't leave. Also, the grit keeps me here and that's what I tell my significant other about the school. It gets crazy, and other teachers ask what's the purpose of staying? It's hard to put it into words. You have to be crazy to teach.

Participant 10 said:

I feel like once you get rooted in the students' life, you actually build a relationship with them, sometimes that's either the thing that's holding you there, but it's also, on certain days, the thing that makes you want to leave. But, knowing that you are such an important factor in their lives helps me to see the bigger picture. Being able to see the big picture and knowing that you are such a big part of their lives, it kind of makes you grounded in it. It makes you think twice about it just being a job, versus you uprooting the lives of students and putting them through the idea of making those relationships all over again with different teachers. So, that pretty much has kept me grounded, just mostly thinking about the students.

Other comments on this question reflected the charter school culture, including smaller classroom sizes (Participant 6), being at a place where she can provide the best quality of education (Participant 13), consistency and the school's mission (Participant 12), and the challenge of what's coming next as eloquently stated by Participant 11:

Well, I think it was the anticipation and the challenge of what's coming next. Or looking forward to trying to teach something that you have taught before in a different way and noticing that you never can do the same thing twice the exact same way. You always have to customize or differentiate what you're teaching for different types of students. And that within itself keeps you motivated, but it also keeps your mind sharp, because the more you have to cater to different learning styles or change the way you're teaching something, it helps you to become more sharper in your thinking. It makes you consider more in your planning and preparation. So, doing that for me, I've yet to have a dull moment in teaching, and I'm always excited and interested in trying new ideas.

Interview Question 7

Interview Question 7 was: What are other factors that haven't been discussed that influence your continued employment at a charter school? Please elaborate on each factor. Participants 1, 2, 6, 10, and 12 had no additional responses. Participant 3 identified accessibility to the leadership team and the team's transparency as "I prefer as much transparency as possible." Participant 5 said that living close to the school was a factor, "I got attached to the neighborhood of our school . . . working with kids on the east side of town is important to me and a factor in me staying." Participant 7's comments reflected the fact that education is always changing and highlighted the ability to make changes faster in the charter school environment:

In my opinion, the schools where I work, they want you to get better faster. Administrators are able to make real time changes within the charter school unlike a public school. If something didn't work, you're able to implement it immediately. You don't have to wait and go through school boards and red tape, or run everything past everyone. You can just actually make the change happen immediately.

Participant 9's comments highlighted the importance of teachers having a voice in making decisions:

Also, I believe in a smaller school the teachers have more decision-making influence. That, number one, validates me as a professional, but it also allows a lot of buy-in from teachers on the direction of the school. This is something that

I've specifically seen not happen in public schools. In public schools, you typically have a board or a school board to approve decisions whereas in a charter school, decision-making is very inclusive. I think that's a powerful reason why teachers stay is because our voices are heard and our views are validated and listened to.

Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine factors that influence teachers' decisions to stay at a charter school for 2 or more years. The emergent themes from the interview data regarding charter school teacher retention were the following: (a) relationships, (b) making a difference, and (c) teacher development.

Theme 1: Building Relationships

One of the main factors that impacted the study participants' decisions to remain at a charter school for 2 or more years was the relationships built with fellow teachers and with their students. Participant 3 said, "To be honest, it was about our original group of teachers who had been here; we bonded like a family, and even though we added people throughout the years, I've really enjoyed the work that we do together." Participant 5 simply stated, "You get attached to the kids." Participant 7 stated, "I would say the camaraderie between the staff members, the fellowship with the families, and the community." Participant 8 gave the most extensive response, giving no less than seven reasons for her decision to remain at a charter school. She shared how at one point she wanted to leave but thought about her students and changed her mind. Her primary reason for staying at a charter school was because of the relationships she built with the students. For this reason, she felt compelled and committed to stay:

I think about this all the time, honestly because I could have easily went to law school because I got into law school, but I was already teaching, and then I just had that feeling like I cannot leave the kids in the middle of the school year with no teacher, that's traumatic. So, I have to kind of pick kids over myself, and that's probably what has kept me in education in general and especially like charter schools. Thinking about the kids and what they need and putting that over kind of some selfish gain sometimes. They are like they are my own kids.

Similar to Participant 8, Participant 10 was motivated by the relationships she built with students, which compelled and committed her to her work:

I feel like once you get rooted in the students' life, you actually build a relationship with themIt makes you think twice about it just being a job, versus you uprooting the lives of students and putting them through the idea of making those relationships all over again with different teachers.

