

UNDERSTANDING GEORGIA'S NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

By

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand what it means to be a National Board Certified teacher (NBCT) in Georgia. Georgia teachers, distinguished with the NBCT title, participated in surveys and interviews which were analyzed qualitatively in order to understand the essence of being a National Board Certified teacher. Three themes emerged from this study. Georgia NBCTs are dedicated, passionate, and driven. They are reflective and use reflection to drive their instruction. Georgia NBCTs have a strong desire to improve their teaching and a strong need to have their teaching validated to ensure they are good teachers.

Keywords: National Board Certified teachers, Georgia, phenomenology, validation, Bandura, Social Cognitive Theory, Maslow, Hierarchy of Needs

Dedication

Dr. Jones, even though you were my professor for a short two and a half days in July, 2009, the impact you had on me will be life-long. It was evident from the start you were a woman after God's own heart and that your love for Him reached the depths of your soul. It was also evident that you truly cared for us, not only as students, but as colleagues as well. Although your life was tragically cut short, you continue to live on in the hearts and minds of those who had the privilege to be your students, your colleagues and your friends. Thank you for your time, your encouragement and your love. You were truly an inspiration.

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List of Abbreviations

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ)

Georgia Association of Educators (GAE)

Georgia National Board Certified Teacher(s) (GANBCT(s))

Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC)

National Board Certified/Certification (NBC)

National Board Certified Teacher(s) (NBCT(s))

National Board Effectiveness Survey (NBES)

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)

National Education Association (NEA)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT)

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PAARC)

Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

National Board Certification (NBC) is a “voluntary assessment program designed to recognize effective and accomplished teachers who meet high standards based on what teachers should know and be able to do” (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), 2001c, p.1). Candidates for NBC are assessed in ten areas – four portfolio entries that showcase specific teaching practices and six constructed response questions that show knowledge of content. Assessors are National Board certified teachers (NBCTs) who are trained to score submissions in their area of expertise. According to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), NBC is a means to “measure teaching excellence” (NBPTS, 2001c).

Most of the research conducted with regards to National Board Certification appears to be quantitative in nature (Benigno, 2005; Bundy, 2006; Cantrell, Fullerton, Kane, & Staiger, 2007; Cavalluzzo, 2004; Center for Teaching Quality, 2008; Childs, 2006; Goldhaber, Anthony, Hakel, Koenig, and Elliott, (Eds.), 2008; Harris, & Sass, 2007; Holland, 2006; Kelley, & Kimball, 2001; McColskey et al., 2005; National Academies News, 2008, June 11; Okpala, James, & Hopson, 2009; Rouse, 2004; Sanders, Ashton, & Wright, Silver, 2007; Smith, Gordon, Colby, & Wang, 2005; Stephens, 2003; Vandevort, 2004; Vandevort, Beardsley, & Berliner, 2004). The majority of these studies use test scores to ascertain if there is a difference in academic performance of students whose teacher is NBC and students whose teacher is (Benigno, 2005; Bundy, 2006; Cantrell et al., 2007; Cavalluzzo, 2004; Center for Teaching Quality, 2008; Childs, 2006; Goldhaber et al., (Eds.), 2008; Harris, & Sass, 2007; Holland, 2006; Kelley, & Kimball, 2001; McColskey et al., 2005; National Academies News, 2008,

June 11; Okpala, James, & Hopson, 2009; Rouse, 2004; Sanders et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2005; Stephens, 2003; Vandevort, 2004; Vandevort et al., 2004). To date, there are no qualitative studies with the sole purpose of giving a voice to NBCTs—to hear from their own words about their certification journey and how the certification has impacted them professionally and personally. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand what it means to be a NBC teacher in Georgia.

Background Information

In 1981, The National Commission on Excellence in Education was formed in an effort to research and report the status of education in America. In 1983, this commission presented their findings in a report titled “A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform.” The purpose of this report was to “define the problems afflicting American education” and provide solutions to “stem the rising tide of mediocrity” in American education (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In response to this report, The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was established. It began when Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, suggested the establishment of national teacher standards. The Carnegie Corporation of New York in turn “funded the establishment of NBPTS following the recommendations of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy’s Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (NBPTS, 2010a). This report, called “A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century,” determined the necessity of a board “to define what teachers should know and be able to do” (NBPTS, 2010a), and to create assessments in order to determine if teachers meet those standards. In 1987, NBPTS established a mission which stated their purpose:

The mission of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by:

1. Maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do.
2. Providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards.
3. Advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of NBC Teachers. (NBPTS, 2010a).

In addition to this mission statement, the NBPTS developed its policy position, which contains their Five Core Propositions. These propositions are standards with which the NBPTS identifies and recognizes teachers “who effectively enhance student learning and demonstrate the high level of knowledge, skills, abilities and commitments” (NBPTS, 2002).

The Five Core Propositions are:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities (NBPTS, 2010c).

Teachers who want to earn National Board Certification go through a rigorous process. There are two parts to certification, one which consists of four portfolio

entries. The other part consists of written responses to prompts. The subjects of both the portfolio entries and prompts vary depending upon which area a teacher chooses to certify.

History of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) in Georgia.

In order to encourage teachers to voluntarily pursue National Board certification, many states, including Georgia, gave financial incentives to teachers who become NBCTs. In addition, many states, including Georgia, have used National Board Certification (NBC) as a way to ensure that teachers are highly qualified, as required by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which was proposed in 2001 by President George W. Bush in order to improve the performance of schools in the United States (NCLB, 2001; NBPTS, 2001b). Initially, the financial incentive to become a NBCT in Georgia was a five percent raise on state-funded portion of the salary.

Georgia's first two NBCTs earned their certification in 1994 (Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC), 2003). The number of NBCTs gradually increased each year. In 2000, Georgia enacted the A+ Education Reform Act in an effort to improve education throughout the state. From the A+ Education Reform Act came House Bill 243. This bill is an amendment to Georgia code 20-2-212.2, which governs teacher salaries. This amendment changed the salary supplement for NBCTs from 5% to 10% (Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE), 2009).

After 2000, the number of teachers who earned NBC per year increased from less than 50 per year (1994–1998), to more than 100 (1999–2000). In 2003, 529 teachers earned the certificate, which was highest number certifying in any given year. In addition to the salary increase, this increase might be explained by the creation of the

Knowledgeable Teacher course, implemented to “provide pre-candidates with an opportunity to describe, analyze, and reflect on their current teaching practice and to assess how the teaching practice meets and/or exceeds NBPTS standards. Attention is devoted to specific impact that those strategies have on improved student achievement” (Professional Standards Commission Course Information, “Course Description”, para. 1). This course provided the support needed to help NBC candidates in Georgia become successful in their endeavor to achieve certification.

Situation to Self

My role in this research study parts is two-fold. . First of all, I was curious about how my experience as a NBCT compared to others’. I became a NBC teacher with an endorsement in Middle Childhood during November, 2005. It took me two years to complete the progress. Initially, I was attracted by the salary stipend and attended an informational meeting. After looking through the requirements, I realized that I had all the qualities of a NBCT and met all the standards. It was just up to me to gather the evidence and I would have the stipend. However, as I went through the process, my attitude changed. I learned so much about myself and my teaching during the process. Because my teaching methods were (and still are to a certain extent) so different from most teachers, I needed to know that what I was doing was effective, sound teaching. The state mandated teacher evaluation instrument meant nothing to me. Unless a teacher did something immoral or unethical, everyone was given the same rating with very little feedback. However, I observed some major differences between my teaching methods and those around me. At the time I certified, I was frustrated by the fact that my colleagues were so tied to the textbook to guide them. They were beholden to the

teacher's edition to guide their instruction and would not veer from that. I, on the other hand, would look to the needs of the students in my class. If they were ready to move on faster than the teacher's edition said, then I moved ahead. On the other hand, if my students did not understand the material, I would not move ahead until I was confident they understood. Additionally, I often found the lessons in the teacher's editions contrived and boring. I was constantly trying to find more authentic, engaging ways to teach the material. I was often accused of not teaching "right" by colleagues because I didn't use the textbook. At the time I chose to pursue National Board certification, I was trying to prove to myself that I was a good teacher. Becoming a NBCT meant that I was highly qualified and that I knew what I was doing even though it was so different.

Additionally Georgia's legislature reneged on their promise of a 10% salary stipend in 2009, slowly reducing the amount until it was totally eliminated, based on three quantitative research studies. My initial thought through all this was, "They never asked us.". It became my endeavor to ask some of Georgia's NBCTs what their thoughts, feelings, and emotions were about the NBCT process and being a NBCT. The purpose of this research is to fill a huge gap in research and to allow just a few of Georgia's NBCTs to have a chance to tell their story.

Because I am a NBCT, there was a need to guard against bias. This was achieved by the use of the epoche. According to Moustakas (1994) epoche is a Greek word that means, "to refrain from judgement, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things...to see what stands before our eyes, what we can distinguish and describe" (p. 33). According to Patton (2002), a qualitative researcher must first become aware of her bias. In my situation, I began by writing down my

responses to the survey questions and interview questions used in the study in a reflective journal. In doing so, I was able to acknowledge my personal involvement in the subject, therefore clarifying my preconceptions (Patton, 2002). I would refer to this journal as I was analyzing the data to ensure that I was using only the evidence before to interpret the data (Moustakas, 1994).

Problem and Purpose Statement

Since the peak in 2003, the number of teachers becoming certified in Georgia has trickled down to 1 in 2012. This decline in the number of new NBCTs in Georgia may be explained by the various changes in Georgia legislature's commitment of a salary supplement for those who earn National Board certification. The first change came in the 2007-2008 school year. Teachers who certified in 2007 or later were required to teach in a Needs Improvement school in order to receive the 10% salary bonus. Additionally, due to recent changes in the economy, the Georgia Assembly amended HB 243 to say that NBCTs ". . . shall be eligible for salary increases, subject to appropriations by the General Assembly . . ." (Georgia General Assembly, n.d., section 1, 4b, 1). The Georgia Assembly justified their change in legislation by examining three quantitative studies. These studies concluded there is no evidence that NBCTs have a positive impact on student achievement. "No matter the source, the research tends to point in the same direction: the NBCT process may sometimes identify teachers already performing above the average, but the process itself does nothing to increase student achievement" (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2009). This led to the stipend being totally eliminated starting in the 2010 -2011 school year (PAGE, 2009).

To date, there are no qualitative studies with the sole purpose of giving NBCTs a chance to tell others about their certification journey and how the certification has impacted them professionally and personally. This clearly shows a gap in the research. The purpose of this study is to determine what it is like to be a NBC teacher. The purpose of this study was to allow a small percentage of these teachers a chance to be heard in an endeavor to understand what it means to be a NBC teacher in Georgia.

Significance of the Study

This main significance of this study is that it serves to fill a gap in the literature. To date, there are no qualitative studies with the sole purpose of giving a voice to NBCTs—to hear from their own words about their certification journey and how the certification has impacted them professionally and personally. This study may be of significance to NBPTS as a means of encouraging other teacher who are interested in pursuing NBC by hearing from actual certified teachers as to why it is worthwhile to pursue certification. Additionally, school districts that believe this certification is a worthwhile endeavor may be interested in using these experiences to persuade teachers to pursue this advanced certification. It also may be of significance to other NBCTs whose state has cut their stipend as a means to express the essence of being certified.

Research Questions

The majority of research on NBC teachers is quantitative in nature and uses standardized test scores or other achievement related data in order to determine if there is a difference in achievement in students whose teacher is a NBCT and in student whose teacher is not a NBCT (Benigno, 2005; Bundy, 2006; Cantrell et al., 2007; Cavalluzzo, 2004; Center for Teaching Quality, 2008; Childs, 2006; Goldhaber et al., (Eds.), 2008; Harris, & Sass,

2007; Holland, 2006; Kelley, & Kimball, 2001; McColskey et al., 2005; National Academies News, 2008, June 11; Okpala, James, & Hopson, 2009; Rouse, 2004; Sanders et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2005; Stephens, 2003; Vandevort, 2004; Vandevort et al., 2004). This study used the following peer-reviewed questions to guide the research:

1. What does it mean to be a NBCT?
2. Why do teachers pursue National Board certification?
3. What, if any professional impact is there to becoming a NBCT?
4. What, if any personal impact is there to becoming a NBCT?

Research Plan

The final outcome of a phenomenology is to “reduce the individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence . . .” of that phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). Van Manen (1990) asserts that the purpose of “phenomenological research is the study of lived experience Phenomenology asks, ‘What is this or that kind of experience like?’” (p. 9). In other words, the purpose of a phenomenological study is to fully understand an experience. According to Polkinghorne, (1989), “The reader should come away from a phenomenology with the feeling, ‘I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that’” (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 62). According to Moustakas (1997) the purpose phenomenological research is to “determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it.” In order to understand this phenomenon, the researcher needed to hear from those who have successfully been through the NBC process to become NBC teachers.

The purpose of this study was to understand the essence of being a NBCT and to find commonalities in what it means to have this certification in order to create a description of these teachers. Surveys and interviews provided the means by which this phenomenon became better understood.

Sampling was a combination of criterion sampling and snowball sampling. Criterion sampling, according to Creswell, (2007), is essential for a phenomenology. Since the purpose of this study was to better understand the essence of what it is like to be a NBCT in Georgia, it was essential that all participants meet the criteria of being a Georgia NBCT. Coupled with criterion sampling is snowball, chain or network sampling. According to Patton (2002) snowball sampling occurs when a participant in a study suggests others who would also meet the criteria for the study. All teachers invited to participate in the study are currently NBC Teachers or teachers whose National Board certification recently expired (criterion sampling). The researcher was willing to contact other NBCTs whose names participants shared (snowball sampling). Data was collected employing two methods. First, data was collected via survey. This survey secured demographic information as well as preliminary information about each participant's perception of being a NBCT. This survey asked for some demographic information such as gender, years of experience, teaching or grade level, and education. The second part of the survey contained some open-ended questions. The responses to each section of the survey were used as the basis for interview questions. Another method to collect data was semi-structured interviews. Local participants had the choice of a face to face interview or phone interview. Participants who live outside a radius of 50 miles had

phone interviews only. The interview was audio recorded and transcribed for later coding. Field notes were taken and served as a part of a thorough audit trail.

Data analysis was an ongoing process and was completed in three stages: familiarization and organization, coding and recoding, and summarizing and interpreting. Depending upon the outcome of these steps, data may be reorganized, recoded, and reinterpreted. Only when all the data was collected was a complete analysis possible. However, small changes were made along the way based on what was collected.

There were several procedures in place in order to enhance the credibility and dependability of the study. The methods that were employed in order to enhance credibility are structural corroboration (data triangulation), consensus (peer review), referential or interpretive adequacy (member checks and thick, rich descriptions), and control of bias (reflective journal and field notes). Methods that were used to enhance dependability include creating an audit trail, using the code-recode strategy, and data triangulation.

In summary, this study was a phenomenology in order to understand the essence of being a NBCT in Georgia. Surveys and interviews were the means by which being a NBCT will come to be better understood.

Delimitations

There are over 100,000 NBCTs in the United States (NBPTS, 2013). For convenience and because I am a Georgia NBCT, I chose to focus only on NBCTs in Georgia. Additionally, I chose to recruit from the Georgia NBC Teacher Facebook page. The rationale of this decision is the convenience of securing permission to use the page for recruiting purposes and the popularity in the use of social media. At the time of this

study, there were 242 members of the Georgia NBC Teacher Facebook page. Because the pool of NBCTs is about 10% of the state total, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other populations of NBCTs in Georgia or NBCTs in other states.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Within the vast majority of literature with regards to NBCT, there are no studies that have explored the essence of being a NBC. In fact, most of the studies are quantitative in nature, applying quantitative data analysis techniques in order to determine what effect NBCTs have on student achievement (Benigno, 2005; Bundy, 2006; Cantrell et al., 2007; Cavalluzzo, 2004; Center for Teaching Quality, 2008; Childs, 2006; Goldhaber et al., (Eds.), 2008; Harris, & Sass, 2007; Holland, 2006; Kelley, & Kimball, 2001; McColskey et al., 2005; National Academies News, 2008, June 11; Okpala, James, & Hopson, 2009; Rouse, 2004; Sanders et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2005; Stephens, 2003; Vandervoort, 2004; Vandervoort et al., 2004). Some studies delve into how others view NBCTs. Additionally, there are some journal articles that are published interviews with NBCTs, but they have not been analyzed qualitatively.

In order to understand the essence of being a NBCT, there are several concepts one must understand. First of all, one must understand the process a teacher goes through in order to become a NBCT. Secondly, one must understand how teacher quality is determined, including the use of measures of student achievement, including standardized test scores; teaching credentials and their impact on student achievement; and teacher dispositions and their impact on student achievement. Finally, in order to understand the essence of being a NBCT, one must understand how teachers view themselves. This includes a teacher's self-efficacy and how it is built.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that is best suited for this study is Albert Bandura's Social Learning theory, which later evolved into his Social Cognitive theory. In this theory, Bandura asserts that people have control of their own actions. People "can affect their behavior by setting goals, arranging environmental inducements, generating cognitive strategies, evaluating goal attainment, and mediating consequences for their actions" (Gurund, 2010, p. 1816). These self-regulatory behaviors are learned through external punishment and rewards but can be internalized and affect behavior (Gurund, 2010). Bandura felt there was something missing from his initial theory and in 1986 introduced the concept of self-efficacy to his theory. Self-efficacy is the belief that one has the capability to complete tasks successfully despite outside influences (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is one's belief in one's ability "to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave" (Bandura, 1994). People with strong self-efficacy do not avoid difficult tasks. Rather, they approach them head-on with the goal of mastery. Additionally, they are intrinsically motivated to persevere to completion. People with high self-efficacy may have doubts about their ability to successfully complete a given task but they persevere despite those doubts (Bandura, 1977). Even if they come across some difficulty in, or fail at the task, they are quick to recover. They attribute the difficulty or failure to not putting forth enough effort or not having the skills or knowledge necessary to complete the task successfully and seek to learn in what way they are deficient (Bandura, 1994).

Review of Related Literature

NBCT Requirements

A teacher who chooses to pursue NBC must complete an extensive portfolio and a six-question assessment. This process can take anywhere from one to three years. The portfolio contains four entries:

1. One classroom-based entry with accompanying student work.
2. Two classroom-based entries that require video recordings of interactions between you and your students.
3. One documented accomplishments entry that provides evidence of your accomplishments outside of the classroom and how that work impacts student learning (NBPTS, 2009).

All entries must include extensive teacher commentary that describes, analyzes and reflects upon what is being presented in the entry and how that entry meets the criteria set forth by the NBPTS (NBPTS, 2009).

The assessment portion of the certification process includes a six-question essay test designed to show content knowledge in all areas and for all ages included in the certificate being pursued. For example, candidates for the Middle School Generalist certificate are asked to respond to questions in the following areas:

- Supporting reading skills.
- Analyzing student work.
- Knowledge of science.
- Social Studies.
- Understanding health.

- Integrating the arts.

While some teachers certify their first year, most teachers need two to three years to meet the certification requirements. **All requirements must be attempted the first year and if a teacher does not receive the required number of points needed to certify the first year, they may bank the points earned on the entries that they did the best and redo any or all other entries that could be improved in an effort to earn enough points to certify (NBPTS, 2009).**

NBCTs and Standardized Test Scores

There are many research studies that have investigated the effect of a NBCT on student achievement as measured on standardized test scores. The results of these studies have produced inconclusive and often conflicting results. The vast majority of these studies have occurred in North Carolina and Florida which are the top two states with the most NBCTs (NBPTS, 2009). In this section, Studies in both these states will be examined as well as studies conducted in other states with far fewer NBCTs.

North Carolina's Conflicting Results

In North Carolina, Goldhaber & Anthony (2004) found that NBCTs have a positive impact on reading and math scores on the End of Grade tests, with the largest positive impact occurring with students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch in third grade. Rouse (2004), however, found that there was no statistically significant difference between the test scores students of NBCTs and the test scores of students of non-NBCTs on North Carolina's End of Grade tests in grades kindergarten through eighth. But in the same study, Rouse (2004) determined that on End of Course tests given in grades 9-12, students of NBCTs outperform students of non-NBCTs. Sanders et al. (2005), in a study

requested by the NBPTS, analyzed math and reading scores on the End of Grade tests from two districts in North Carolina. They found that overall, NBCTs “did not have significantly better rates of academic progress than students of other teachers” and that “a student randomly assigned to a NBCT is no more likely to get an ‘effective’ (or an ‘ineffective’) teacher than a student assigned to a non-NBCT” (p. 4).

McCloskey et al, (2005) analyzed scores on the End of Grade tests from three North Carolina school districts in reading and math that found that even though NBCTs had “slightly higher Teacher Achievement Indices in math and reading, the differences were not statistically significant” (p. 74). In addition, they found several cases of what they referred to as “false positives. They found that 20% of NBCTs “fell into the bottom quartile of all fifth-grade teachers on the Teacher Achievement Indices” (p. 74).

Florida’s Conflicting Results

Many studies have been conducted in Florida and have produced conflicting results as well. Calvuzzo (2004) analyzed the test scores of ninth and tenth grade math teachers in the Miami Dade County School District. On the models in her study that control for school attributes, or when school fixed effects are taken into consideration, students of NBCTs outperformed students of non-NBCTs. Additionally, she also found that NBCTs have a greater impact on the scores of Black or Hispanic students. It was suggested that the NBCTs “are doing things that result in higher average gains for students” (p. 25). But when Vitale (2008) analyzed test data of four NBCTs from 2004-2007, he found that NBC “does not have significant impact on . . . achievement results in reading or math on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)” (p. 55). He did note that students of NBCTS had higher scores in math on the FCAT. However, when

confounding variables such as SES, gender, ethnicity and teacher experience were taken into account, there was no statistical difference between student scores of NBCTs and non-NBCTs.

In a study that combined both North Carolina and Florida, Hakel et al. (2008) performed their own analysis of student achievement data from both North Carolina and Florida. They found that students of NBCTs in North Carolina had test scores that were higher than students of non-NBCTs in reading and higher in math in both North Carolina and Florida.

Other States' Conflicting Results

Studies in other states have afforded conflicting results as well. Childs (2006) and Stephens (2003) both analyzed the test scores of students in South Carolina. In two separate studies of the results on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) found that NBCTs students categorized as having low socioeconomic status did not have statistically different scores on the reading, English language arts, or math sections of that test when compared with students of non-NBCTs. In Mississippi, Benigno (2005) had similar results from his analysis of the test scores of 22 reading, language arts and math teachers in grade 3-8, where half were NBCTs, on the Mississippi Curriculum Test during the 2003-2004 school year.

Hakel et al. (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 10 studies that studied the effect of NBCTs on student achievement. Overall, they found that those teachers who obtained their NBC were more effective than those teachers who applied for certification and were unsuccessful. They also found that there were minute differences between NBCTs and

those teachers who had never attempted certification, but the results were not statistically significant.

Cantrell et al. (2007) conducted a study in California, the fourth highest state with regards to number of NBCTs, to determine if there is a difference between the scores of students of NBCTs and students of non-NBCTs on the California Standards Test. He found there is no statistically significant difference in student achievement of students of NBCTs and non-NBCTs. Vandevort et al. (2004) studied 35 NBCTs in Arizona, which is not in the top ten states with regards to numbers of NBCTs. They analyzed the test scores of students in grades K-5 on the SAT-9 from 1999-2003 and found that NBCTs have some positive effects on student tests. According to Vandevort et al. (2004), NBCTs “were able to get in about 25 more days of instruction in the typical 180 day (school year)” (p. 37).

Additional Impacts on Student Achievement

Many studies conducted with NBCTs reported positive student impacts that cannot be measured with standardized tests and again, the results are conflicting. The Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ) (2008) asserts that there are other ways to measure student learning that cannot be measured on standardized tests. These include “. . . student motivation, intellectual readiness, persistence, creativity, or the ability to apply knowledge and work productively with others” (p. 47). They also assert that the NPBTS certification process “. . . looks for teachers who can demonstrate the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and beliefs necessary to help any student reach his or her maximum potential *across the whole spectrum of learning*—from academic content knowledge, to creating thinking and problem solving, to the habits of mind associated with good

citizenship and a productive life (p. 43).” In addition, they also believe that characteristics good teachers foster in students are motivation, intellectual readiness, persistence, creativity, application of knowledge to solving everyday problems, and working with others to solve problems. These characteristics cannot be measured in a standardized test but are just as important to evaluate to determine student success CTQ (2008) has many recommendations, including more research into the impact NBCTs have on student achievement, using measurements such as “. . . authentic assessments, project-based learning products, student engagement and drop-out rates” in addition to the data from standardized testing.

McCloskey et al. (2005) also used the Teacher Achievement Indices to evaluate teacher effectiveness. These include pre-instructional evaluations (education level, lesson planning, rigor in assignments), in-classroom evaluations (rigor of questions asked of students, student disruptive behavior, interventions for disruptive behavior), and teacher effectiveness evaluations. They found that NBCTs had “slightly higher Teacher Achievement Indices (p. 74)” but they were not statistically significant. NBCTs were also found to have given slightly more challenging assignments.

Smith et al. (2005) found that NBCTs “developed and implemented to a considerably greater degree than non-NBCTs, instruction plans and assignments aimed at fostering deeper student understanding” (p. 145). In this same study, NBCTs were also found to have students who “accomplished deeper learning outcomes more frequently” (p. 146) than students of non-NBCTs. Bond, Smith, Baker and Hattie (2000) also found that students of NBCTs produce work that is at a deeper level of knowledge rather than just surface level. They assert that students of NBCTs “appear to exhibit an

understanding of the concepts targeted in instruction that is more integrated, more coherent, and at a higher level of abstraction than the understanding achieved by other students” (p. 118). They went on to say that in the final analysis of their data, NBCTs use their knowledge of content “more flexibly and innovatively in instruction”; they are better able to “improvise and alter instruction” based on what is happening during the lesson and how students are responding. Additionally, they are better able to analyze the reasons behind students’ academic success or failure, plan developmentally appropriate activities that are meant to challenge and interest students, anticipate difficulties students may have with new concepts, and “bring a distinct passion to their work” (p. 140). Hakel et al., (2008) assert that NBCT status identifies “. . . more effective teachers” (p. 174). In addition, he stated, “Earning NBPTS certification is a useful ‘signal’ that a teacher is effective in the classroom” (p. 178).

Others’ Perceptions of NBCTS

Administrators. There are mixed opinions on having a NBCT on staff. Some administrators reported that were excited to have a NBCT on staff and that it looks good to others to have a NBCT as part of their staff (Kelley & Kimball, 2001). Others “downplay the significance of the credential” (National Research Council, 2009). Some administrators found that the certification process leads to teacher improvement, which in turn leads to improved teaching practice which finally leads to improved school performance (Kelley & Kimball, 2001). However, many administrators are concerned that a NBCT may leave the classroom to take on a leadership role (Kelley & Kimball, 2001). Other concerns from administrators include the fear of teachers’ unions using the

pay incentives as a means of raising teacher salaries and NBPTSs link to national standards (Kelley & Kimball, 2001)

Non-NBCTs. Jealous reactions for others' accomplishments often occur in schools. This leads to some NBCTs being hesitant to tell other teachers that they are indeed a NBCT. Much of this hesitation is due to negative reactions from non-NBCTs. Many non-NBCTs feel that teachers who become nationally certified are trying to call attention to them or to assert that they are better teachers than those who are not NBCTs (Kelley & Kimball, 2001).

NBCTs' Thoughts on Certification Process

When reflecting on the NBC process, teachers came to many of the same conclusions. They agreed that the NBC process is rigorous (Cormier-Kuhn, 2006; NBPTS, 2001b; Johnson, 2009; Southeastern Oklahoma, 2004) but that it was the best professional development they have ever undertaken (Cormier-Kuhn, 2006; Harris & MacKenzie, 2007; Kanter, Bergee, & Unrath, 2000; Keiffer-Barone, Mulvaney, Hillman, & Parker, 1999; Linden, 2001; Linqanti & Peterson, 2001; NBPTS, 2001b; Rotberg, Futrell, & Holmes, 2000; Southeastern Oklahoma, 2004; Thompson, 2007) and that it pushed them to be better teachers (Johnson, 2009; Weibke, 1996.). Teachers concurred that the process of earning NBC status was time consuming (Southeast Oklahoma, 2004; Lovingood, 2004) yet rewarding (Southeast Oklahoma, 2004). Many teachers agreed that it was the hardest thing they've ever done (NBPTS, 2001b), with another going as far to say "It was worth every grueling sentence I had to write" (Southeast Oklahoma, 2004, p. 15). For some teachers, it renewed in them their passion for teaching (Haas, 2005; Ranch Road Writing, 2008; Weibke, 1996.). One idea that recurred in many of these studies is

that teachers valued the reflection that is required from the NBC process and it was not a practice that was normally undertaken. Teachers noted that reflection was not only beneficial during the process (Burns, 2007; Cormier-Kuhn, 2006; Harris & MacKenzie, 2007; Johnson, 2009; Linden, 2001; Southeastern Oklahoma, 2004; Standefer, 2007; Thompson, 2007) but that this reflection continued after receiving certification (Burns, 2007; Lustick, 2002; Southeastern Oklahoma, 2004; Thompson, 2007). One teacher expressed that the reflection itself was more beneficial than meeting all the requirements needed to become a NBCT (Ranch Road Writing, 2005). Another said that the reflection required by the NBC process was like “. . . adding five to seven years to my teaching experience” (NBPTS, 2001a, p. 4).

The NBC process also validated the teaching practices of the NBCTs. It gave them the assurance that they were good teachers and that what they taught and how they taught were rated as exemplary (Cormier-Kuhn, 2006; Haas, 2005; Harris & MacKenzie, 2007; Ranch Road Writing, 2008; Thompson, 2007). On the other hand, some teachers changed their teaching practices as a result of having gone through the NBC process, which the teachers believed made them better teachers (Cormier-Kuhn, 2006; Haas, 2005; Johnson, 2009; Linden, 2001; Weibke, 1996). In fact, Weibke (1996) stated that “being NBC has come to signify a valuable mark of accomplishment, worthy of respect.” Some teachers gained the confidence to try new ways of teaching (Johnson, 2009; Lustick, 2002). Other teachers took on the practice of rethinking their lessons and constantly asking themselves if what they are doing is affecting student learning (Harris & MacKenzie, 2007; Linden, 2001; NBPTS, 2001b; Southeastern Oklahoma, 2004; Thompson, 2007). Some learned that actually taking the time to learn about their students

impacted student learning (Linden, 2001; Lustick, 2002; NBPTS, 2001b; Southeastern Oklahoma, 2004). One teacher suggested that it forced her to think about teaching as an art rather than a science (Ranch Road Writing, 2008). Other teachers learned to use assessments as a tool for guiding instruction rather than just a required grade in the grade book and that not only giving a grade on feedback on these assessments but that giving meaningful feedback was essential (Lustick, 2002). In summary, teachers who have gone through the NBC process feel that it is worthwhile professional development opportunity that enables them either to improve their teaching practices or giving them the assurance that their teaching practices were exemplary.

NBPTS itself conducted two research surveys in order to determine the impact of the assessment process. They found that there are many positive impacts of NBPTS certification. In the first survey, they found that achieving NBPTS certification has positively affected the ways in which teachers perform on a day to day basis. Some of these ways include:

- Validation of current teaching practices as well as trying new techniques or teaching tools.
- More thorough lesson planning.
- Use of student-focused instruction.
- Application of performance standards to teaching.
- No longer using ineffective teaching practices.
- Use of rubrics to evaluate student performance (NBPTS, 2010c).

In the second survey, they found that 69% of NBCTs reported that there were “positive changes in student engagement, achievement and motivation” (NBPTS, 2010, p. 1).

- 35% of NBCTs reported that their students had a more positive attitude towards learning.
- 75% said that the NBPTS certification process has helped them with their interaction with their students.
- 39% provide more time for student discussions.
- 36% said that they are “more aware of their students’ developmental needs” (NBPTS, 2001b, p. 4).
- 35% reported that they are “more sensitive to their students’ academic needs” (NBPTS, 2001b, p.5).

Bundy (2006) found that National Board certification has a “greater effect on student achievement than other measures of teacher excellence.” He also found that the more NBCTs that are added to the staff of a school, the more student performance rise school-wide.

The literature with regards to NBCTs is, for the most part, focused on the impact NBCTs have on student achievement as measured on a standardized test. This trend might be explained by the implementation of NCLB and its focus on standardized tests as a measure of student academic progress. According to Hakel et al. (2008),

Using test scores in this way has a long history in research, and in the current Federal accountability system established under the No Child Left Behind Act,

test scores are the primary indicator of whether schools are making adequate yearly progress (p. 155).

Evaluating Teacher Quality

Evaluating teaching quality depends upon your point of view. In today's test results-results focused society, local and state boards of education evaluate teacher quality with credentials, with a look at student performance on state-mandated standardized tests or with the results of teacher evaluation instruments administered by building principals or assistant principals. An administrator, while still concerned with credentials and student performance as measured by standardized test scores, may also look at a teacher's dispositions, or how a particular teacher related to her colleagues and students. A teacher, on the other hand, may equate quality with student success on a day to day, even class by class point of view. Different instruments are used to evaluate teacher quality. In the following section, teacher quality will be examined, with a specific look at what the research has to say about teacher evaluation instruments, teacher efficacy and teacher dispositions.

Teacher Quality Defined. How does a state or local board of education know if their teachers are being effective? According to Haycock (in Vandevort et al., 2004) “. . . the single most important factor in student achievement (is) the teacher (p. 2).” Smith et al. (2005), state that “teacher quality is critical to the academic success of students”. In addition, The NCLB Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2001) is concerned with student achievement and has also determined that teacher quality is the key to student achievement. In fact, NCLB requires that every teacher in all public schools be “highly qualified”. On a national level, teacher quality is determined in many different ways, depending upon

which organization is evaluating teacher quality. The NCLB act of 2001 states that a “highly qualified” teacher:

- Has a bachelor’s degree.
- Has full state certification or licensure.
- Proves that they know each subject they teach.

The NCTAF (2003) defines highly qualified teachers as those who:

- Possess a deep understanding of the subjects they teach.
- Evidence a firm understanding of how students learn.
- Demonstrate the teaching skills necessary to help all students achieve high standards.
- Create a positive learning environment.
- Use a variety of assessment strategies to diagnose and respond to individual learning needs.
- Demonstrate and integrate modern technology into curricula to support student learning.
- Collaborate with colleagues, parents and community members, and other educators to improve student learning.
- Reflect on their practice to improve future teaching and student achievement.
- Pursue professional growth in both content and pedagogy.
- Instill a passion for learning in their students.

Yet another definition of teacher quality comes from the National Commission of Education Statistics (1999):

Teacher quality is a complex phenomenon, and there is little consensus on what it is or how to measure it. For example, definitions range from those that focus on what should be taught and how knowledge should be imparted to the kinds of knowledge and training teachers should possess. There are, however, two broad elements that most observers agree characterize teacher quality: (a) teacher preparation and qualifications, and (b) teaching practices.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) defines qualified teachers as those who:

1. Are committed to students and their learning.
2. Know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Are members of learning communities.

The NCTAF recommended that the standards of the NBPTS be used to define high quality teachers who exemplify accomplished teaching. Hunag and Moon (2009) suggested that none of the measures of teacher quality, either at the local or national level indicate that a teacher is effective. In fact, they state the following:

Results indicated that a highly qualified teacher was not necessarily a highly effective teacher. Certified and uncertified teachers as well as teachers with Masters Degrees or Bachelor's degrees performed no differently from each other in terms of raising student achievement. While school systems may reward certified teachers with advanced degrees more than uncertified teachers with bachelor's degrees, the result

could lead to higher teacher costs without an accompanied increase in student achievement (p. 223).

Rather, they believe that a teacher's experience is an indicator of teacher quality. In a study they conducted in a Mid-Atlantic state, Huang and Moon (2009) found that the number of years' experience a teacher has in the same grade level positively impacts student achievement in reading. It wasn't about the credentials or even total years' experience. It was the consistency of the same grade level that determined quality.

Teacher evaluation instruments. Most current local teacher evaluation programs vary from state to state and often do a poor job of determining teacher quality. These programs do not accurately show what is going on in a classroom or help teachers improve their teaching (Milinowski, 2004; NASSP, 2011). Flowers and Hancock (2003) state that most current teacher evaluation programs are based on studies conducted in the 1980s when direct instruction was popular. They assert that these programs evaluate a teacher's teaching style, not the content being taught. Naugle, Naugle and Naugle (2000) suggest that evaluating teachers must go beyond looking at test scores alone. Rather, teachers should be evaluated on the growth their students make while under their care. According to Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern and Keeling, (2009), all teachers are good teachers, based on the current evaluation instruments. These instruments . . . fail to distinguish great teaching from good, good from fair, and fair from poor. A teacher's effectiveness—the most important factor for schools in improving student achievement—is not measured, recorded, or used to inform decision-making in any meaningful way (p. 32).

Weisburg et al. refer to this as the widget effect and is characterized by the following:

1. All teachers are good or great.
2. Excellence goes unrecognized.
3. No special attention to novices.
4. Poor performance goes unaddressed (p. 33).

Hill and Grossman (2013), when referencing new evaluation instruments, state,

The new observation systems will replace those in which cursory evaluations have yielded little variation in observed teacher quality, and states and districts are now selecting observation instruments, training raters, and piloting these new systems in an effort to accomplish this goal (p. 373).