Participant 14 stated that he stayed because he served as an essential role model for inner-city students and also cited his relationships with his students.

Theme 2: Making a Difference

Participant 2's devotion to making a difference in students' lives motivated her to stay at her current charter school. She said:

I got to know that I'm making a difference. I saw those babies when they came in, what their scores were when they came in, and I know what they were when they left. I know I had a part in it.

Similarly, Participant 6 stayed at her current charter school because of her passion to make a difference in students' lives. She said, "It's my job as an educator to teach them everything that they need in order for them to be successful. So, my passion just for teaching and touching students' lives in general is why I stay in teaching, period."

Participant 13 felt that it was important for him to be employed at a school that cared about the success of students. He said:

If I ever feel like a place is not truly promoting my ideas that will allow the best success of a student, I don't necessarily want to be at that place. I want to make sure that students are getting the education that they deserve.

Theme 3: Teacher Development

Many study participants identified opportunities for professional development as a main motivator to staying at a charter school for 2 years or more. Participant 7 said:

In a charter school, the administrators that I've been connected with have a really strong sense on how to push you further. Like, they really want to push you further to the next arena. Like, it's a non-negotiable, you have to be willing to accelerate, move forward, so that's what I really love about working in the charter school that is a continuum of growth and of excellence. That's the reason why I stay.

Participant 9 was extremely satisfied with the teacher development he received at his current charter school as well. He said that this was one of the reasons why he stayed at the charter school:

Charter schools are the fastest way to grow as a teacher. Leadership will groom you into moving into the next level, whereas in a public school you may not have those options. That's why I've stayed in there for 3 years. I was able to grow, learn, and build to become the best teacher I could be.

Summary

Various initial reasons for becoming charter school teachers became evident often in the interview analysis. These reasons included: (a) a smaller school setting, (b) the first opportunity offered, (c) being recommended for the job, (d) interaction with a charter school principal, and (e) familiarity with the structure of charter schools. All study participants felt working at a charter school had some challenges and rewards. Despite the challenges of heavy workloads, turnover, and limited financial resources, the participants found that the rewards of being in a smaller environment allowed them to build relationships with students and make a difference in their lives. Based on the interview responses, these rewards attracted them to charter schools.

Chapter Four revealed the emerging themes from this phenomenological qualitative study. The study participants identified building relationships, making a

difference, and great teacher development as factors that impacted their decision to remain at a charter school for two years or more. Specific quotes from each study participant were included to provide a rich, comprehensive description of the perceptions of charter school teachers' motivation to remain employed at these schools for 2 years or more. Chapter Five is a summary of the findings of the major themes yielded by the data analysis from this study as well as implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Five is a discussion of the current study's results. It contains the following sections: Summary of Study, Summary of Findings, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations. The following research question guided this study's exploration: What factors contribute to teachers' decisions to remain working at a charter school for 2 or more years?

Summary of the Study

Empirical research presented in Chapter Two focused on overall teacher attrition, turnover, and retention, which are problems for public schools and for charter schools. In this study, research was presented on the cost of teacher turnover, the theory of motivation, and reasons why teachers leave; specifically, why charter school teachers leave. The primary focus was to explain the factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain with a charter school for 2 or more years that may promote teacher retention.

Teacher attrition occurs when teachers leave the teaching profession altogether, including when they retire. Teacher turnover occurs whenever teachers leave a particular school, and teacher retention is when teachers return to their particular school the following school year. Teacher retention has been a challenge for many school districts, especially for charter schools (Bland et al., 2014; Hughes, 2012; Latifoglu, 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Torres, 2016). Because teacher turnover in charter schools is high (Torres, 2016), it is important to understand the factors that influence teachers' decisions to stay (Gomba, 2015).

Because the current study was intended for school administrators, it was important for them to understand the factors that impact teacher retention. Herzberg's

(1968) motivational hygiene theory was presented to highlight factors teachers consider when deciding whether to remain or leave their current school assignments or the profession (Larkin et al., 2016). This theory proposes two factors—satisfaction or dissatisfaction—that affect employees' perceptions of the workplace. Herzberg's theory identifies the following attributes as motivational factors or satisfiers: recognition, the work itself, responsibility, achievement, and growth (Herzberg, 1968; Islam & Ali, 2013). If delivered, the motivational factors or satisfiers will enhance employee satisfaction or motivation, but their absence does not necessarily create dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1968; Islam & Ali, 2013).