All this is an effort to make evaluations more subject-specific. Most districts use the same evaluation instrument for teachers who teach kindergarten and those who teach advanced high school college preparation courses. “The current systems ask us to believe that teaching kindergarten requires the same set of practices and knowledge needed to teach high school algebra” (Hill & Grossman, 2009, p. 374).

Milianowski (2004) states that many school systems are moving towards a more standards-based teacher evaluation system. With this standards-based evaluation, teachers are given an opportunity to dialogue with the evaluator to further discuss how to improve instruction in order to gain higher student achievement. However, with more standards based evaluations comes the problem of evaluator training. Not every evaluator is knowledgeable enough to evaluate a teacher on whether content being taught is accurate (Hill & Grossman, 2009).

Teacher dispositions. According to Singh and Stoloff (2008), teacher dispositions are a vital component to student achievement. The problem with evaluating teaching dispositions in an effort to determine teacher quality is that the dispositions that define a quality teacher are wide and varied. In a study conducted by Beishuizen, Hof, van Putten, Bouwmeester, and Asscher (2001), a list of teacher dispositions were compiled after analyzing the essays of primary and secondary students, as well as teachers. The participants were asked to respond in writing to the prompt “The Good Teacher”. They found that, “[Primary] students described good teachers primarily as competent instructors, whereas secondary school students emphasized relational aspects of good teachers. Teachers, however, considered good teaching in the first place as establishing personal relationships with their students.” Colker (2008), in her survey of 43 early childhood teachers, determined that the following were dispositions of good teachers: passionate, perseverant, willing to take risks, pragmatic, patient, flexible, respectful, creative, authentic, love learning, highly energetic, sense of humor. Mowrer-Reynolds (2008) compiled another list of teacher dispositions. She asked education majors to list five characteristics of exemplary teachers. From these responses she compiles a list of the top responses:

caring, compassionate and empathetic; warm, kind, friendly, sociable, familiar; fair, treats students equally; enthusiastic, excited about subject; organized; flexible, cooperative; makes subject matter clear for students, provides concrete examples; patient, tolerant; humorous, funny, makes learning fun; easy to talk to, approachable; disciplinarian, controls classroom environment; knows subject

matter, has a wealth of information; knows how to motivate students, inspirational; entertaining, can hold the attention of the class (p. 217)

She used the most frequently used characteristics to create a survey. She then surveyed the same pre-service teachers, asking them to choose five qualities of exemplary teachers from the list. Upon analysis of the surveys, these characteristics were prevalent. Results showed that for females, exemplary teachers are enthusiastic, respectful of students, have high expectations for their students, are humorous and funny and provide outside help for struggling students (Mowrer-Reynolds, 2008). Results for males showed that exemplary teachers are enthusiastic, respectful of students, knowledgeable of subject matter, humorous and funny, entertaining and hold their attention and provide outside help for struggling students. In a study conducted by Hallinan (2008) the focus was on student attachment to school. Hallinan posited that students who like school will in turn want to come to school, which will increase student achievement. She found that teachers who respect their students and praise them for their accomplishments increase their students' attachment to school.

In another study, Steele (2010) found three dispositions of good teachers. One such disposition is that of nonverbal communication, or the way a teacher communicates with her body. She stated, "Teachers need to understand nonverbal communication and behaviors as well as the power and influence they can have over others" (p. 72).

A second disposition is self-efficacy. Steele (2010) defines self-efficacy as "the set of beliefs a teacher holds regarding his or her own abilities and competencies to teach influence student behavior and achievement regardless of outside influences of obstacles"(p.73). A confident teacher is a good teacher.

The last disposition of a good teacher is that of servant leadership. A teacher who embraces servant leadership is one who puts the needs of others before her own (Steele, 2010). She consistently focuses on others. “Behaviors exhibited by servant leaders include caring, open communication, empathy, autonomy, and appreciation of cultural differences” (Steele, p. 73). Other characteristics include being keenly aware of oneself, justice in making decision and loyalty to the students and the school (Steele, 2010).

In an effort to determine what teacher dispositions lead to higher student achievement, Thornton (2009) completed a study of 16 teachers deemed “highly qualified” by their administrators. These teachers were observed while teaching in a summer academy for at-risk students. Additional data was collected by interviewing 18 random students who were participating in the academy. She found that there were two categories of dispositions: responsive and technical. Responsive dispositions were more conducive to student achievement than technical dispositions. She also separated out the two different categories and analyzed them in three areas: assessment, instruction, and management. Responsive dispositions for assessment include being a critical and challenging thinker rather than the technical dispositions of being an assuming or accepting thinker. Responsive dispositions for instruction include being a facilitative and creative thinker rather than a directing or repetitive thinker (technical). Responsive dispositions for management include being an empowering thinker and a connected rather than the technical dispositions of being a controlling and disconnected thinker (technical).

Akbar & Allvar (2010) found that yet another differing disposition for determining teacher quality. The results of their study found a high correlation between

the use of reflective practices and student achievement. Teachers who reflected on their teaching did so as a means to help a struggling student. “Reflective practice starts with a passion for wanting to help children succeed. These teachers are constantly puzzling over what works and what doesn’t work in order to help children learn. Their reflection is fueled by their passionate commitment to help children to learn.” (p. 115).

As evidenced by these different studies, dispositions that positively impact student learning are as wide and varied as those who conducted the studies. While there are some commonalities in the lists, dispositions of effective teachers seem to be in the “eye of the beholder.”

Teacher self-efficacy. Self-efficacy lies in Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive theory. According to Bandura, self-efficacy is the belief in one’s ability “to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave” (Bandura, 1994). According to Steele (2010), a teacher’s self-efficacy is “the set of beliefs a teacher holds regarding his or her own abilities and competencies to teach influence student behavior and achievement regardless of outside influences or obstacles” (p. 73). Teacher self-efficacy influences classroom practices which in turn influences student achievement (Steele, 2010). According to Gibson and Dembo (1984), a teacher’s belief in his or her ability to positively change students is one example of teacher self-efficacy. Tschannen-Morana and Hoy (2001) assert that personal teaching efficacy is the feeling a teacher has with regards to his/her competence as a teacher. In another study, Woolfolk & Hoy (1990) assert that a teacher’s self-efficacy is tied to effective teaching, and thus, in student achievement. If a teacher has a positive sense of self-efficacy, he/she has a

positive effect on student achievement. However, Tamalu and Oim (2005) found that some teachers have high teaching self-efficacy but low personal efficacy. In that same study it was shown that teaching self-efficacy was tied to years' experience and grade level taught (Tamalu & Oim, 2005). Akbari & Allvar's (2010) results of their study concurred with many of the studies on teacher efficacy. They noted that teachers with strong efficacy are committed teachers and spend time boosting their efficaciousness in areas where they believe they are weak. They also persevere with students who are difficult to teach or are having difficulty in a particular subject area. "Self-efficacious teachers are far more likely to plan more effective lessons, take more responsibility for student achievement, persist when students face challenges, and search extensively for appropriate strategies and materials to improve student achievement" (p. 14).

Bandura asserts that self-efficacy can be developed in four basic ways. First of all, "self-efficacy can be developed through mastery experiences." (Bandura, 1994, p 72). For a teacher, teaching a particular lesson or in a particular manner that leads to high student success leads to efficacious feelings. Secondly, self-efficacy can be developed vicariously. Observing someone more experienced being successful at a task is a means to build self-efficacy vicariously – that is, through others' success. For teachers, watching a veteran teacher successfully teach a lesson may lead the observing teacher to think that they can be successful as well (Bandura, 1994). Additionally, self-efficacy can be developed via verbal persuasion. With verbal persuasion, listening to someone more experienced discuss the skills they use to perform a certain task will serve as a reminder to the less experienced person what is needed to be successful. For example, a mentor teacher may tell a protégé the skills she uses to successfully teach in a manner that leads

to student success (Bandura, 1994). Arousal is the fourth component in developing self-efficacy. This is when the body physically gets ready to perform. For a teacher, this would be excitement or “butterflies” when teaching a new lesson or group of students for the first time (Bandura, 1994).

Teachers can meet any or all of the requirements to be considered highly qualified by NCLB, NCES, NCTAF, or NBPTS standards but in reality, due to the increasing demands and requirements for schools make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), teacher quality is not measured by any of the above standards. One of the requirements for making AYP lies in student academic performance, and this performance is measured by each state’s performance on standardized tests. Hakel et al. (2008) assert that “using test scores in this way has a long history in research, and in the current federal accountability system established under the No Child Left Behind Act, test scores are the primary indicator of whether schools are making ‘adequate yearly progress’” (p. 155). However, Caillier (2010) posits that using test scores alone to evaluate an individual teacher’s quality is flawed due to factors such as class size or student home life that not within a teacher’s ability to control. He goes on to suggest that the use of some of the NBPTS requirements, namely “rigorous self-reflection exercises in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of their instruction” (p.60) be used for teacher evaluation. The specific standards vary based on the type of certification but are all tied into the Five Core Propositions (NBPTS, 2010c):

1. Are committed to students and their learning.
2. Know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.

4. Think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Are members of learning communities.

Summary

Within the literature there appears to be several way to look at NBCT. The first way, which constitutes the vast majority of the literature, was endeavors to quantitatively determine the impact of NBCTs on student achievement as measured by standardized tests. Another way is to examine others' perceptions of NBC teachers, including administrators and non-NBCTs. A third way to look at NBC teachers is through the thoughts of actual NBCTs. The problem that occurs with this third way is that many of the published works that look examine NBCT's thoughts are not qualitative studies. To date, there are no qualitative studies with the sole purpose of giving NBCTs a chance to tell others about their certification journey and how the certification has impacted them professionally and personally. This shows a gap in the literature that this study hopes to begin to fill.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Since the institution of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), most school districts' focus is on making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). One of the “benchmarks” of making AYP is test scores and school districts are often looking for ways of boosting these test scores. According to Hakel et al. (2008)

Using test scores in this way has a long history in research, and in the current Federal accountability system established under the NCLB Act, test scores are the primary indicator of whether schools are making AYP (p.155).

Hence, most of the available research concentrates on how NBCTs affect student achievement as measured by standardized tests. These studies have produced mixed results. Many studies have found that NBCTs have a positive effect on student achievement (Cavalluzzo, 2004; Goldhaber, 2004; Hakel et al. 2008; Vandevooort et al, 2004) while on the other hand, many of these studies have found that there is not a significant difference between student achievement of NBCTs and non-NBCTS (Cantrell, 2007; Sanders et al., 2005; McCloskey et al., 2005). Any studies performed that ask teachers for their views are in the form of surveys, using Likert scales (NBPTS 2001a & 2001b).

There have been no research studies to date that interview teachers from Georgia who are NBC in order to understand the essence of being a NBCT. Any research that includes interviews merely gives a transcription of the interview without qualitative data analysis. The rationale for choosing these questions is that there is no qualitative research that has investigated why teachers pursue NBC, what they experienced during the

certification process and how being a NBCT has impacted them professionally and personally. NBCTs thoughts and feelings about this phenomenon are essentially silent.

Research Design

This study strove to understand teachers' perspectives of what it means to be a NBCT. This type of experience cannot be measured quantitatively. Instead, the researcher must listen to those who have achieved NBC status. According to Moustakas (1994), an empirical phenomenological approach is used in order to “determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience” (p. 13). From these descriptions, the meaning of the experience can be derived in order to fully understand the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). This approach allowed these teachers to express their thoughts and feelings about their experience in their own words.

According to Ary et al. (2005), the purpose of qualitative research is necessary to fully understand a phenomenon from the inside from those who have actually experienced it. Creswell (2007) asserts that qualitative research is a means by which researchers can develop a thorough understanding of the phenomena, which can only happen by talking directly to those involved. The researcher needs to listen to the people involved – to capture the essence of their individual experience (Creswell, 2007). Annin (2009) asserts that phenomenological studies are not just about seeking the facts; rather, phenomenology's purpose is to *understand an* experience—to hear the voices of those involved. Because understanding of the phenomenon of the being a NBCT was the purpose of this study, phenomenological research was appropriate.

Research Questions

The majority of research on NBCT is quantitative in nature and uses standardized test scores or other achievement related data in order to determine if there is a difference in achievement in students whose teacher is a NBCT and in student whose teacher is not a NBCT (Benigno, 2005; Bundy, 2006; Cantrell et al., 2007; Cavalluzzo, 2004; Center for Teaching Quality, 2008; Childs, 2006; Goldhaber et al., (Eds.), 2008; Harris, & Sass, 2007; Holland, 2006; Kelley, & Kimball, 2001; McColskey et al., 2005; National Academies News, 2008, June 11; Okpala, James, & Hopson, 2009; Rouse, 2004; Sanders et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2005; Stephens, 2003; Vandevort, 2004; Vandevort et al., 2004). To date, there are no qualitative studies with the sole purpose of giving a voice to NBCTs-to hear from their own words about their certification journey and how the certification has impacted them professionally and personally. This study used the following peer-reviewed questions to guide the researcher:

5. What does it mean to be a NBCT?
6. Why do teachers pursue National Board certification?
7. What, if any professional impact is there to becoming a NBCT?
8. What, if any personal impact is there to becoming a NBCT?

Participants

The opinion with regards to the number of participants needed for a phenomenological study is varied. According to Patton (2002) and Ary et al. (2005) there is not a set number of participants required for a phenomenology. On the other hand, Creswell (2007), recommends 20-30 participants, while Groenenwald (2002) suggests that 10 participants is sufficient. Ary et al. (2005) asserts that the sample size is sufficient

when data saturation is reached. After conferring with my committee, it was decided that nine-12 participants would be the goal for this study. Initially, three of participants were chosen because they certified before the 10% salary supplement went into effect. Three were chosen because they certified after the 10% salary supplement went into effect and before the stipend was reduced or eliminated completely. Three were chosen because they recertified after the stipend was eliminated. A tenth teacher was interviewed because she certified for the first time after the supplement was totally eliminated.

Sampling Procedures

Georgia's Teachers

At the time of this study Georgia had 111,840 teachers. 22,227 teachers are male and 90,925 are female. 25,786 teachers are Black, 82,848 are White, 2,019 are Hispanic, 985 are Asian, 226 are Native American, and 1,288 are Multiracial. The average number of years of teaching experience is 13.24 years. The average salary is \$52,871.49. 38,436 have their Bachelor's degree only, and 51,747 have their Master's degree. 20,375 have their Educational Specialist's degree, while 2,132 have their Doctoral degree (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2010). 2,601 of these teachers are NBCTs in the following certification areas (NBCT directory, 2010):

Table 3.1

Georgia's NBCTs, Early and Middle Childhood, Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood

Certification Area	Early and Middle Childhood	Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood
Art	22	34
Career and Technical Education	not applicable	79
English as a New Language	18	11
Music	35	27
Physical Education	32	19
World Languages other than English	2	40

Table 3.2

Georgia NBCTs, Generalist

Early and Middle Childhood	Early Adolescence
923	30

Table 3.3

Georgia's NBCTs, Early Adolescence, Adolescence and Young Adulthood

Certification Area	Early Adolescence	Adolescence and Young Adulthood
English Language Arts	146	153
Mathematics	97	124
Science	118	136
Social Studies-History	65	85

Table 3.4

Georgia’s NBCTs, Early Childhood through Young Adulthood

Exceptional Needs Specialist	Library Media	School Counseling
216	115	16

A combination of criterion and convenience sampling was employed to choose participants for this study. The population for this study was collected from NBCTs in Georgia who had joined the Georgia NBCT Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/379397742071122/>). This population was targeted based on the nature of the posts on this Facebook page. The posts often referred to staying connected with one another and supporting and encouraging each other. Those who post often seemed to be those who want others to know more about NBCTs and were thought more likely to participate in the study.

At the time, 242 NBCTs were members of this page. A survey was posted on www.surveymonkey.com in early February, 2013. Before posting a link to this survey, permission was secured from the moderator of the page via Facebook messaging. This page was started by a Georgia NBCT in order to allow other Georgia NBCTs to “become involved and receive daily updates regarding . . . the reinstatement of our stipend” (Brewer, 2012). It is a private page that requires approval to join. After permission was secured, a link to this survey was subsequently posted. A request to participate in the survey was subsequently reposted on this same Facebook page five more times in an effort to garner participation during the next two subsequent months. After two months no further requests to complete the survey were posted and the survey was closed. 17

teachers participated in the survey. Of those seventeen, seven indicated their willingness to be interviewed. Two of the participants in the interviews were local NBCTs that I contacted directly. The tenth was a result of snowball sampling. The three participants not recruited for an interview as a result of the survey took the survey after I contacted them but before their interview. The teachers who agreed to participate in the study were contacted by phone to set up an interview at their convenience. The interviewee was free to choose the location and/or type of interview: in person, over the phone, or via Skype.

Interviews were semi-structured in nature. Interviews were appropriate for this type of study because they provide a wealth of data that cannot be gathered by observation alone. In addition, clarification of what was said happened while ideas were still fresh in the minds of the participants and interviewer (Ary et al., 2006). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

Research Site

The setting for this study was the state of Georgia. The locations of the participants were widespread throughout the state. Three teachers reside in the Atlanta area. Two teachers were from the south-central part of the state. Three teachers reside in the southeastern part of the state and two live in the west-central part of the state.

Although Creswell (2007) suggests that interviews occur in the natural setting, time and distance was an obstacle for interviews. While participants within a 25-mile radius were given an option for a face to face interview, all but one chose a phone interview. Those participants who resided further than a 25-mile radius were interviewed by phone. In order to accommodate participants' schedules, my location was either my home or classroom,

depending upon the time of the interview. All interviews were audio recorded using a digital recorder and cell phone compatible microphone.

Researcher's Role/Bibliography

I decided to undertake this topic for my research for a variety of reasons. First of all, I was curious about how my experience as a NBCT compared to others'. In brief conversations with NBCTs with whom I had encountered, it became apparent that we had some things in common with our experience. Research revealed that the majority of the research dealt with the impact NBCTs have on standardized test scores when compared to non-NBCTs. I realized that nobody had asked any of Georgia's NBCTs about their experience and that the essence of being a NBCT was a phenomenon on which there was no literature. In light of the budget cuts resulting in the loss of the stipend for Georgia's NBCTs, I felt it was necessary for Georgia's NBCTs to be heard.

According to Creswell (2007), the researcher is the "key instrument" (p. 38) in qualitative research. A danger, however, to being the key instrument in qualitative research is bias. According to Creswell, qualitative researchers must be sure to bracket out her experiences in order to "take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell, 2007, p. 60). This requires that the researcher set aside preconceived notions, judgments, and prejudices with regards to the research topic. In order to set aside, or bracket, my experiences as a NBC teacher I recorded answers to the open ended survey questions as well as the interview questions. I reflected and meditated upon these responses, acknowledged them and put them aside as I collected and analyzed data. Having the responses in writing enabled me to recognize when the preconceived

notions crept up in the interview process as well as the data analysis process. Instead of trying to block out my preconceived ideas, I recognized them and then set them aside.

Two of the NBCTs interviewed were former colleagues. Care was taken in reporting of data via heavy use of member checks and peer review in order to ensure that data was interpreted correctly and to control for bias.

Data Collection

Data was not collected before receiving permission for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A) and receiving informed consent (see Appendices B and C) from the volunteers. Data was collected via surveys, interviews and field notes.

Survey

The survey used in this study was a modified version of Okpala's NBPTS Survey for School Teachers (see Appendix D). Permission to use and modify this survey was secured from the author (see Appendix E). In the original study, this survey was constructed based on Okpala's review of the literature on teacher quality. Multiple items were written in order to increase reliability and validity in the measure of teacher quality components. The survey was then piloted a year before the original study using two groups of pre-service teachers, three administrators, and three teacher education faculty. Some of the items were subsequently deleted several items based on the recommendations of the pilot group in order to ensure the high reliability of the survey. Cronbach's Index of Internal Consistency (C. Okpala, personal communication, April 12, 2010) was used to test the reliability of the scale and the coefficient was = .8012. This was an acceptable reliability rate according to Creswell (2007). The questions on this

survey were initially peer reviewed for use in this study and were modified. The questions were peer reviewed a second time with no modifications made.

The purpose of the survey was to get a general picture of National Board Certified teachers in Georgia. The information gleaned from the surveys served as a foundation on which to add more details from data gathered in interviews. Additionally, the survey served as a means to recruit teachers for interviews in order to get a more in depth picture of Georgia's NBCTs.

Interviews

The second method of data collection was in depth interviews. These interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. Nine interviews were conducted via telephone. The tenth interview was face to face at the participant's school.

A standardized open-ended interview approach was taken. Each participant was given an opportunity to tell me about their experience as an educator. Then, each of the participants was asked identical questions in the same order (Patton 2002). Because I am a NBC teacher, there was the danger of bias. According to Patton (2002) the use of a standardized open-ended interview approach further reduces "interviewer effects and bias (p. 349). Additionally using this approach provides ease in organization, comparison and analysis of the data (Patton, 2002).

Three types of questions were asked during the interview: one experience and behavior question, four opinion/values questions, one feelings questions, and one was a combination of values and feelings. Question one dealt with the participant's experience with NBC. Question two dealt with the participants feelings toward the NBC process. Questions three, four, five and seven asked the participants their opinion of aspects of

being a NBCT. Question six was a combination of feelings and values as it asked for meaning of an emotional issue. The final question gave the participant an opportunity to speak freely of her opinions, values, feelings or behaviors with regards to being a NBCT.

Table 3.5

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

Questions Type	Interview Questions
Background	Why did you decide to pursue National Board Certification?
Feelings	Could you describe your feelings about the NBC process?
Opinion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How, if at all, did becoming a NBC teacher impact you personally? 2. How, if at all, did becoming a NBC teacher impact you professionally? 3. In what ways do NBC teachers differ from non-NBC teachers? 4. What is your perception on NBC as a measure of teacher quality?
Feelings/Values	What does it mean to be a NBCT?
Feelings/Values/Opinion	Is there anything else related to this issue you'd like to add?

The background question, questions one and two of the opinion section and the feelings/values questions are the research questions. The rest of the questions served to elicit responses to further understand what it means to be a NBCT.

Field Notes

The final method of data collection was field notes. Field notes are a supplement to other data sources (Ary et al., 2006) and are essential to qualitative data collection (Patton, 2002). Notes were taken during interviews and, because the interviews were audio recorded, notes were taken while listening to the interviews and while transcribing them as well. Additionally, field notes were taken during the data analysis process. One

of the features of the ATLAS.ti (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2012) qualitative data analysis software is note-taking. Field notes were recorded and stored in a file on the computer (password protected).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is often interpretive and occurs simultaneously with data collection in an effort to understand the phenomena that is being researched (Ary et al., 2006). In addition, data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing process that should be broken down into three stages: “familiarization and organization, coding and recoding, and summarizing and interpreting” (Ary et al., 2006, p. 490). Throughout the entire data collection and interpreting process, a reflective log was kept during and served as a record of thoughts throughout the data analysis process. This also served as a simple means to summarize and interpret the data as they came in.

In this study, familiarization and organization began with the survey data. After the first survey was read, the data was sorted by units of meaning, using many tentative codes in order to create categories of information (Ary et al., 2006). As subsequent survey responses were read, the data was either assigned an existing code or given a new code. This process continued until the survey was closed and all data was read.

Data collection simultaneously continued with the interviews. After each interview, the researcher transcribed it and then uploaded the transcript into ATLAS.ti (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2012) qualitative research computer program. Again, each transcript was read and reread with an eye towards adding data to an existing code or creating a new code. All the interviews were completed, transcribed,

uploaded and initially coded in a similar manner. Once the survey was closed and all interviews were complete, 40 codes emerged.

Next, the process of recoding began. Again, all the data was read and codes were either combined into an existing code or combined into a new code. After this process, 20 codes remained. Finally, the data was summarized using the constant comparative method in which the data was constantly refined in order to look for patterns and relationships that helped to understand the essence of being a NBCT.

This process continued during and after the data collection process in order to get at the essence of the experience of NBC.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research deals with the credibility of the data. In other words, how truthful that data are (Ary et al., 2006). This truthfulness is concerned with “. . . how well the researcher has established confidence in the findings based on the research design, participants and context” (Ary et al., 2006, p.504). Ary et al., 2006, asserts that there are several methods for “enhancing the credibility of qualitative studies” (p. 504). The researcher employed several of these methods in order to enhance credibility: consensus, referential or interpretive adequacy, control of bias, use of an audit trail, and the code-recode method. Consensus was established via peer review. The researcher asked an outside colleague who is not a NBCT to review the data and interpretation in order to identify problems with the interpretation, including bias (Ary et al., 2006). Referential or interpretive adequacy was established in two ways. First, member checks were used. The researcher transcribed all responses to the interview questions. These responses were emailed to the person who was interviewed in order to

verify and clarify what said. Five of the participants responded to the request to verify information. Three of these participants remarked that everything was as they intended. One participant made one minor change and another made substantial changes and corrections in her transcription by enabling the “track changes” tab in Microsoft Word. In addition, referential or interpretive adequacy was established via the use of “thick, rich description(s)” (Ary et al., 2006, p. 506). Additionally, numerous direct quotes from the interviewees were employed in the write up of the results. Next, control of bias was established via the use of a reflective journal. The researcher recorded copious field notes, especially noting when subjectivity comes into play. According to Bogdan and Bilken (2007), the purpose of the reflective journal is to “...become more reflective and conscious of how who you are may shape and enrich what you do, not to eliminate it” (p. 38).

Additionally, the researcher used an audit trail to enhance trustworthiness. This audit trail consisted of notes, records and raw data along records of decisions that were made along with thorough explanations as to why such decisions were made (Ary et al., 2006). One final strategy that was employed to establish dependability was the code-recode strategy. In the use of the code-recode strategy, the data was coded and then left alone for a set period of time (1-2 weeks). The data was subsequently recoded and compared with the original coding in order to look for agreement. (Ary et al., 2006).

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality of the participants was secured in several different ways. First of all, surveys were completely anonymous. In order to access the questions to the survey, the participant had to read and agree to the informed consent (Appendix C). The

responses to the survey were downloaded into an excel spread sheet and then in an ATLAS. ti (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2012) qualitative data analysis program on the researcher's laptop. Additionally, all interview participants were sent an informed consent document to review and sign. The informed consent document was reviewed prior to each interview as well to ensure that the participant fully understood what she was being asked to do. The interviews were audio recorded on a digital data recorder and transcribed by the researcher. These transcriptions were saved on separate jump drive. Each participant was given as pseudonym and only the researcher knows which pseudonym was assigned to the participant. No record was kept. Since the transcription of audio recordings took numerous days, the digital data recorder, along with the jump drive was locked in a fireproof box in the researcher's home. The transcriptions were uploaded to an ATLAS. ti (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2012) qualitative data program on the researcher's laptop, which was secured by a password.

Summary

This chapter discussed the phenomenological research design that was employed in this study. In addition, data collection procedures, including surveys and interviews and document analysis were discussed. Methods such as consensus, referential or interpretive adequacy, and control of bias were discussed in order to lend credibility to the study. Methods such as documentation, coding agreement, and corroboration were discussed in order to ensure dependability to the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to understand what it means to be one of Georgia's NBCTs. An empirical phenomenological approach was used in order to fully understand the essence of being a NBCT. According to Moustakas (1994), an empirical phenomenological approach is used in order to "determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience" (p. 13). From these descriptions, the meaning of the experience can be derived in order to fully understand the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). This approach allowed these teachers to express their thoughts and feelings about their experience in their own words. Their words were transcribed verbatim in order to maintain the authenticity of the surveys and interviews. No attempts to correct grammar, spelling or word choice were made.

Research Questions

This study was conducted to answer four questions in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the essence of being a NBCT in Georgia.

1. What does it mean to be a NBCT?
2. Why do teachers pursue National Board certification?
3. What, if any professional impact is there to becoming a NBCT?
4. What, if any personal impact is there to becoming a NBCT?

These four questions guided the research. Responses to these questions helped to gain a better understanding of the essence of being a NBCT.

The rest this chapter is guided by the research questions: first, an overall description of the participants; second, a brief individual portrait for each participant; third, the

thoughts, words, and feelings of the survey participants; fourth, each research question will be answered separately, using the interview participant's own thoughts, words and feelings. Finally, the thoughts, words and feelings of the all participants will be qualitatively synthesized in order to gain an understanding of what it means to be a NBCT in Georgia.

Group Portrait-Survey Participants

Seventeen NBCTs participated in the survey. One participant was male, 13 participants were female and two did not identify their gender. Twelve participants identified themselves as Caucasian, two African-American, one Hispanic, and one Caucasian and Hispanic. One teacher has been teaching for eight-11 years; one has been teaching for 12-15 years; three have been teaching 16-19 years and 11 have been teaching 20 or more years. Nine respondents teach at the elementary level, three at the middle school level, one at the high school level and three did not respond to what level they teach. With regards to education level, one teacher has a Bachelor's degree only; four have their Master's Degree; eight have their Educational Specialist's degree, and three have their Doctorate.

Survey Responses and Analysis

According to Jansen the purpose of surveys in qualitative research is to determine variations in a particular population (Jansen, 2010). Fink (2002) asserts that the use of surveys in qualitative research is to "collect information on the meanings that people attach to their experiences," especially when the researcher wants those experiences described in the words of the participant. In this study, surveys served a two-fold purpose. First, they served as a means to understand what it means to be a NBCT. This

survey consisted of open-ended questions on which the participants could freely express themselves, using their own words. Secondly, these surveys served as a means to recruit participants for interviews. Responders were given the option to contact me via email if they were interested in participating in an interview.

Responses to the first question, “Could you describe your feelings about the National Board certification process?” resulted in two overwhelmingly common responses. The majority of the respondents alluded to the rigor of the process itself: The word rigor and various synonyms (difficult, hard) were used to describe the process nine different times. Phrases such as to “difficult but rewarding” and “one of the hardest things I have ever done professionally” were found in the majority of the responses. The most significant response, however, came from this teacher: “It is a very difficult process. Much different than getting my MED or EDS.”

The other recurring response used to describe the NBC process alluded to the reflection required in the process. Reflection and various synonyms were used twenty times in response to this question in the survey. Many commented not only how novel this approach was, but how they much they learned because of the required reflection pieces. Some more detailed responses include:

“The process taught me to reflect daily and analytically, not only in my students’ performance but in my teaching methods as well.”

“I learned the importance of analyzing the individual strengths and weaknesses of each student. I became more research oriented as I continued to discover and think.”

“I am always questioning what I do, reflecting on my teaching and researching how to improve. NB challenges you as a teacher to look carefully at what you do and always strive to do it better.”

Responses to the second question, “In what ways has becoming a NBCT impacted you?” again resulted in two responses that were common in the majority of responses. The first common response was that becoming a NBCT resulted in improved teaching practice and the desire to help others to improve their teaching. A total of 12 teachers made reference to a change in their own teaching or mentoring others in an effort to improve teaching. Seven teachers mentioned that their teaching was changed, while five teachers mentioned the change in their teaching impacting not only their students but other teachers’ students as well. Responses ranged from simply, “My teaching improved throughout the process” to more elaboration, as this teacher demonstrated, “Rather than studying the practice of others (getting their ideas), I studied my practice and was forced to work and improve it.” Another teacher, who certified in 2003, mentioned her desire to collaborate after certification, even before collaboration was recognized as an effective teaching practice: “[I was] more willing to collaborate with others, recognizing the impact collaboration [had] on my teaching as well as student achievement.” Yet another teacher described the change in her teaching practice this way:

Going through the process and once certified, mentoring others through the process I found “my voice.” I was not a public speaker before this and did not get involved in professional groups/committees before this. After realizing I had opinions and ideas that mattered I became active in several different groups, which lead to leadership positions in several that led to opportunities to serve on

advisory boards and committees that I would not have had the opportunity for had I not become a NBCT.

The second common response to the question, “In what ways has becoming a NBCT impacted you?” mentioned by seven teachers, was the validation of their teaching practices and styles they received when they certified. Some responses were succinct. One teacher stated, “In a job that typically offers no method to dignify your practice, it made me feel valued and appreciated for my efforts.” Another, somewhat poignant, response related to validation was written by this teacher, “We are not necessarily better than other teachers; however, in a profession of some ‘bad apples,’ we chose to prove that we are not one of them”. And lastly, this teacher described the validation she received in this manner:

The most important aspect was the empowerment I felt once I had received my certification. I can still remember the sense of elation I felt when I saw the score indicating I had passed. I actually whooped with joy. I had been teaching in a school district which was forcing teachers to follow a one-size-fits all approach to the teaching of reading at the primary level. I was very frustrated with individuals who had never taught young children to read deciding how I was to teach. The impact of this certification really is a deep personal one for me. It validated and continues to validate who I am as a professional educator.

Responses to the third question, “Based on your opinion, in what ways do NBCTs differ from non-NBCTs?” resulted in two common thoughts as well. The first common idea with regards to the difference between NBCT and non-NBCT was the propensity to be an unconventional teacher. Some references to the unconventional teaching style of

NBCTs were a general description. Phrases used to describe the unconventionality of NBC teachers included, “. . . don’t follow scripts or rote schedules . . .” and “They think outside the box.” Since teachers who responded to the survey were NBC teachers, these comments were actual descriptions of their own tendency to be unconventional and were quite personal. One teacher stated, “There are many good teachers in the county. However, my approach to teaching is different”. Another teacher described her unconventional teaching style in this manner: “NB teachers are always pushing themselves, challenging conventional practices, and constantly looking for best practices. NB teachers are always on the forefront of improvement and change”.

The second common response to the third question pointed to the passion and drive NBCTs have towards teaching. Phrases describing the passionate and driven nature of NBCTs occurred 13 times in the responses to this question. This passion and drive was often towards their desire to help their own students achieve, such as these description shows: “They have a need for self-improvement as a means of helping their students grow;” “Willing to go the extra mile! Willing to commit to pushing themselves and their students;” “They want to make sure that they are doing their best for their students.” Sometimes, however, this passion and drive to enhance student achievement spills out into the school and even the community, as shown by these two responses:

I believe NBC teachers are more motivated—I think they want to help the learning and achievement of ALL students not just their own. I believe NBCTs work harder to find rigorous learning experiences for their students—not just plop down what is easy. I believe NBCTs have higher expectations for their students, but also work to help their students meet those goals.

What I have discovered about myself since I received my certification is a need to learn all I possibly can about whatever the new educational buzzword of the moment is particularly if it will have an impact on what I teach. I participated in the PAARC reviews when others in my district seemed unaware. I reviewed Common Core standards in my area long before we were given our first drafts. I tend to read research regarding the curricular areas I am responsible for teaching. The people I went through the program with all seemed to have an internal drive which took us down the path towards our various certifications.

Upon examination of the responses to the final statement, “Please provide comments on the quality of NB teachers,” there was nothing new with regards to the description of NBCT. Rather the comments reiterated the descriptions gleaned from the responses to the first three questions: reflection, rigor, validation, improvement of teaching practices, unconventionality of teaching, and passion and drive. Some phrases used to describe the quality of NBCTs included the following: “There is no doubt, NBCT teachers have more dedication to the profession ;” “One can assume they have found the value of reflection and research.” “NB teachers are those teachers who are constantly striving to challenge themselves. They are not happy with the status quo but are always working to be exceptional.”

Teachers that go through the NB process often are the teacher leaders that one will find in a school, system or state This cannot be said about the “on-line” programs that teachers are flocking to now in order to get advanced degrees just to get pay raises since the state government does not give us pay raises anymore It is a very difficult process. Much different than getting my MED or my

EDS. In this process you must basically brag about yourself. Tell how your teaching has impacted the lives of your school, students, community.

Perhaps, however, the most poignant comment made with regards to a National Board teacher's quality was given by this teacher:

NBCTs are the types of teachers that we want all children to have - I want my own child to be a student of a Nationally Board Certified teacher. The above and beyond aspect plays a key role in their success not just as NBCTs, but as educators.

Interview Participant Portraits

In order to delve deeper into the meaning or essence of being a NBCT in Georgia, portraits of each teacher interviewed will be presented. Forrest (2013) asserts that phenomenological research's purpose is to re-present the story or experience of another. Seidman (2006) asserts that interviews are a means of "understanding the lived experience of other people" (p. 9). Ten teachers were interviewed in an endeavor to provide a more in-depth look at the essence of being a NBCT. Each participant was given as pseudonym and only the researcher knew which pseudonym was assigned to the participant. No record was kept. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and uploaded into ATLAS. ti (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2012). These interviews served to provide a more intimate look into the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of ten of Georgia's NBCTs. According to Creswell (2007), epistemology is the study of "how the researcher knows what she knows" (p. 17) and is philosophical assumption in phenomenological research. An epistemological approach requires that researcher "attempt to lessen the distance between herself and that being researched" (p. 17). In

order to do this, a researcher must spend time with participants. According to Groenwald (2004), data are contained within the perspectives of people that are involved . . .” (p. 15). According to Moustakas (1994) the purpose phenomenological research is to “determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it (p. 13).” In order to understand this phenomenon, the researcher needed to hear from those who have successfully been through the NBC process to become NBCTs. Since NBCTs are the ones who hold that data, I spent time with ten of them. The following section contains a synopsis of each of the participant’s responses by question, and serves as means to further paint a portrait of a NBCT.