Likewise, Herzberg's (1968) theory identified the following attributes as hygiene factor maintenance: company policy, pay, working conditions, and supervision. Dissatisfaction occurs when hygiene factors fall to an unacceptable level and will negatively impact the intent to stay, leading to turnover (Woodworth, 2016). Therefore, it is essential for hygiene factors to be present for workplace satisfaction (Islam & Ali, 2013; Woodworth, 2016). School administrators should know the factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain in a school and strive to create work environments that reflect these factors, including feeling valued and job satisfaction (Vari et al., 2018).

To apply the motivational theory to teachers, studies have shown that when teachers' needs are met and when they are satisfied, they are more inclined to stay in the teaching profession and at their respective schools. Consequently, when their needs are not met, and they are not satisfied, they leave. Ingersoll's (2001) research indicated that more than 50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years. According to the literature reviewed for the present study, new teachers leave because they are

without administrative support, working conditions are poor, salaries are low, and they lack mentoring (Dupriez et al., 2016; Ndoye et al., 2010).

Summary of Findings and Interpretation of Results

While it is important for principals to understand why teachers leave, it is more important for school principals, especially charter school principals, to understand what they need to do to retain teachers. I next summarize and interpret findings that reflect the three key emergent themes from the participant interviews: (a) relationships, (b) making a difference, and (c) teacher development.

Building Relationships

Teachers in this study largely remained at charter schools because of the relationships they built with their students. They believed that the smaller enrollment numbers at these schools helped to foster these relationships. As Participant 2 said, “It is important for me to see the growth of my students and be in a family-like atmosphere. Charter schools allow that because its smaller than public schools, more personal, and more family oriented.”

Simon and Johnson (2015) stated that working environments influence teachers’ decisions to remain at their current employment. The teachers in the current study care deeply about their students, which contributed the most to the participants’ perceptions of their working conditions. Study participants felt committed to their schools because of the relationships they built with students. Participant 1 stated, “The rewards are the kids, their experiences, their interactions with you, the relationships, the skills that they learn throughout the time that you teach them.”

After analyzing the combined interview responses, the word “students” emerged as the overall theme of the qualitative data analysis. This word was used mostly in relation to rapport with teachers and as a motivator for teachers. The participants’ comments affirmed that they remained at their charter schools because of the relationships they had with their students. This concurs with Shann’s (2001) research, which showed that teacher–pupil relationships were the most important factor that influenced teacher job satisfaction based on interviews with 92 teachers in four urban middle schools.

When analyzing the qualitative data, intrinsic rewards appeared to be a major reason why teachers stayed at their charter schools. This finding reflects that in previous research. Teacher–student relationships and student success mattered the most to teachers in this study, just as Geijsel, Oort, Peetsma, Slegers, and Thoonen (2011) reported that intrinsic motivators such as personal teaching efficacy, working with students, and job satisfaction influenced teacher retention. This finding also reflects research by Herzberg (1968) and Islam and Ali (2013) in that organizations with motivation factors or satisfiers (i.e., recognition, the work itself, responsibility, achievement, and growth) present enhance employee satisfaction and motivation to remain with the organization.

Making a Difference

Teachers in this study also expressed that they were satisfied because of the success that their students achieved. Participant 2 shared that she was motivated to remain at her charter school because she saw the difference she was making in her students’ lives. Participant 4 said, “Just seeing your students accomplish goals, and they

didn't think they could . . . it's rewarding." Participant 8's comments were similar, "What is rewarding is seeing my students succeed." Teachers enjoyed seeing their students overcome challenges to further their understanding of educational concepts.

Teachers are motivated by intrinsic rewards and knowing they are making a difference. It is that self-efficacy that motivates teachers to go above and beyond for students to help them learn and understand the importance of an education in order to achieve student success. This aligns with Herzberg's (1968) theory that explains how job satisfaction depends on motivators, and in this case the motivator is the work itself—helping students grow.

Teacher Development

Text analysis from the interviews showed that administrative support for teacher development is an important factor in why teachers stay at their charter schools. Participant 3 stated, "I had the best professional growth and coaching from administration." Participant 8 said, "My administrator was very supportive by giving me feedback to help improve my performance and professional developments that helped me become more skilled in my position." Participant 13 shared that he was motivated to stay at his charter school because his administrator does what is best for students and supports his ideas of what is needed to help his students grow academically. Participant 14 said, "I receive motivating feedback from my administrator and trusts me in providing instruction that is best for my students." These comments align with findings from other studies showing that administrative support was essential in retaining teachers (Hughes et al., 2015; Ndoye et al., 2010; Prather-Jones, 2011; Torres, 2016).

The study participants felt like they received constructive criticism that helped them grow, and even when they did not know what to do as a teacher for their students, their administrators guided them in the right direction. The teachers also felt that administrative support was provided through targeted training sessions (also called professional development) and coaching feedback sessions. Participant 9 said, “My administrator always gave me feedback that allowed me to grow, learn, and build and become the best teacher I could be.” Participant 7 stated, “The administrators I had pushed me in my practices that allowed my development as a teacher accelerate and grow.”

The data showed that these teachers genuinely appreciated the administrative support they received, and it contributed to their remaining at their charter school. These findings reflected those in previous research that principals’ leadership or lack of leadership played a critical role in determining teacher job satisfaction (Ndoye et al., 2010). Teachers were motivated to stay with their charter schools because they enjoyed working for administrators who afforded them the opportunity to make a difference in students’ academic growth and helped them grow as teachers.

The findings suggest that teachers need administrative support, which is consistent with findings from previous studies. For example, Hallam et al. (2012) found that schools in which the administrators maintained strong positive relationships with their teachers had higher teacher retention rates. Okcu and Cetin (2017) communicated the importance of maintaining healthy professional relationships in the work environment to increase job satisfaction among teachers. Ndoye et al. (2010) reported a similar finding reflecting that administrative support greatly influenced teachers’ decisions to

remain or leave a teaching assignment. The study's findings suggest that administrators who provide professional development support their teachers and has a positive impact on teacher retention.

I analyzed all 14 interview responses collectively in NVivo to determine the overall themes regarding why teachers remain at their charter schools. After conducting the text analysis, the most frequently used word throughout all interview responses was students. Based on the qualitative data results, teachers remained at their charter schools mainly because of the students. Students motivated the teachers and made it rewarding for them to teach at the charter schools. The teachers enjoyed the relationships they had with their students, and the overall consensus was that they enjoyed working with all students. Additionally, the teachers felt supported by their administrators.

Other Findings

In contrast to the empirical research by Raza and Ahmed (2017), Sawchuk (2015b), and Torres and Oluwole (2015), heavy workloads were not a stressor or a challenge for the study's participants. In fact, only one participant mentioned that charter school teachers have heavier workloads than public schools, but this was not a factor that impacted her decision to remain or leave her school. Qualitative data for the current study showed that teachers decided to remain at their charter school despite having heavier workloads than public schools.

Further, data from the present study do not support prior findings that charter school teachers are underpaid (Sawchuk, 2015b; Torres & Oluwole, 2015). Participants 1, 5, and 9 shared their experiences of being offered higher salaries at charter schools

than at public schools. Based on their interview comments, salary did not motivate them to remain at a charter school.

Limitations

When considering the research findings, this study's limitations must be examined. First, although participants were informed of the steps I took to maintain confidentiality, responses to interview questions sometimes seemed guarded. This limitation indicates that the present study's findings may not account for all variables that influence a teacher's willingness to provide work-related information. Other potential limitations associated with the current study were:

- The study only included teachers who worked in charter schools for 2 or more years.
- The study encompassed only a small number of teachers working in central or northwest Indiana charter schools for 2 or more years, therefore limiting the transferability of the findings. Future research could increase the range of transferability by including a wide variety of charter schools outside of Indiana.
- All three levels of schools—elementary, middle, and high school—were represented in the current study. However, the levels were not equally represented.

Recommendations

The current study consisted of a literature review and interviews conducted with 14 charter school teachers in central and northwest Indiana. The study participants

shared their reasons for remaining at charter schools for 2 or more years. From the current study's findings, recommendations for charter school administrators include:

- Create multiple opportunities during the academic school year for teachers and students to get to know each other and to build positive relationships (i.e., offering meet and greets for families so that students can meet their teachers before the start of the school year, staff versus student competitive events, etc.)
- Offer opportunities for teachers to be involved in decision-making processes on efforts to improve student achievement.
- Give frequent classroom observational feedback to teachers that promotes their professional growth.
- Provide professional development and training for teachers to develop their craft.
- Provide professional development needs that are differentiated according to teacher years of experience and teacher capacity.
- Create a mentoring program to help with teacher development.