Table 4.1

Participant Overview

Participant	Current Position	Years of Experience	Certification Year	Education Level
Anne-Liesse	Elementary Assistant Principal; former 3 rd and 5 th grade teacher	19	2000/2010	Educational Specialist
Jacinda	Kindergarten Teacher	28	2003/ Not recertifying	Doctorate
Jessica	Elementary Instructional Supervisor; former 5 th grade teacher	18	2003	Working on Doctorate
JoAnn	fifth grade teacher	25	2002/2012	Doctorate
Mary Kathryn	fourth grade teacher	15	2003	Working on Doctorate
Nancy	sixth grade science	20	2002/ Not recertifying	Master's Degree
Rebecca	Gifted Resource Grades 1-4	13	2007	Master's Degree
Ruth	Retired; taught grades 1-3, 6-7 and college	32	1999/2009	Educational Specialist
Sarraah Elisabeth	Retired; taught grades K-8	30	1999/2009	Master's Degree
Tessa	Data Specialist; former 3 rd grade teacher	19	2010	Working on Doctorate

Mary Kathryn. Mary Kathryn’s interview was conducted by phone and audio recorded. At the time of the interview Mary Kathryn was on bed rest, about 32 weeks pregnant, awaiting the birth of twin girls. She shared,

They’re due in May, but I do one type of pregnancy, and that’s high risk, so I’m already on bed rest, and they really could come while I’m on the phone right now! I’m hoping I can make it through the interview!

She was easy to talk to as she enthusiastically shared her thoughts and feelings. She sounded eager to help as she, too, is working on a doctorate at an online university in the southeastern United States. She is confident in that she has a definite plan for her life and her career. Both she and her husband are trying to support their ever-growing family.

Mary Kathryn has been a teacher for 15 years. She and her husband moved frequently so she has teaching experience in Michigan, North Carolina, and Georgia. She has taught in a variety of positions, all at the elementary level. She has taught first grade and fifth grade. She has also served as a literary coach. She is currently a fourth grade teacher in a school district in the Atlanta area. She describes herself as,

. . . very driven, you know, constantly either getting degrees or National Board Certification or that kind of thing, motivated by wanting to make as much money as we can in this profession. A teacher by trade and a teacher by heart. I’m definitely doing what I’m supposed to be doing. Just love it. Love my job.

Sarrah Elisabeth. Sarrah Elisabeth was a 30-year veteran teacher who loved her profession so much she came out of retirement multiple times. She spoke enthusiastically about education and used the word “enjoy” multiple times as she spoke of her experience in education. She spoke with confidence about herself and her experiences. When she

spoke about her National Board experience, her voice became quite animated: “It’s been a wonderful part of my life for the last 15 years.” She started her career teaching kindergarten and eventually worked her way up to teaching eighth grade. Once she retired from public school education, she took a position with the Georgia Association of Educators in Professional Development. She was also involved in the National Educators Association and helped promote National Board certification. Later, she worked for The Georgia Professional Standards Commission as a grant specialist for teachers who were working in the classroom but were not fully certified to teach.

Jessica. Jessica is a former colleague. We taught at the same school for four years before she moved to another local school. I had arranged to meet Jessica at her school for the interview. When I arrived at Jessica’s school for the interview, she was in her office speaking with one of her teachers. She was dressed professionally, as one would expect an administrator to be—a nice dress, accessorized with jewelry and polished make-up. As I waited for her to finish her conversation, I noticed that although it was about an hour after dismissal, the school was still abounding with teachers and teachers’ children. I could hear snippets of adult conversations peppered with the voices of children playing in the gym and in the hallways. When she was ready for the interview, Jessica took me to a conference room near the entrance to the school. It contained several chairs and a large conference table. It was a well-lit room with many west-facing windows. We sat across from each other at the table. Jessica was warm and inviting but admitted that she was afraid of saying something that was “lame” or wrong. We were interrupted twice during the interview. Once by her son, who wanted to check in with her and a second time by the

assistant principal, who Jessica admitted, with a twinkle in her eye, was being ‘nosey’ about what we were doing.

Jessica was a teacher for 17 years and was in her first year as an Instructional Supervisor. She has taught all elementary levels except kindergarten. Her preference was upper grades, especially fifth grade. She had taught in both gifted cluster classroom as well as EIP classes.

Rebecca. Rebecca is a former colleague of mine as well as one of my “parents.” I was her daughter’s fourth grade teacher and I worked with her at the same school for several years before and after her daughter was in my class. However, we have not worked together for seven years. Rebecca’s interview was conducted by phone. Although she was more than willing to be interviewed, we had difficulty finding a time that was convenient for her as she was under a deadline to finish her last Master’s Degree class. At the beginning of the interview, she seemed a bit distracted, which was understandable due to her deadline. After some idle talk and a question or two, Rebecca’s voice became more relaxed and she spoke freely with me. She has quite a dry sense of humor, which came out several times during the course of the interview.

Rebecca is a Gifted and Talented resource teacher for grades, 1-4 in a K-8 school. She has taught for 13 years in first, second, third, and fourth grades. She had a very rough start to her teaching career. “I had nine fourth graders and they were rich, rotten kids and they decided that they did not like this southern lady and made life very, very difficult.” Because of this experience, she had doubts about her teaching ability.

JoAnn. JoAnn’s interview was conducted by phone. As we were talking, I could hear household noises in the background, as if the last of the supertime dishes were

being done. She was very friendly and willing to be interviewed. She was gregarious and quite charismatic. I could hear joy in her voice when she spoke of her job. It was obvious she loves her job.

JoAnn teaches in a unique situation. She is a fifth grade teacher in a family grouping model. Students are moved in tact from second grade up through fifth. Three days a week the teachers do a multi-age grouping activity so that by the time they get to fifth grade, she knows her students and can teach from day one. She spoke with confidence and conviction about her role in this model.

Nancy. Nancy's interview was conducted by phone. I called her while she was waiting for her daughter to finish with an afterschool activity. In the beginning of the interview, she seemed a bit distracted, and her tone was business-like and to the point. Her answers were succinct and matter-of-fact. However, the further we got into the interview she warmed up to me, and she spoke enthusiastically about her experience.

Nancy is a sixth grade science teacher in a local middle school. She is also a Master Teacher in Georgia. She has taught fifth grade self-contained, sixth grade math, science and social studies, and seventh grade and eighth grade science.

Ruth. Ruth's interview was conducted by phone on a weekday evening. She was very friendly and warm. She was soft-spoken but confident. An obvious lilt came into her voice as she spoke of not only her teaching experiences, but her National Board certification experience as well. . It was evident from the interview that she loves being an educator and took joy in all things education-related in which she participated. She used the word "enjoy" many times when describing her feelings about her various jobs throughout her career. Ruth taught for 32 years in public and private school. She started

in Atlanta, GA and taught in eight different school systems. She taught mostly first, second and third grade. She also taught two years in sixth-seventh grade. She later taught college classes for one year full time and then mentored student teachers for eight years. She has a Master's degree and an Educational Specialist degree. She is currently fully retired.

Jacinda. Jacinda's interview was conducted by phone and took place while she was on her way to take her son to baseball practice. While she was a bit busy, she was more than willing to be interviewed. Jacinda is in her 28th year of teaching and currently teaches kindergarten. While most of her experience has been in kindergarten, she did teach 4 years in first grade as well as I did do a fourth and fifth grade remediation one year. She certified in 2003. Her certification runs out at the end of this term but she is choosing not to recertify due to the legislative issues. She is also a Teacher Support Specialist for her school. She mentors early teachers and teachers who might need some professional development. She also gives professional development workshops on Writer's Workshop.

Anne-Liesse. Anne-Liesse's interview was conducted by phone on a weekday evening. She was enthusiastic and easy to talk to. She was professional yet friendly. When she spoke about her faculty, it was almost as if they were family. It was obvious she cared about them and wanted to help them become better teachers. It was also obvious she believes in National Board certification. Her voice became passionate when she spoke of her own personal experience and how she has introduced National Board certification to her staff.

Anne-Liesse was a teacher for 10 years before she left the classroom. She taught third and fifth grade. She received National Board certification in 2000, which was her sixth year teaching and she has recertified once. She left the classroom after ten years and became a curriculum support teacher, which she did for five years. She then became an assistant principal and has been for the last four years. She chose to recertify in 2009 despite the fact she was already out of the classroom. “I wanted to still have that recognition and prestige and it really wasn’t about the money. It was important to me that my teachers still knew I was a teacher even though I was out of the classroom.”

Tessa. Tessa’s interview took place late one weekday evening. Her voice was professional and warm. She spoke very highly of her entire experience and of the change it made in her career and how she viewed herself. Although it was quiet during the majority of the interview, her children came into the room at one point. She apologized for the interruption but as she dismissed her children from the room, you could hear the love in her voice for them.

Tessa is a former teacher who recently certified in 2010. She was in the classroom for 15 years and had taught second, third and fourth grades, with ten of the 15 years in third grade. “My favorite grade is third grade It’s just a wonderful grade . . . the curriculum was so rich in third grade and they’re just making that turn to being great people.” Tessa is currently a data support specialist lead teacher. She serves 27 schools and instructs teachers on the use of data to drive instruction.

Interview Responses

Interviews were appropriate for this type of study because they provide a wealth of data that cannot be gathered by observation alone. In addition, clarification of what

was said took place while ideas were still fresh in the minds of the participants and interviewer. Although each participant was asked the same questions in the same order the interviews were semi-structured which allowed me to ask for clarification and probe deeper as needed.

In the following section the responses to each question is presented. Then the responses to both the surveys and interviews are analyzed with an eye towards themes, leading to a better understanding of what it means to be a NBCT in Georgia.

Reasons for Pursuing NBC

There were almost as many reasons for pursuing NBC as there were participants. As a result, a common reason did not emerge. Mary Kathryn chose to pursue becoming a NBCT because she felt it was expected of her. She stated:

I kinda felt like I wanted to just get done with the thing that needed to get done, what was required of me, so when I lived in Michigan, they really pushed getting your Master's degree, so I started that there, moved to North Carolina and finished it there, and when I got to North Carolina, it [NBC] was just so popular, like there was pay increases to do it, I mean they just pushed it, especially in the district, they offered us mentors to get it done, there were scholarships available, that kind of thing.

Sarrah Elisabeth and pursued NBC because it won out over getting an advanced degree. Sarrah Elisabeth chose NBC for convenience:

You could do it in the classroom with your units and at that time I was involved with at-risk kids and we had key in developing the program. We had the freedom from the Middle School principal to do what we felt like was the best for these

kids and we had them sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade, it was combination and we were looking at so many different avenues to with them to get them on to high school and not drop out. So it fell right in place with what I was doing in my classroom. And that meant a lot.

Tessa, Anne-Liesse, Jacinda, and Jessica decided to pursue NBC at the recommendation of a colleague. Additionally, Jessica was lured by the salary supplement, as were Rebecca and Nancy. Ruth, on the other hand, pursued National Board certification for the challenge:

It was just a challenge for me. As soon as it started, things I'd heard about it, I thought I want to do that. I just made up my mind that I wanted to do it. And like I say it was more for the challenge. At that time, my understanding was this is a way to prove you are a good teacher . . . it was just my feeling that I think I'll just see if I can do this just for my own personal satisfaction. So that's why I did it. And enjoyed doing it, really enjoyed doing it. Hardest work I've ever done but I enjoyed it.

JoAnn pursued NBC as part of her Educational Specialist's degree program: I was working on my Specialist degree at Georgia State University. You had a choice at that time to either go in the route of a National Board certified teacher or go towards an Ed. Leadership degree. And there were six of us who said, "Well, why can't we do both?" And so they said, "We'll do it." Originally that's why I did it, because it was part of the Specialist program and they were offering us all sort of support, both financially as well as classes to help with our National Board.

Personal and Professional Impact of NBC

Research questions three and four asked the participants to comment upon the impact of NBC, both personally and professionally. Eight out of the 10 participants answered with professional impacts when asked how becoming a NBC teacher impacted them personally. Two participants answered with a truly personal impact when asked to comment. Sarrah Elisabeth commented about how becoming a NBCT impacted her in a non-educational way:

I learned to reflect in my personal life, I learned to know myself better, just by knowing how to sit back and reflect on happenings personally, you know family, of course my boys already were in college , it really didn't help me with my kids, but personally with the relationships I had at that time.

When asked how becoming a NBCT impacted her personally, JoAnn replied, "I think what it personally it showed me is that with perseverance you can accomplish anything you want to do."

When responding to this question, most teachers spoke about how being a NBCT impacted them personally in their profession. Mary Kathryn spoke of the doors that opened for her once she earned her certification:

It's an attention-getter on your resume, and I even, when I sent emails when I was trying to get a job out here, I put it in the tag-line, "NBC looking for an elementary school position" and I feel like . . . it got the attention, I mean, I got emails back, it didn't ensure a job but it got me many more interviews than I would have gotten, so that's great.

When responding to how becoming a NBCT impacted them professionally, the overwhelming response dealt with opportunities afforded these teachers because of the certification. When speaking about working with GPSC and GAE, Sarrah Elisabeth stated, “I don’t think I would have had the opportunity to do either one if I hadn’t had NBC. I think it put me out there.” The opportunities afforded her put her in direct contact with teachers who were in the process of pursuing NBC. She served as a mentor to these teachers and as she spoke about her experience, it was clear that she took joy in helping teachers become successful in their pursuit of NBC:

Career wise, we saw the last 10 years of my career blossom in different directions where I could help teachers rather than be in the classroom with kids and that’s just as rewarding. I’ve worked with a lot of teachers who were going through the process, GAE teachers, and we would have workshops to work with them and help them reflect, learn reflective process, and it was amazing to see them blossom over the time they were working with their students. You know you saw the students evolve and you saw a picture of the teacher in the classroom reflecting enough that she or he were pulling the students into that evolutionary process if keeping going, those students at that time, and they realized you know, a lot more. A lot of it’s in the classroom and I saw it with them, there’s a subconscious state, you’re doing what works but you don’t know why. And you don’t know how to pass it on. And when we put them in groups and let them pass it on to each other, I saw the teachers who went through the process really get a lot from it.

For Jessica, becoming a NBCT changed how she viewed her role as an educator. Being a NBCT brought new pressure and new expectations from having the credential. She was no longer just a regular classroom teacher. She was now an advocate for the students and her colleagues:

But it's also, for me has meant—and I've alluded to it before—you've got to be one of the best, you've got to be willing to speak up for the students, willing to speak up for the teachers. People are going to look to you to be the leader. But also not that you just focus on in your room—number 410—what's your whole grade, your whole school, what can you do. You have to take that role on now. You're just there; you're in the spotlight now. It makes you realize you have to live up to that I'm Nationally certified, I have to do something special. It made me a better teacher.

She also saw herself as a better collaborator and as being willing to take on more of a leadership role in her school:

I think it's made me a better collaborator and I think it made me more of a leader and more outspoken, because when I came from a different district, I was like letting everyone else do the leading and I was like that's a great idea, I'll follow you and do what you're doing, but after receiving this, it made me more reflective and I kinda knew what I wanted to see happen in my classroom and then in my grade level and then as I continued throughout my career, things I wanted to happen in my school. It's made me see the bigger picture.

Several participants felt that becoming a NBCT made them a better teacher. Jessica, Rebecca, Nancy, Ruth, and JoAnn remarked that the professional impact of becoming a NBCT was that it helped them become better teachers. JoAnn stated:

But the one thing I can honestly say it's still to this day, every lesson I teach, I go back to that question, it's like a mantra. How does this impact my students' achievement? And if I don't, yeah there are some days we do and it's just for fun, but the majority of every lesson is driven by how's this going to impact my students' achievement.

In this same light, Nancy said:

I thought that was probably the best thing about it was it made me have to look internally and go why am I doing this? How is this benefiting my students? I think it's absolutely the best staff development you could ever do. I actually think it's really made me a better teacher.

Rebecca's change in her teaching came with a more introspective look at why she was teaching what she was teaching. She stated, "So how did it affect me? I guess I do look at the more me part of it. Am I doing all I can? Am I creating the best learning situation?"

Four participants felt that the National Board process was such a positive one that they became involved in helping other teachers become NBCTs. Anne-Liesse and Nancy have led held workshops to introduce interested teacher to the NBC process. Sarrah Elisabeth became a mentor to National Board candidates. Ruth did not work for NBPTS in any official capacity but would talk to anyone who would listen about her certification experience:

I just talked to everybody I saw, not everybody, the people I knew were really good teachers, I tried to talk them into doing it . . . many people did National Board because I encouraged them to do it.

What it Means to be a NBCT

This question seemed to elicit some thoughtful, meaningful responses. Most of the participants had to really think before answering. Two participants commented on the difficulty of this question. Six participants audibly sighed, used verbal fillers such as “um” or repetition of the question. One participant paused significantly before responding. The responses quite varied, from having more money in the paycheck (Mary Kathryn), to being proud and honoring the teaching profession (Jessica and Tessa). Some responses were a bit more involved. Mary Kathryn stated that being a NBCT meant improvement of her practice. “It means that I care and I want to keep getting better. It means that I want to learn and grow. It means I’m dedicated.” Along those same lines, Jessica said that being a NBCT means, “You love education” but with that comes a risk of having a lot to live up to. Rebecca and JoAnn said that being a NBCT was something you did for yourself, that you accepted the challenge of it and came out of the process with the certification. More specifically, Rebecca stated the following:

You’ve made a choice. You made a choice for yourself . . . you’ve done this for yourself, really. You have put yourself through a ringer of sorts and scrutinized yourself, been challenged by being graded accordingly, and either you came out on the other side with those initials next to your name or you didn’t.

To JoAnn, being a NBCT means:

You've given your best effort. You've personally sacrificed your time, your finances, yourself, your family in order to contribute to what you feel is a worthwhile endeavor in life.

However, the most overwhelming response to what it means to be a NBCT is that it means you're a good teacher. Nancy put it this way:

I think we're the go-getters, I think we're the ones who are stepping up to the plate to go that extra mile. I think we're the ones who look at our students and go that's not good enough and let's see why, what's going on that you can't produce quality work. You know is there some deficit that you have or is there something that I'm doing, you know we're the ones who actually dig and try to figure it out.

Similarly, Ruth stated the following:

To me, it just means that you have proven that you have. uh, that you know a lot about education and that you know what you're doing in the classroom. Just a way of proving that you are a good teacher to me.

Jacinda said, "I just think that it means that I have a passion for the way students learn and why they need to learn certain things and how to best meet their needs."

And finally, Anne-Liesse sums it up by saying the following:

What does it mean . . . to me it means that I'm accomplished. It means, um, it's like a doctor who gets their certification. To me it's you know I've gone through a process that rigorous and I've been evaluated and that my teaching practices, you know, are high or great. It means that I know what I'm doing.

Themes

A thorough analysis of the data revealed several themes with regards to NBCTs. On the surface, it appeared that the biggest impact for these teachers was the opportunities afforded them as a result of becoming a NBCT. Teachers overwhelmingly responded to the questions regarding the impact of NBC with stories of numerous opportunities that came their way after certification. Sarrah Elisabeth mentioned that her “career blossomed” as a result of becoming a NBCT. Ruth compiled a list of opportunities she’d had as a result of becoming a NBCT. These opportunities included meeting the governor of Georgia, being trained by the NBPTS as a facilitator to mentor NBC candidates and becoming a mentor for the PAGE and the GAE. Jacinda mentioned that because of becoming a NBCT, her confidence grew enough that she was able to take what she learned about writing during the National Board process and what she learned at a Writer’s Workshop conference and present it to other teachers to help them help their students to become better writers. Anne stated that her enthusiasm for the NBC process resulted in her county hiring her as a support person for candidates going through the process. Tessa relayed numerous opportunities after she became certified, including being invited to be in the audience of Education Nation when it came to Atlanta; going through the Learning Forward Academy.

But, digging deeper into what was said and perhaps what was not said, revealed three essences of what it means to be a NBCT in Georgia:

1. Georgia NBCTs are dedicated, passionate and driven.
2. Georgia NBCTs are reflective and use reflection to drive their instruction.

3. Georgia NBCTs have a strong desire to improve their teaching and a strong need to have their teaching validated to ensure they're good teachers.

Theme One: Georgia NBCTs Are Dedicated, Passionate, and Driven

Many teachers in the study alluded to the rigor of the NBC process. Ruth stated that it was the “hardest thing I’ve ever done.” JoAnn said, “I will tell you that I thought my doctorate was a piece of cake when you hold it up to my National Board.” Rebecca described her experience as putting yourself, “through a ringer of sorts and scrutinized yourself, been challenged by being graded accordingly”. Evidence of these qualities abounds in the surveys and interviews. Throughout the course of the surveys and interviews, teachers described themselves in terms of being passionate about teaching, dedicated to teaching and/or driven were mentioned 19 times. Many of them have advanced degrees, with most having either an Educational Specialist’s degree or a doctorate degree.

When asked what it means to be a NBCT, Jacinda said, “I think that it means that I have a passion for the way students learn and why they need to learn certain thing and how to best meet their needs”. Mary Kathryn said, “It means I want to learn and grow. It means I’m dedicated”. She also said later in the interview, “It definitely shows that we’re driven. It’s not something we have to do . . .” JoAnn said, “I can’t imagine a professional that’s done the National Board that wouldn’t be a totally dedicated, proficient teacher in the Georgia teacher system.” More subtle references were found in comments such as, “constantly seeking ways to improve student learning,” “NB teachers are those teachers who are constantly striving to challenge themselves. They are not happy with the status quo but are always working to be exceptional” and “NBCTs are professionals that give

100% of themselves to the job and their students. They are the ones that volunteer their extra time in various ways or work to make the best learning environment for the students. Teaching is a calling for them, not just a job.”

Theme Two: Georgia NBCTs Use Reflection to Drive Instruction

With so many prescribed curricula in schools today, reflection is often forgotten. Teachers read scripted lesson, follow scripted directions and think that their students are learning. Gone is the intrapersonal aspect of teaching as the thinking is done for teachers who use this curriculum. Reflection is an integral part of the NBC process. Teachers are asked to repeatedly reflect on their teaching in order to ascertain how their teaching practices impact student achievement. NBCT are required to learn and apply the art of reflection and use it to become more effective. Throughout the survey responses and interviews the idea of reflection was mentioned 39 times. Unlike passionate, dedicated, and driven, which was alluded to in the data, the actual words “reflection” and “reflective” were used. For some teachers, the idea of reflection was not new and was natural. For others, like Anne, reflection was novel:

So the standards for accomplished teaching, all of that, it was new and it was a challenge and I totally . . . reflecting? I’d never reflected before. No, all of that was so new for me. And you know, looking, you know at my students’ progress, the impact on student learning, I never thought about what I did in terms of impact on student learning Just the teaching and learning part, and analyzing my students’ work . . . it was just amazing, the progress. And that’s what was so hard about it. There was some thinking involved and that’s what made it so like wow.

To Rebecca, reflection was new as well. Her thoughts, however, were less of awe as Anne's were, but a more introspective and personal in nature:

I guess it's that introspective look at yourself, which is unusual. You're not normally asked to do that. And so you start to look at why would I do things this way or am I doing whatever. So how did it affect me? I guess I do look at the more me part of it. Am I doing all I can? Am I creating the best learning situation?

JoAnn's take on the reflective nature of a NBCT was also personal:

It was the most rigorous, intense examination of my philosophy in teaching and looking at curriculum presentation; far more intense than the doctorate program or any other curriculum program Without sounding like you're really being an elitist, I think until somebody goes through that process, they have no earthly clue what that's like, how you take all of your philosophy about education and you really put in under a microscope and you think about it, you reflect about what you do, how you're contributing to this sect of society, I just, I think it creates deeper thinkers

Theme Three: Georgia NBCTs Desire to Improve and Validate Their Teaching

Perhaps the most poignant theme that emerged from this research is the need for validation. The actual words "validation" and "prove" and other synonymous phrases were said 19 times. Phrases such as "prove I knew what I was doing," "prove I was a good teacher," "affirmed what I already learned," "demonstrated their ability," and "take the risk to show evidence of great teacher practices" were some of the words teachers used to show a deep concern for their level of teaching and a desire to show that they are

good teachers. Several teachers were painfully eloquent when discussing the validation aspect of being a NBCT. Sarrah Elisabeth, when asked what it means to be a NBCT said, after a long pause, “Personally it meant that I had something that I could show I knew who I was.” Jessica said:

It made me more confident in my teaching. I mean, you know a lot of people said I don’t need that to make me feel good about the kind of teacher I am but I really think that validated me. I had advanced degrees already . . . and I think it really said, hey, you’re a great teacher. Keep going in that direction.”

Ruth stated that being a NBCT means, “. . . you have proven that you have, uh, that you know a lot about education and that you know what you’re doing in the classroom. Just a way of proving that you are a good teacher to me.” Rebecca’s account of a past teaching venue affected her confidence in her teaching, and left her questioning her ability:

Um . . . part of that is . . . hmm. It’s kind of slightly deeply personal [nervous laugh]. Because when I was in New York, the reason I left New York, among the other reasons, mostly ‘cause of [my husband], but also I just want to tell you I had a really bad experience in that private school. I had a . . . *really* bad experience. They fired me. And when I tell you those kids were horrible rotten? They created a scenario that they said happened in class which did not and I had no defense because it was nine voices against one. I was really glad it was a private institution so it didn’t do anything to a teaching certificate that I had. It was bad, bad, bad. When I came to North Caro... sorry, to Georgia, I had been pretty much beaten up with this and I was really unsure of myself as a teacher. Then I became a new mother and there was that new mother aspect. Just a lot of self-questioning,

wondering about my self-worth, self-esteem, there was a lot of questioning of self. When I decided to do National Board and I really looked at myself, that was a real scary thing to do because I wasn't sure I was good enough.

National Board certification was a means for her to regain her confidence and to help her realize she was a good teacher.

Summary

There are 111,840 teachers in Georgia (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2011). Twenty-two percent of these teachers are NBC (NBCT directory, 2010). These teachers voluntarily went through a rigorous, two-part process to earn this certification. The portfolios and the prompt submitted as a part of this process are the means by which teachers provide the evidence that their practice meets criteria put forth by the NBPTS:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities (NBPTS, 2010).

Research with regards to NBCTs mainly focuses on their impact on test scores on standardized tests. To date, there are no qualitative studies with the sole purpose of giving NBCTs a chance to tell others about their certification journey and how the certification has impacted them professionally and personally. This study was an endeavor to fill the gap in the literature.

Using the thoughts, words and feeling of this sample of NBC, I was able to delve into the essence of what it means to be NBCT in Georgia. These teachers described themselves as dedicated, passionate, and driven. Secondly, they are reflective and use reflection to drive their instruction. Finally they have a strong desire to improve their teaching and a strong need to have their teaching validated to ensure they are good teachers. These qualities may not be unique to NBCT. However, as JoAnn put it, these teachers “personally sacrificed [their] time, [their] finances, [themselves], [their] family in order to contribute to what [they] feel is a worthwhile endeavor in life.”

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of a phenomenological approach, according to van Manen (1990), is to determine what a particular experience is like. Glatthorn and Joyner (2005) stated that the discussion section of a study should answer the question, “What does your study mean?” Because this appears to be one of the first, if not the first, endeavor to understand the essence of being a NBCT in Georgia, this study means that the understanding of NBCTs is in its infancy. Each teacher in this study had a unique story to tell and it should not be assumed that any of these stories are generalizable. Rather, this data should be treated as unique and used as a base for further study. Much more can, and should be, learned about these teachers, not only in Georgia, but across the country.

Based on the results reported in Chapter Four, it is apparent that the essence gleaned from this small sample of Georgia’s NBCT shows that they are dedicated, passionate, and driven; they are reflective and use reflection to drive their instruction and they have a strong desire to improve their teaching and a strong need to have their teaching validated to ensure they’re good teachers. This is just the beginning. These results can be used as a springboard to future studies in an effort to garner more meaning about what it means to be a NBCT.

Ties to Literature and Implications

While the intent of this study was to fill a gap in the research with regards to NBCTs by endeavoring to understand the essence of what it means to be a NBCT in Georgia, the results did tie in to some of the studies cited in Chapter Two. First, a short overview of the literature with regards to NBCTs will be reviewed in order to show how

this study began to fill a gap in the existing literature. Secondly, the ties this study has to the existing literature on teacher quality, teacher dispositions and self-efficacy will be discussed. Thirdly, how the themes found in this study are tied to research will be discussed, followed by a discussion of the surprising cry for validation emerged and its ties to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Gap in Existing Literature

When this study was started, the vast majority of the research with regards to NBCTs were quantitative in nature, and were aimed at determining what impact, if any, NBCTs had on student achievement (Benigno, 2005; Bundy, 2006; Cantrell et al., 2007; Cavalluzzo, 2004; Center for Teaching Quality, 2008; Childs, 2006; Goldhaber et al., (Eds.), 2008; Harris, & Sass, 2007; Holland, 2006; Kelley, & Kimball, 2001; McColskey et al., 2005; National Academies News, 2008, June 11; Okpala, James, & Hopson, 2009; Rouse, 2004; Sanders et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2005; Stephens, 2003; Vandevort, 2004; Vandevort et al., 2004). There were other types of studies that examined others' perceptions of NBCTs, including administrators and non-NBCTs. Some studies did look at NBCT's thoughts, but these studies only delved into thoughts about the certification process. To date, there are no qualitative studies with the sole purpose of giving NBCTs a chance to tell others about their certification journey and how the certification has impacted them professionally and personally. This study hoped to fill that gap.

Ties to Existing Research: Teacher Self-Efficacy, Teacher Quality and Teacher Dispositions

Bandura (1977) asserts that people with strong self-efficacy do not avoid difficult tasks. Rather, they approach them head-on with the goal of mastery. Additionally, they

are intrinsically motivated to persevere to completion. People with high self-efficacy may have doubts about their ability successfully complete a given task but they persevere despite those doubts. Many of these teachers described the certification process as rigorous, yet they were driven to complete it successfully. Tessa stated that it took her three years to achieve certification, yet she persevered. A statement from this survey participant shows dedication, passion and drive—all components of self-efficacy:

It was the most rigorous, intense examination of my philosophy in teaching and looking at curriculum presentation; far more intense than the doctorate program or any other curriculum program. And I think what kept me sold in the program, kept me motivated in the program was the constant reflection on how does this impact student achievement

Several studies cited earlier noted that teachers with high self-efficacy have a positive impact on student achievement (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990; Woolfolk, 1998; Akbari & Allvar, 2010; Steele, 2008).

Two studies with regards to teacher dispositions list passionate as a disposition that positively impacts student achievement (Colker 2008; Mowrer-Reynolds, E. (2008). One study lists teacher-self efficacy as a disposition that impacts student achievement (Steele, 2008).

A second theme to come from this study is that Georgia's NBCTs are teachers who reflect on their practice with regards to materials, presentation and outcomes in an effort to improve student achievement. For two of the teachers, reflection was a brand new experience and they now incorporate it into their practice. For the rest, reflection was not a new concept, but it became central to the decisions made in their teaching. This ties

to the research that found that reflection was beneficial during the certification process (Burns, 2007; Cormier-Kuhn, 2006; Harris & MacKenzie, 2007; Johnson, 2009; Linden, 2001; Southeastern Oklahoma, 2004; Standefer, 2007, Thompson, 2007) but that this reflection continued after receiving certification (Burns, 2007; Lustick, 2002; Southeastern Oklahoma, 2004; Thompson, 2007). This ties into research that found that reflective practice leads to higher student achievement because these teachers are pondering ways to help their students improve (Akbari & Allvar, 2010). Additionally, these reflective practices can lead to discussion among other teacher in an effort to improve student learning. These discussions among peers can lead to changes in curriculum and instruction practices (Akbari & Allvar, 2010).

Tying Themes to Existing Literature

As seen in chapter two, there appears to be several lenses used to look at NBCTs in the literature. The first lens, which constitutes the vast majority of the literature, is test scores. These studies endeavor to quantitatively determine the impact of NBCTs on student achievement as measured by standardized tests. Another way to view NBCTs found in the literature is to examine others' perceptions of NBCTs, including administrators and non-NBCTs. A third way is to look at NBC teachers is through the thoughts of actual NBCTs. Because of the purpose of this study was to better understand NBCTs through their own words, themes garnered in this study cannot be directly tied to the first two lenses. The following is an examination of the themes found in this study with regards to previous studies involving the thoughts of NBCTs.

NBCTs are dedicated, passionate, and driven

As stated in chapter four, the teachers who participated in this study, either via the survey or an interview, described themselves in terms of being passionate about teaching, dedicated to teaching and/or driven 19 times. According to the NEA (2013), there were 3,083,266 public school teachers in the United States in 2011-2012 school year. 106, 389 of those teachers are NBCTs (NBPTS, 2013), which constitutes only three percent of the nation's teachers. While it is not clear as to why 97% of the nation's teachers are not NBCTs, a possible explanation could be found in the amount of work that is required to earn the certification. The literature showed that although that the National Board certification process is completely voluntary (NBPTS, 2001c, p.1), and that NBCTs found that the process is rigorous (Cormier-Kuhn, 2006; NBPTS, 2001b; Johnson, 2009; Southeastern Oklahoma, 2004) and time consuming, (Southeast Oklahoma, 2004; Lovingood, 2004). The requirements of the process are involved and include four portfolio entries and a six-question assessment and may take anywhere from one to three years to achieve certification (NBPTS, 2009). Despite the copious amount of work, NBCTs agreed that it was the best professional development they have ever undertaken (Cormier-Kuhn, 2006; Harris & MacKenzie, 2007; Kanter, Bergee, & Unrath, 2000; Keiffer-Barone, Mulvaney, Hillman, & Parker, 1999; Linden, 2001; Linqanti & Peterson, 2001; NBPTS, 2001b; Rotberg, Futrell, & Holmes, 2000; Southeastern Oklahoma, 2004; Thompson, 2007). Putting all this research together shows indirectly, if not directly that NBCTs are dedicated, passionate and driven and concurs with this theme found in this present research. Additionally, this finding can be linked to the research with regards teacher quality. As stated in Chapter two, teacher quality is essential to student achievement (Haycock [in Vandevoort et al., 2004], Smith et al., 2005; NCLB,

2001). Research with regards to teacher dispositions has shown that being passionate about teaching is a disposition that positively impacts student achievement (Colker 2008; Mowrer-Reynolds, E. (2008).

NBCTs are reflective and use reflection to drive their instruction and they have a strong desire to improve their teaching

Reflection was a second theme found in this study. Throughout the survey responses and interviews the idea of reflection was mentioned 39 times. Many teachers in the present study, reflection was a natural part of their teaching practice. For some, it was novel. These findings are similar to those found in previous studies. Studies by Burns, 2007; Cormier-Kuhn, 2006; Harris & MacKenzie, 2007; Johnson, 2009; Linden, 2001; Southeastern Oklahoma, 2004; Standefer, 2007; Thompson, 2007 found that reflection was beneficial during the NBC process, and that this reflection continued after receiving certification Burns, 2007; Lustick, 2002; Southeastern Oklahoma, 2004; and Thompson, 2007 found that teachers continued reflection continued after receiving certification. One teacher expressed that the reflection itself was more beneficial than meeting all the requirements needed to become a NBCT (Ranch Road Writing, 2005). Another said that the reflection required by the NBC process was like “. . . adding five to seven years to my teaching experience” (NBPTS, 2001a, p. 4).

NBCTs have a strong need for validation

The third theme found a strong need to have their teaching validated to ensure they're good teachers. The word or concept of validation occurred 19 times throughout the survey responses and interviews. Phrases such as “prove I knew what I was doing,” “prove I was a good teacher,” “affirmed what I already learned,” “demonstrated their

ability,” and “take the risk to show evidence of great teacher practices” were used to describe their feelings about the validation they received as a result of becoming a NBCT. The need for validation ties into previous research that found the certification gave teachers the assurance that they were good teachers and that what they taught and how they taught were rated as exemplary (Cormier-Kuhn, 2006; Haas, 2005; Harris & MacKenzie, 2007; Ranch Road Writing, 2008; Thompson, 2007). In addition, the need for validation ties into the research with regards to teacher self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) found that people with high self-efficacy may have doubts about their ability successfully complete a given task but they persevere despite those doubts. As stated earlier, certification can take up to three years. All requirements must be attempted the first year and if a teacher does not receive the required number of points needed to certify the first year, she may bank the points earned on the entries that she did the best and redo any or all other entries that could be improved in an effort to earn enough points to certify. Most of the teachers in this study took at least two years to complete the certification; some even took the full three years to achieve certification. This points to the perseverance component of Bandura’s self-efficacy.

Maslow

The third theme took some deep pondering. On the surface, it appeared that the teachers who participated in this study wanted to prove that they were good teachers. This would make sense if these teachers were relatively new to the profession. However, these teachers were veteran teachers. Why would they need to be reassured that they are good teachers? Why do they have this overwhelming desire to have their practice validated? Eight of the teachers interviewed already had advanced degrees when they

pursued NBC. Seven of these teachers had multiple advanced degrees. Most of these teachers had over ten years' experience before they decided to pursue NBC. Although for some the promise of a stipend lured them to the process, the decision to continue resided in the desire to be validated. Sarrah Elisabeth, Jessica, Rebecca, Ruth, Jacinda and six teachers who completed the survey spoke of the desire for validation of themselves as teachers—to be thought of as good teachers. Jessica poignantly summed this up:

It made me more confident in my teaching. I mean, you know a lot of people said I don't need that to make me feel good about the kind of teacher I am but I really think that it validated me and I had advanced degrees already, I had my Master's degree, my Specialist's degree, and I think it really just said, 'Hey, you're a great teacher keep going in this direction.' You know it validated me.