Recommendations for further research include the following:

- Conduct research replicating the study in the same area in Indiana with a new sample and compare the results to the current study.
- Conduct research to determine correlations between male and female perceptions on why teachers remain at charter schools.
- Conduct research replicating this study with charter schools in other areas to determine how the findings might be similar or different.

- Conduct a qualitative case study on a specific charter school to understand factors that influence teacher retention.
- Conduct research to determine correlations between principal and teacher perceptions as to why teachers remain in charter schools.
- Conduct a qualitative study comparing charter school elementary school teachers', middle school teachers', and high school teachers' perceptions of factors that influence teacher retention.

Conclusion

This study's focus was on exploring the experiences of teachers employed at charter schools in central and northwest Indiana. I further sought to expand the literature on teacher retention, specifically in charter schools. The qualitative data from the interviews identified relationships, making a difference, and teacher development as factors that influenced their decisions to remain in a charter school for 2 or more years. Among the motivational factors presented in the data, the intrinsic rewards of teacher-student relationships built and student success appeared to be the major reasons why these teachers were motivated to stay at their charter schools just as Geijsel et al. (2011) reported that intrinsic motivators such as personal teaching efficacy, working with students, and job satisfaction influenced teacher retention. Personal growth, noted as teacher development in this study, was another motivational factor that influenced teachers' decisions to remain in a charter school. The study findings were in general agreement with Herzberg (1968) and Islam and Ali (2013), who stated that motivational factors or satisfiers (i.e., recognition, the work itself, responsibility, achievement, and growth in organizations, enhance employee satisfaction and motivation to remain with

the organization. The responses from the study's participants aligned to the empirical research that explained how intrinsic rewards, administrative support, and working conditions are critical factors in determining whether or not teachers stay.

Satisfied teachers will go above and beyond for students and principals if they are fulfilled with their jobs. It is imperative that principals use the research findings to discover ways to increase teacher retention in charter schools. Understanding teachers' decisions to remain in charter schools may help charter school administrators reduce teacher turnover and improve teacher retention.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Recruitment Email

APPENDIX A**Recruitment Email**

- **Are you a charter school teacher?**
- **Have you taught at a charter school for 2 years or more?**
- **If yes, please consider helping by being in a study!**

Greetings,

I am a doctoral candidate at National Louis University. This email is to invite you to participate in a research study of teacher retention in charter schools. The purpose of this dissertation is to identify the factors of your professional experiences that influence your decision to remain in your teaching position. Your participation will require you to respond to interview questions regarding the aforementioned.

Your participation is optional. You can choose whether or not to participate in this study with no penalty to you. There will be no tangible rewards for participation in this study; however, your participation will be beneficial to the field of education as educational leaders aim to improve the teaching environment in an effort to retain teachers.

Please respond back to this email if you wish to participate in the study. If you choose to participate, you will be provided a consent form that further outlines the details of the study. If you have any questions, please contact me at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Thank you,

Tyneasha L. Banks
Doctoral Student
National Louis University

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

Dear Prospective Participant:

My name is Tyneasha Rogers-Banks, and I am a doctoral student in the Education Department at National Louis University, Chicago, working on my dissertation. This study is a requirement to fulfill my degree and will not be used for decision making by any organization. This study is for research purposes only.

You are cordially invited to volunteer your participation in my dissertation research. The title of my research project is “Factors That Influence Teachers to Remain at Charter Schools.” The purpose of this research is to examine the factors that influence teachers’ decisions to remain at charter schools for two years or more.

I have included some frequently asked questions concerning participation:

Q: What will be involved if one participates?

A: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in the following:

- One interview with audio recording for approximately 45- 60 minutes. All interviews will be conducted in a private room, i.e. private library conference rooms, unoccupied classroom or office. The location would be agreed to by the participant and researcher.
- If the participants wish not to be recorded, the researcher will ask if written notes could be taken during the interview.

Q: When will this study take?

A: The research will be conducted between November 2018 and December 2018. You will be asked to participate during this timeframe.

Q: What if I change my mind about participating?

A: You can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. Your decision about whether to participate or to discontinue participating will not jeopardize your future relations with National Louis University, Chicago, or your school district. You can do so without fear of penalty or negative consequences of any kind.