Other phrases such as “prove I was a good teacher,” “show that I knew who I was,” “made me more confident in my teaching,” and “you know what you are doing” permeated the data. These statements go deeper than the research on self-efficacy, teacher quality, or teacher dispositions. The voices of the teachers in this study cried out for validation of their teaching practice. This cry for validation ties directly into Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. These teachers appear to have pursued NBC in order to have their esteem needs met. Aanstoots (2010) asserts that Maslow's esteem needs include self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, and respect by others. Poston (2009) further asserts that the esteem needs can be broken into two levels. The lower level deals with the need to be accepted by others. “This lower form of self-esteem is met when an individual has established a level of status, fame, recognition, reputation and appreciation . . .” (p. 351). This level requires maintenance and needs to be validated throughout one's

life (Poston, 2009). The higher level deals with self-respects, which Poston posits, cannot be taken away (2009). It seems a conundrum to have teachers who have decades of experience, high levels of self-efficacy, who are viewed as accomplished by NBPTS, by their administrators and their peers, and have multiple advanced degrees to have such a basic need as this.

Implications

Forrest (2013) asserts that this section of a study should be focused on “finding the value and meaning innate within the study” (p. 112). Glatthorn and Joyner (2005) assert that this section of the study should answer the question, “What does your study mean?” (p. 207). The following is a discussion of the three essences of a Georgia NBCT and to whom this may be valuable.

Georgia NBCTs are dedicated, passionate and driven. This essence would be valuable to those who hire teachers- principals, superintendents or school boards. With school boards leaning more and more towards results on standardized tests as a means to evaluate teachers, schools and school districts, it would behoove these entities to have teachers who exude these essences in order to get results. Teachers cannot simply show up every day and hope their students learn. They must have that extra dedication, passion and drive to “make it happen”-to do what it takes to ensure their students are able to show what they know on these tests. While the literature does show that there are other ways to measure student learning that cannot be measured on standardized tests (The Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ), 2008) it appears by news reports and articles that today’s focus is solely on test scores. If administrators wish to ensure that their teachers do what it

takes to help students be successful on their tests, a NBCT may be worth considering during the hiring process.

Georgia NBCTs are reflective and use reflection to drive their instruction.

This essence could be valuable to principals. As mentioned earlier, our society is a focused on results on standardized tests to evaluate those involved in education. From my experience, principals want teachers who are able to effectively ensure their students learn what is required. Teachers in this study found that the reflection component of the certification process not only helped them decide what students needed to be successful, it helped the teachers improve their teaching practice. Districts often require that teachers participate in yearly staff development activities. Perhaps having a NBCT on staff could serve as a provider for staff development in the art of reflection and serve as a model of reflective teaching. If teachers have a desire to improve their teaching and NBCTs find reflection valuable and reflection is disposition linked to teacher quality then perhaps being a NBCT a signal of teacher quality.

NBCTs have a strong desire to improve their teaching and a strong need to have their teaching validated to ensure they're good teachers. This essence would be extremely valuable to those who evaluate teachers and those who create teacher evaluation instruments. From what has been gleaned here, a good start would be to examine teacher evaluation instruments used by administrators. In Chapter Two, teacher evaluation instruments were discussed in light of determining teacher quality. While these instruments are used to determine teacher quality in the eye of the districts that use them, the literature purports that they do a poor job of doing so (Milinowski, 2004; NASSP, 2011). Whether or not this is so, lies in the results of a future study. What can be taken

from the current study is that whichever instrument is used, it is not meeting a basic need of these teachers—the need for assurance that they are indeed good teachers. It may be as simple as a hand-written addendum to a teacher’s annual evaluation that would give these teachers the added boost to their self-esteem that would meet the need for which these teachers appear to be crying out.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. The first limitation is that all the teachers in this study are from Georgia. Again, it would behoove any researcher further study with NBCTs outside of Georgia before any conclusions are made. Yet another limitation is the fact that the researcher is a NBCT, and despite the effort at bracketing, partiality may have been a factor in the reporting of the results. Finally, lack of face to face interviews may have been a limiting factor. Due to the interviews being conducted via telephone, field notes may not have been as complete as they could have if the interviews took place in person.

Suggestions for Further Research

Since this study is one of the few, if not the only, truly qualitative study in which NBCTs were listened to, there is much potential for further research:

1. Repeat the study in Georgia, recruiting participants with other methods. Lack of response was surprising, especially in light of the purpose stated on the Facebook page, the number of members on that page and the nature of posts.
2. Repeat the study with NBCTs from other states—is the need for validation a Georgia problem or a country-wide issue?

3. Repeat the study using all teachers, not just NBCTs to see if the need for validation is a natural outpouring of being driven, dedicated, passionate and reflective. Is there a difference between NBCTs and non-NBCTs in the need for validation?
4. More qualitative studies involving NBCTs. Is there more to their essence than was found in this study?
5. Conduct a correlation study using a personality inventory in order to determine whether there is something unique in their personalities that is tied into their need for validation of their teaching.

Epilogue and Concluding Comments

Mary Kathryn is taking a year off from teaching to finish her own dissertation. JoAnn is in her last year of teaching. She has decided to retire after this year. She said she will miss teaching but her family needs her and she is ready to start that “next chapter” in her life. All the other teachers I interviewed are in the same positions as when I interviewed them. In my mind, they are all dedicated, passionate, and driven educators who are examples to our profession.

The purpose of this study was to give a voice NBCTs—to hear from their own words about their certification journey and how the certification has impacted them professionally and personally. Three themes emerged from this study.

1. NBCTs are dedicated, passionate, and driven.
2. NBCTs are reflective and use reflection to drive their instruction
3. NBCTs have a strong desire to improve their teaching and a strong need to have their teaching validated to ensure they’re good teachers.

This study may be of significance to NBPTS as a means of encouraging other teacher who are interested in pursuing NBC by hearing from actual certified teachers as to why it is worthwhile to pursue certification. Additionally, school districts that believe this certification is a worthwhile endeavor may be interested in using these experiences to persuade teachers to pursue this advanced certification. It also may be of significance to other NBCTs whose state has cut their stipend as a means to express the essence of what it means to be a NBCT.

The question left unanswered is how, if at all, are NBCTs different from non-NBCTs? Do non-NBCTs possess the same essences as those who participated in this study? That question cannot be answered without further research. What is known from this study is that this small population of Georgia's NBCTs are a group of well-educated, veteran teachers. They are dedicated, driven and passionate teachers who, use reflection to not only improve their students' achievement, but improve their teaching practice. However, something is missing...validation of their teaching practice. They simply need assurance that all the effort they put into their teaching is recognized as exemplary.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: IRB Documentation

IRB Application # _____ 1462 _____

I. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

- To submit a protocol, complete each section of this form and email it and any accompanying materials (i.e. consent forms and instruments) to irb@liberty.edu. For more information on what to submit and how, please see our website at: www.liberty.edu/irb. Please note that we can only accept our forms in Microsoft Word format.
- In addition, please submit one signed copy of the fourth page of the protocol form, which is the Investigator's Agreement. Also submit the second page if a departmental signature is required for your study. Signed materials can be submitted by mail, fax, or email (scanned document to irb@liberty.edu). Signed materials can also be submitted via regular mail or in person to our office.
- Please be sure to use the grey form fields to complete this document; do not change the format of the application. You are able to move quickly through the document by using the "Tab" key.
- **Note: Applications with the following problems will be returned immediately for revisions: 1) Grammar/spelling/punctuation errors, 2) A lack of professionalism (lack of consistency/clarity) on the application itself or any supporting documents, 3) Incomplete applications. Failure to minimize these errors will cause delays in your processing time.**

II. BASIC PROTOCOL INFORMATION

Protocol Title: **UNDERSTANDING GEORGIA'S NATIONAL BOARD**

CERTIFIED TEACHERS:

A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Principal Investigator (PI): Kimberly Brantley

Professional Title: **Dissertation Candidate**

School/Department: **School of Education**

Check all that apply: Faculty Graduate Student Undergraduate Student
 Staff

This research is for: Class Project Master's Thesis Doctoral Dissertation
 Faculty Research Other (describe):

Have you defended and passed your dissertation proposal? Yes No N/A

If no, what is your defense date?

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michelle Goodwin

School/Department: **School of Education**

Non-key Personnel:

Name and Title: **Dr. Sally Childs, Adjunct Professor**

School/Department: **School of Education**

Consultants:

Name and Title: **Dr. Frederick Milacci, Associate Professor**

School/Department: **School of Education**

Liberty University Participants:

Do you intend to use LU students, staff, or faculty as participants in your study? If you do not intend to use LU participants in your study, please indicate "no" and proceed to the section titled "Funding Source."

If yes, please list the department and classes you hope to enlist, and the number of participants you would like to enroll.

No Yes

Department

Class(es)

In order to process your request to use LU participants, we must ensure that you have contacted the appropriate department and gained permission to collect data from them.

Please obtain the original signature of the department chair in order to verify this.

Signature of **Department Chair**

Date

Funding Source: If research is funded please provide the following:

Grant Name (or name of the funding source):

Funding Period (month/year):

Grant Number:

Anticipated start and completion dates for collecting and analyzing data:2/13-4/13

III. OTHER STUDY MATERIALS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Does this project call for (more detail will be required later):

Use of voice, video, digital, or image recordings?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Participant compensation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Advertising for participants?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
More than minimal psychological stress?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Confidential material (questionnaires, photos, etc.)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Extra costs to the participants (tests, hospitalization, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
The inclusion of pregnant women?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
More than minimal risk? *	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Alcohol consumption?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Waiver of Informed Consent?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
The use of protected health information (obtained from healthcare practitioners or institutions)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
VO2 Max Exercise?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
The use of blood?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Total amount of blood	
Over time period (days)	
The use of rDNA or Biohazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
The use of human tissue or cell lines?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
The use of other fluids that could mask the presence of blood (including urine and feces)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
The use of an Investigational New Drug (IND) or an Approved Drug for an Unapproved Use?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Drug name, IND number, and company:
The use of an Investigational Medical Device or an Approved Medical Device for an Unapproved Use?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Device name, IDE number, and company:
The use of Radiation or Radioisotopes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Minimal risk is defined as “the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.” [45 CFR 46.102(i)]*

IV. INVESTIGATOR AGREEMENT & SIGNATURE PAGE

BY SIGNING THIS DOCUMENT, THE INVESTIGATOR AGREES:

1. That no participants will be recruited or entered under the protocol until the Investigator has received the final approval or exemption email from the Chair of the Institutional Review Board.
2. That no participants will be recruited or entered under the protocol until all key personnel for the project have been properly educated on the protocol for the study.
3. That any modifications of the protocol or consent form will not be initiated without prior written approval, by email, from the IRB and the faculty advisor, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the participants.
4. The PI agrees to carry out the protocol as stated in the approved application: all participants will be recruited and consented as stated in the protocol approved or exempted by the IRB. If written consent is required, all participants will be consented by signing a copy of the approved consent form.
5. That any unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others participating in the approved protocol, which must be in accordance with the Liberty Way (and/or the Honor Code) and the Confidentiality Statement, will be promptly reported in writing to the IRB.
6. That the IRB office will be notified within 30 days of a change in the PI for the study.
7. That the IRB office will be notified within 30 days of the completion of this study.
8. That the PI will inform the IRB and complete all necessary reports should he/she terminate University Association.
9. To maintain records and keep informed consent documents for **three years** after completion of the project, even if the PI terminates association with the University.
10. That he/she has access to copies of 45 CFR 46 and the Belmont Report.

Principal Investigator (Printed)

Principal Investigator (Signature)

Date

FOR STUDENT PROPOSALS ONLY

BY SIGNING THIS DOCUMENT, THE FACULTY ADVISOR AGREES:

1. To assume responsibility for the oversight of the student's current investigation, as outlined in the approved IRB application.
2. To work with the investigator, and the Institutional Review Board, as needed, in maintaining compliance with this agreement.
3. That the Principal Investigator is qualified to perform this study.
4. **That by signing this document you verify you have carefully read this application and approve of the procedures described herein, and also verify that the application complies with all instructions listed above.** If you have any questions, please contact our office (irb@liberty.edu).
- 5.

Dr. Michelle Goodwin

Faculty Advisor (Printed)

Faculty Advisor (Original Signature)

Date

*The Institutional Review Board reserves the right to terminate this study at any time if, in its opinion, (1) the risks of further experimentation are prohibitive, or (2) the above agreement is breached.

V. PURPOSE

- 1. Purpose of the Research.** Write an original, brief, non-technical description of the purpose of your project. Include in your description: Your research hypothesis or question, a narrative that explains the major constructs of your study, and how the data will advance your research hypothesis or question. This section should be easy to read for someone not familiar with your academic discipline.

The purpose of this study will be to explore the essence of what it means to be a National Board certified teacher (NBCT) by exploring a teacher's perspective of the impact of being identified as a NBCT has had on him or her both personally and professionally. This study will be an endeavor to answer the following questions:

1. Why do teachers pursue National Board certification?
2. How does becoming a NBCT impact one personally?
3. How does becoming a NBCT impact one professionally?
4. What does it mean to be a NBCT?

It is hoped that using qualitative analysis will lead toward better understanding of NBCTs from the teacher's perspective.

VI. PARTICIPANT INCLUSION/EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- 1. Population.** From where/whom will the data be collected? Address each area in non-scientific language:
 - a. The inclusion criteria for the participant population including gender, age ranges, ethnic background, health status and any other applicable information. *Provide a rationale for targeting this population.*
 - b. The exclusion criteria for participants
 - c. Explain the rationale for the involvement of any special population (Examples: children, specific focus on ethnic populations, mentally retarded, lower socio-economic status, prisoners).
 - d. Provide the maximum number of participants you seek approval to enroll from all participant populations you intend to use and justify the sample size. You will not be approved to enroll a number greater than this. If, at a later time, it becomes apparent you need to increase your sample size, you will need to submit a Change in Protocol Form.

- e. **For NIH, federal, or state-funded protocols only:** Researchers sometimes believe their particular project is not appropriate for certain types of participants. These may include, for example: women, minorities, and children. If you believe your project should not include one or more of these groups, please provide your justification for their exclusion. Your justification will be reviewed according to the applicable NIH, federal, or state guidelines.

The population for this study will be collected from National Board certified teachers in Georgia who have joined the Georgia NBCT Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/379397742071122/>). To date, there are 242 GA NBCTS who have joined this page. According to the first post on the page, the purpose of the page is to keep GA NBCTs updated on the legislation with regards to reinstatement of the salary supplement that was revoked in 2010. Based on the posts on this page, it appears the members are advocating for Georgia's NBCTs and want to be heard in Georgia's legislature. I would like to give these teachers another avenue from which to be heard.

A link to the survey will be posted on the Georgia NBCT Facebook page and will be accessible to all members of the site. To date, there are 242 members of this private page. All members will be able to click on a link at the end of the survey in order to send an email to the PI, indicating that he/she is willing to be contacted for an interview. Of those who send the PI an email, up to 12 will be selected for an interview.

2. Types of Participants. Check all that apply:

- Normal Volunteers (Age 18-65)
- Minors (under age 18)
- Over age 65
- University Students
- Inpatients
- Outpatients
- Patient Controls
- Fetuses
- Cognitively Disabled
- Physically Disabled
- Pregnant Women
- Participants Incapable of Giving Consent
- Prisoners or Institutional Individuals

Other Potentially Elevated Risk Populations

VII. RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

1. **Contacting Participants.** Describe in detail *how* you will contact participants regarding this study. Please provide all materials used to contact participants in this study. These materials could include letters, emails, flyers, advertisements, etc. If you will contact participants verbally, please provide a script that outlines what you will say to participants.

Participants will be recruited from the Georgia National Board Certified Teacher's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/379397742071122/>). The following will be posted on this page:

Dear Fellow Georgia NBCT,

I am a doctoral student at Liberty University Online and am beginning research for my dissertation UNDERSTANDING GEORGIA'S NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS:

A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE. The purpose of this study will be to understand the essence of being a NBCT and to find commonalities in what it means to have this certification in order to create a description of NBCTs. I will be using surveys and interviews to gather data. If you'd like to participate, please click on the link below that will take you to a survey. At the end of the survey will be directions on how to participate further in this study. Thank you in advance for your help.

Kim Brantley

(The following will be inserted after "click on the link below that will take you to a survey") The first page of the survey is an informed consent form. Please read it carefully and make sure you understand what you are being asked to do. If you do not agree to give consent, simply exit the survey. If you would like to participate but have questions, please click here (link to my email address will be inserted here) and I'd be happy to answer your questions. If you would like to participate, click next. Please note that by clicking "next" you are indicating that you understand about what you are being asked to do, why you are being asked to do it and that you give permission to use any information you leave in the survey in the research study.

2. **Location of Recruitment.** Describe the location, setting, and timing of recruitment.

Recruitment will be online.

I will repost the invitation 4 times: The first time will be on the first Saturday after IRB approval, then the following Wednesday, the next Saturday and the following Wednesday. These days were chosen because of the nature of the teaching profession. From experience, it is likely that teachers would have time to check the Facebook page on a weekend day. Wednesday was chosen because it is approximately half way through the week.

3. **Screening Procedures.** Describe any screening procedures you will use when recruiting your participant population.

When a survey participant sends an email indicating that he/she is will to be interviewed, I will check the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and verify that the responder is a Georgia NBCT.

4. **Relationships.** State the relationship between the Principal Investigator, Faculty Advisor (if applicable) and Participants. Do any of the researchers have positions of authority over the participants, such as grading authority, professional authority, etc.? Are there any relevant financial relationships? If yes, please answer number 5 below.

Some of the potential participants may be former colleagues with the Principal Investigator.

5. **Safeguarding for Conflicts of Interest.** What safeguards are in place to reduce the likelihood of compromising the integrity of the research? (Examples: Addressing the conflicts in the consent process, emphasizing the pre-existing relationship will not be impacted by participation in research, etc.).

There should be no conflict of interest with those who participate in the survey as they will not be identifiable from the survey itself. If a former colleague responds and is chosen for an interview, that information will be disclosed in the study. The PI no longer works with, nor works for any other NBCT.

VIII. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

1. **Description of the Research.** Write an original, non-technical, step-by-step description of what your participants will be required to do during your study and data collection process.. Do not copy the abstract/entire contents of your proposal.

(Describe all steps the participants will follow. What do the data consist of? Include a description of any media use here, justifying why it is necessary to use it to collect data).

Participants will complete an anonymous online survey. At the end of the survey will be an a link to my email for those who wish to be considered for an interview. All those who are chosen to be interviewed will be asked the following questions:

- 1. Why did you decide to pursue National Board certification?**
- 2. Could you describe your feelings about the National Board certification process?**
- 3. How, if at all, did becoming a NBCT impact you personally?**
- 4. How, if at all, did becoming a NBCT impact you professionally?**
- 5. In what ways do National Board certified teachers differ from non-National Board certified teachers?**
- 6. What does it mean to be a NBCT?**
- 7. What is your perception on National Board certification as a measure of teacher quality?**
- 8. Is there anything else related to this issue that you would like to add?**

The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The interview should last between an hour and an hour and a half. Both times are approximate, depending upon how quickly a participant can formulate answers and type them on the survey and how thoroughly a participant can answer the interview questions in order to provide a thick, rich description once the data in analyzed.