Q: How will my information be treated?

A: All information obtained will be confidential. Written documentation will be stored in a locked file cabinet, accessible only by the researcher. Recorded data and transcribed data will be stored on my personal password protected laptop, which is accessible only by me, then transferred to a locked cabinet after the research is completed. Results of the research will be reported as summary data only, and no individually identifiable information will be presented. In the event your information is quoted in the written results, I will use pseudonyms or codes to maintain your confidentiality. Please note that my research chair and committee will have access to the interviews as well, but without names associated.

All information obtained will be held with the strictest confidentiality. All recorded information will be stored securely for three years, as per National Louis University, Chicago requirements. At the end of the three years, all recorded data and other information will be deleted, and all written data will be shredded.

Q: What are the benefits of this study?

A: There will be no direct or immediate personal benefits from your participation in this research, except for the contribution to the field of study. For the professional audience, the potential benefit of this research will be to provide additional knowledge to the literature on factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain at charter schools for two years or more.

Q: What are some support referrals?

A:

1. Suicide Prevention and Crisis Hotline: 1 (800) 273- 8255
2. Crisis Center: (219) 938-7070
3. Indiana Suicide and Crisis Hotlines: 1-800-SUICIDE

You also have the right to review the results of the research if you wish to do so. A copy of the results may be obtained by contacting Tyneasha Rogers-Banks at: Email: [REDACTED] or phone: [REDACTED]

Additionally, should you have specific concerns or questions, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Marsha Bundt, at National Louis University-Chicago, email at [REDACTED], or Dr. Shaunti Knauth, IRB Chair, National Louis-Chicago, 122 S Michigan Ave , or by phone at [REDACTED], or email at [REDACTED].

I have read and understand the information explaining the purpose of this research and my rights and responsibilities as a participant. My signature below designates my consent to voluntarily participate in this research, according to the terms and conditions outlined above.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Tyneasha Rogers-Banks
Doctoral Student, National Louis University

APPENDIX C

Participant Demographic Information

APPENDIX C**Participant Demographic Information**

Please answer the following background questions. This information is for statistical purposes only and has no direct effect on participation. Thank you kindly!

1. () Male () Female
2. Age: _____
3. Ethnicity:
 - a. African- American
 - b. Caucasian
 - c. Hispanic
 - d. Asian (specify: _____)
 - e. Other (specify: _____)
 - f. Prefer not to answer
4. What is your highest degree obtained? _____
5. How many years have you been in education? _____
6. How many years have you worked at a charter school? _____
7. What is your official job title? _____
8. What grade(s) do you teach? _____

APPENDIX D
Interview Protocol

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Greetings participants! Thank you for participating in this research study. The researcher's contact information is found at the bottom of this protocol.

Participants are asked to participate in an in-depth interview as a part of this research study. The following information explains the expectations/requirements for in-depth interviews for this study. Please read the protocol in its entirety prior to the start of your interview.

Your opinions are valued highly! Thanks again for your time.

Interview Protocol

1. Interviews will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Depending upon your interaction with the researcher, your interview may be longer.
2. Your interview will be audio recorded by the researcher. You are at liberty to ask that the recording be stopped if you feel uncomfortable at any time.
3. Responses to interview questions are your personal feelings and are not limited to "politically correct" responses. You are highly encouraged to be as candid as your comfort level permits.
4. Your interview is confidential and the recording will not be shared with anyone except a designated transcription service for transcription purposes.
5. You have the right to review the results of the research if you wish to do so. A copy of the results may be obtained by contacting Tyneasha Rogers-Banks at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Additionally, should you have specific concerns or questions, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Marsha Bundt at National Louis University-Chicago, by phone at [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED], or Dr. Shaunti Knauth, IRB Chair, National Louis University-Chicago, 122 S Michigan Ave, or by phone at [REDACTED], or email at [REDACTED].

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions

1. What were your reasons for becoming a teacher?
2. What were the reasons you chose to teach at a charter school?
3. What were your experiences working in a charter school over the years?
4. What is challenging about being a teacher in a charter school?
5. What is rewarding about being a charter school teacher?
6. What were your motivations for teaching for (length of service) in a charter school? Please elaborate.
7. What are other factors that haven't been discussed that influence your continued employment at a charter school? Please elaborate on each factor.