***Also, please submit one copy of all instruments, surveys, interview questions or outlines, observation checklists, etc. to irb@liberty.edu with this application.**

- 2. Location of the Study.** Please describe the location in which the study will be conducted (Be specific; include city and state). **Depending upon the location of the participant, interviews will be conducted either in the school, home or another location of the interviewee's choice, or via phone, or Skype. If the participant lives within 25 miles of the PI, he/she may choose to have the interview face to face. Otherwise, the participant may choose from either a Skype or other video conferencing program interview or a phone interview.**

- 3. Will participant data be collected anonymously? Describe.**

Because there is no identifying information on the survey, they will be completely anonymous.

Due to the nature of an interview, data cannot be collected anonymously. Each person who is interviewed will be given a pseudonym that cannot be linked to him/her in any way. Only the PI will have access to the list of personal identifiers. This list will be kept on a jump drive and password protected.

IX. DATA ANALYSIS

1. Estimated number of participants to be enrolled in this protocol or sample size for archival data: **up to 242, with up to 12 of those 242 participating in an interview.**
2. Describe what will be done with the data and resulting analysis: **Data will be analyzed qualitatively in order to understand the essence of being a NBCT and to discover what it means to have this certification in order to create a portrait of NBCTs.**
3. **Data will be reported in the PI's dissertation. However, any direct quotes taken from an interview will be attributed to the participant's pseudonym. Any quotes taken from the survey will be anonymous because there is no identifying information on the survey.**

X. PROCESS OF OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT

1. **Consent Procedures.** Describe in detail how you will obtain consent from participants and/or parents/guardians. Attach a copy of all Informed Consent/Assent Agreements. The IRB needs to ensure participants are properly informed and are participating in a voluntary manner. *Consider these areas: amount of time spent with participants, privacy, appropriateness of individual obtaining consent, participant comprehension of the informed consent procedure, and adequate setting.* For a consent template and information on informed consent, please see our [website](#). If you believe your project qualifies for a Waiver of Consent, note that here, go to section XV, and answer its questions. **Consent for the survey will be the first page of the online survey. It will ask participants to read the consent for and then click in a box that will indicate that they understand why they're taking the survey, how all responses are anonymous and what will be done with the data collected.**

Those who are chosen for an interview will be walked through the consent form and given an opportunity to have any questions answered. The interview will not take place unless and until the participant signs the consent form. The participant will be asked to sign 2 consent forms one of which he/she will keep.

2. **Deception.** Are there any aspects of the study kept secret from the participants (e.g. the full purpose of the study)?
 - a. No (Skip to #3)
 - b. Yes

Describe:

3. Is any deception used in the study?

a. No (Skip to #4)

b. Yes

If yes, describe the deception involved and the debrief procedures. Attach a post-experiment debriefing statement and consent form offering participants the option of having the data destroyed:

4. Will participants be debriefed?

a. No

b. Yes

Attach a copy of your Debriefing Statement. If the answer to protocol question IX (3) is yes, then the investigator must debrief the participant. If your study includes participants from a participant pool, please include a debrief statement.

XI. PARENTAL PERMISSION*

1. Does your study require parental permission?

a. Yes

b. No

2. Does your study entail greater than minimal risk, without potential for benefit?

a. Yes (If so, consent of both parents is required)

b. No

*Please refer to the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) regulations ([45 CFR 46.408](#)) to determine whether your project requires parental consent and/or child assent. This is particularly applicable if you are conducting education research.

XII. ASSENT FROM CHILDREN AND WITNESS SIGNATURE

1. Assent is required unless the child is not capable (age, psychological state, sedation), or the research holds out the prospect of direct benefit that is only available within the context of the research. If the consent process (full or part) is waived, assent may be also. See our [website](#) for this information.

2. Is assent required for your study?

a. Yes

b. No

3. Please attach assent document(s) to this application.

XIII. WAIVER OR MODIFICATION FOR REQUIRED ELEMENTS IN INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS

1. Waiver or modification for required elements in informed consent is sometimes used in research involving a deception element. See Waiver of Informed Consent on the IRB website (link above). If requesting a waiver of consent, please address the following:
 - a. Does the research pose greater than minimal risk to participants (greater than everyday activities)?
 - b. Will the waiver adversely affect participants' rights and welfare? Please justify.
 - c. Why would the research be impracticable without the waiver?
 - d. How will participant debriefing occur (i.e. how will pertinent information about the real purposes of the study be reported to participants, if appropriate, at a later date)?

XIV. CHECKLIST OF INFORMED CONSENT/ASSENT

1. Please see our [Informed Consent materials](#) and Informed Consent template to develop your document. Attach a copy of all informed consent/assent documents.

XV. WAIVER OF SIGNED INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

1. Waiver of signed consent is sometimes used in anonymous surveys or research involving secondary data. This does not eliminate the need for a consent document, but it does eliminate the need for a signature(s). If you are requesting a waiver of signed consent, please address the following (yes or no):
 - a. Does the research pose greater than minimal risk to participants (greater than every day activities)? **no**
 - b. Does a breach of confidentiality constitute the principal risk to participants? **no**
 - c. Would the signed consent form be the only record linking the participant and the research? **yes**
 - d. Does the research include any activities that would require signed consent in a non-research context? **no**
 - e. Will you provide the participants with a written statement about the research (an information sheet that contains all the elements of the consent form but without the signature lines)? **yes**

XVI. PARTICIPANT PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY SURVEYS

1. **Privacy.** Describe what steps you will take to protect the privacy of your participants. Remember privacy is referring to persons and their interest in controlling access to their information. **I will be the only one to look at the responses to the survey. Responses will be copy and pasted into the**

qualitative data analysis program on my computer. No one else will read the responses, nor will the information be discussed with anyone other than members of my committee. Since there is no identifying information on the survey, if it becomes necessary for me to discuss the information with members of my committee, privacy will be maintained.

2. **Confidentiality.** Please describe how you will protect the confidentiality of your participants. Remember confidentiality refers to agreements with the participant about how data are to be handled. Indicate whether the data are archival, anonymous, confidential, or confidentiality not assured and then provide the additional information requested in each section. The IRB asks that if it is possible for you to collect your data anonymously (i.e. without collecting the participants' identifiable information), please construct your study in this manner. Data collection in which the participant is not identifiable (i.e. anonymous) can be exempted in most cases.

a. **Are the data archival?** (Data already collected for another purpose).

- Yes (please answer i-iv below)
 No (please skip to b in this section)

Please note: if your study only includes archival data, answer no to 2-b, 2-c, 2-d, and leave 2-e blank.

i. Are the data publicly accessible?

- Yes (please skip to ii) No (Please answer below)

Please describe how you will obtain access to this data and provide the board with proof of permission to access the data.

ii. Will you receive the data stripped of identifying information, including names, postal addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, social security numbers, medical record numbers, birth dates, etc.?

- Yes (see below) No (see below)

If yes, please describe who will link and strip the data. Please note that this person should have regular access to the data and he or she should be a neutral third party not involved in the study.

If no, please describe what data will remain identifiable and why this information will not be removed.

iii. Can the names of the participants be deduced from the data set?

- Yes (see below) No (skip to iv)

If yes, please describe.

Initial the following: I will not attempt to deduce the identity of the participants in this study: _____

- iv. Please provide the list of data fields you intend to use for your analysis and/or provide the original instruments used in the study.

b. **Are the data you will collect anonymous?** (Data do not contain identifying information including names, postal addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, social security numbers, medical record numbers, birth dates, etc., and cannot be linked to identifying information by use of codes or other means. If you are recording the participant on audio or videotape, etc., this is not considered anonymous data).

Yes (see below) No (skip to c)

- i. Describe the process you will use to collect the data to ensure that it is anonymous.

- ii. Can the names of the participants be deduced from the data?

Yes (see below) No (skip to c)

If yes, please describe:

If you agree to the following, please type your initials: I will not attempt to deduce the identity of the participants in the study:

- c. **Are the data you will collect confidential?** (Confidential data contain identifying information and/or can be linked to identifying information by use of codes or other means). Please note that if you will use participant data (such as photos, videos, etc.) for presentations beyond data analysis for the research study (classroom presentations, library archive, conference presentations, etc.) you will need to provide a materials release form to the participant.

Yes (see below) No (skip to d)

Please describe the process you will use to collect the data and to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. Verify that the list linking codes to personal identifiers will be kept secure by stating where it will be kept and who will have access to the data.

- d. **Will you assure confidentiality in the study?** (For example, will you handle and store the data in such a way as to prevent a breach in confidentiality?) Please note that if you will use participant data (such as photos, videos, etc.) for presentations beyond analysis for the research study (classroom presentations, library archive, conference

presentations, etc.) you need to provide a materials release form to the participant.

Yes (see below) No (see below)

Please describe why confidentiality will not be assured.

- e. Please describe how you will maintain confidentiality of the data collected in your study. This includes how you will keep your data secure (i.e. password protection, locked files), who will have access to the data, and methods for destroying the data once the three year time period for maintaining your data is up. **A direct link to the survey will appear on the GA NBCT Facebook page. There is no identifying information included in the surveys. I will have no way of knowing who filled out a survey. Information collected from this survey will be saved onto a it's own jump drive and not directly onto the PI's computer. The file in which the data is kept will be password protected. This jump drive will be stored in a locked, fireproof box in the PI's home. It will be kept for a minimum of three-years as required by the IRB. It will be destroyed via erasure from the jump drive.**

3. **Media Use.** If you answer yes to any question below, in question VI (1), [Description of Research](#), please provide a description of how the media will be used and justify why it is necessary to use the media to collect data. Include a description in the Informed Consent document under "What you will do in the study."

- f. Will the participant be audio recorded? Yes No
g. Will the participant be video recorded? Yes No
h. Will the participant be photographed? Yes
 No
i. Will the participant be audio recorded, video recorded, or photographed without their knowledge?
 Yes No

i. If yes, please describe the deception and the debriefing procedures: Attach a post-experiment debriefing statement and a post-deception consent form offering participants the option of having their tape/photograph destroyed.

- j. If a participant withdraws from a study, how will you withdraw them from the audiotape, videotape, or photograph? Please include a description in the Informed Consent document under "How to withdraw from the study." **n/a**

*Please note that all research-related data must be stored for a minimum of three years after the end date of the study, as required by federal regulations.

V. PARTICIPANT PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY INTERVIEWS

3. **Privacy:** Describe what steps you will take to protect the privacy of your participants. Privacy refers to persons and their interest in controlling access to their information. **In order to ensure privacy of participants, the following steps will be conducted during interviews, and after interviews: The participant will choose the method with which he/she wishes to be interviewed: phone, Skype, or in person. If the participant chooses to be interviewed in person, he/she will decide where the interview will take place. If the participant chooses to be interviewed electronically, I will ensure that I am the only person in the room during the interview. All participants will be given the opportunity to read the transcription of the interview. All audio tapes, transcriptions, field notes and journals will be kept in a locked, fireproof box in the PI's home. No documents will be saved onto a computer directly. They will be saved on a dedicated jump drive that will be stored in a locked fireproof box which will be kept in the PI's home. Additionally, all files on the jump drive will be password protected. Each person who is interviewed will be given a pseudonym that cannot be linked to him/her in any way. Only the PI will have access to the list of personal identifiers. This list will be kept on the jump drive and password protected as described above.**
4. **Confidentiality:** Please describe how you will protect the confidentiality of your participants. Confidentiality refers to agreements with the participant about how data are to be handled. Indicate whether the data are archival, anonymous, confidential, or confidentiality not assured and then provide the additional information requested in each section. The IRB asks that if it is possible for you to collect your data anonymously (i.e. without collecting the participants' identifiable information), please construct your study in this manner. Data collection in which the participant is not identifiable (i.e. anonymous) can be exempted in most cases.
- a. **Are the data archival?*** (Data already collected for another purpose).
- Yes (please answer b-e below)
 - No (please skip to 3)

***Please note: if your study only includes archival data, answer no to 2-b, 2-c, 2-d, and leave 2-e blank.**

- b. **Are the data publicly accessible?**
- Yes (Please answer below)
 - Please provide the location of the publicly accessible data (website, etc.).

- ii. No (Please answer below)
 - 1. Please describe how you will obtain access to this data and provide the board with proof of permission to access the data.
 - c. **Will you receive the data stripped of identifying information, including names, postal addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, social security numbers, medical record numbers, birth dates, etc.?**
 - i. Yes (see below)
 - 1. Please describe who will link and strip the data. Please note that this person should have regular access to the data and he or she should be a neutral third party not involved in the study.
 - ii. No (see below)
 - 1. If no, please describe what data will remain identifiable and why this information will not be removed.
 - d. **Can the names of the participants be deduced from the data set?**
 - i. Yes (see below)
 - 1. Please describe.
 - 2. Initial the following: I will not attempt to deduce the identity of the participants in this study:

 - ii. No
 - e. **Please provide the list of data fields you intend to use for your analysis and/or provide the original instruments used in the study.**
5. **Are the data you will collect anonymous?** (Data do not contain identifying information including names, postal addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, social security numbers, medical record numbers, birth dates, etc., and cannot be linked to identifying information by use of codes or other means. If you are recording the participant on audio or videotape, etc., this is not considered anonymous data).
- a. Yes (see below)
 - i. Describe the process you will use to collect the data to ensure that it is anonymous. **In an effort to keep data anonymous the following steps will be take inorder to maintain th anonymity of the participants:** **If a participant chooses to be interviewed electronically, I will ensure that I am the only person in the room during the interview.** **All audio tapes, transcriptions, field notes and journals will be kept in a locked, fireproof box in the PI's home. No documents will be saved onto a computer directly. They will be saved on a jump drive that will be stored**

in a locked fireproof box which will be kept in the PI's home. Additionally, all files on the jump drive will be password protected.

- ii. **Each person who agrees to be interviewed will be given a pseudonym that cannot be linked to him/her in any way. Only the PI will have access to the list of personal identifiers. This list will be kept on the jump drive and password protected as described above. This list of personal identifiers will be kept on its own password protected jump drive and locked in a fireproof box in the PI's home.**

b. No

6. Can the names of the participants be deduced from the data?*

a. Yes (see below)

i. Please describe:

b. No

***If you agree to the following, please type your initials: I will not attempt to deduce the identity of the participants in the study: KKB**

7. Are the data you will collect confidential? (Confidential data contain identifying information and/or can be linked to identifying information by use of codes or other means). Please note that if you will use participant data (such as photos, videos, etc.) for presentations beyond data analysis for the research study (classroom presentations, library archive, conference presentations, etc.) you will need to provide a materials release form to the participant.

a. Yes (see below)

i. Please describe the process you will use to collect the data and to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. Verify that the list linking codes to personal identifiers will be kept secure by stating where it will be kept and who will have access to the data. **In order to ensure confidentiality during interviews, the participant will choose the method with which he/she wishes to be interviewed: phone, Skype, or in person. If the participant chooses to be interviewed in person, he/she will decide where the interview will take place. If the participant chooses to be interviewed electronically, I will ensure that I am the only person in the room during the interview.**

b. No

8. Will you assure confidentiality in the study? (For example, will you handle and store the data in such a way as to prevent a breach in confidentiality?) Please note that if you will use participant data (such as photos, videos, etc.) for presentations beyond analysis for the research study (classroom presentations, library archive, conference presentations, etc.) you need to provide a materials release form to the participant.

- a. Yes (see below)
- b. No (see below)
 - i. Please describe why confidentiality will not be assured.

9. **Please describe how you will maintain confidentiality of the data collected in your study.** This includes how you will keep your data secure (i.e. password protection, locked files), who will have access to the data, and methods for destroying the data once the three year time period for maintaining your data is up. **All audio tapes, transcriptions, field notes and journals will be kept in a locked, fireproof box in the PI's home. No documents will be saved onto a computer directly. They will be saved on a jump drive that will be stored in a locked fireproof box which will be kept in the PI's home. Additionally, all files on the jump drive will be password protected. Each person who agrees to be interviewed will be given a pseudonym that cannot be linked to him/her in any way. Only the PI will have access to the list of personal identifiers. This list will be kept on the jump drive and password protected as described above. Once the three year time period for maintaining data has passed, the transcriptions will be shredded, all documents pertaining to the study stored on the jump drive will be deleted and audio tapes used will be destroyed.**

10. **Media Use*:** If you answer yes to any question below, in question VI (1), [Description of Research](#), please provide a description of how the media will be used and justify why it is necessary to use the media to collect data. Include a description in the Informed Consent document under “What you will do in the study.”

- a. Will the participant be audio recorded? Yes No
- b. Will the participant be video recorded? Yes No
- c. Will the participant be photographed? Yes No
- d. Will the participant be audio recorded, video recorded, or photographed without their knowledge? Yes No
- e. If yes, please describe the deception and the debriefing procedures: Attach a post-experiment debriefing statement and a post-deception consent form offering participants the option of having their tape/photograph destroyed.
- f. If a participant withdraws from a study, how will you withdraw them from the audiotape, videotape, or photograph? Please include a description in the Informed Consent document under “How to withdraw from the study.” **If a participant withdraws from the study, his/her interview will be deleted from the digital recording device and any transcript of the interview will be destroyed.**

***Please note that all research-related data must be stored for a minimum of three years after the end date of the study, as required by federal regulations.**

XVII. PARTICIPANT COMPENSATION

1. Describe any compensation that participants will receive. Please note that Liberty University Business Office policies might affect how you compensate participants. Please contact your department's business office to ensure your compensation procedures are allowable by these policies. **Participants will not be compensated financially. They will be sent a copy of the study when complete.**

XVIII. PARTICIPANT RISKS AND BENEFITS

1. **Risks.** There are always risks associated with research. If the research is minimal risk, which is no greater than every day activities, then please describe this fact. **The risk in this research is no greater than everyday activities.**
 - a. Describe the risks to participants and steps that will be taken to minimize those risks. Risks can be physical, psychological, economic, social, legal, etc. **/While a breach of confidentiality is highly unlikely, the PI will take the following steps in order to minimize this risk: Surveys will be anonymous. If a NBCT decides that he/she would be interested in participating in a survey he/she will click on a link to the survey. This, in addition to asking for no identifying information on the survey, will keep the surveys anonymous. With regards to interviews, after the interview, all audio tapes will be transcribed and erased when no longer needed. On the written transcription, the participant will be referred using a pseudonym. All transcriptions, field notes and journals will be kept in a locked, fireproof box in the PI's home. No documents will be saved onto a computer directly. They will be saved on a dedicated jump drive that will be stored in a locked fireproof box which will be kept in the PI's home. All files on the jump drive will be password protected. Once the three year time period for maintaining data has passed, the transcriptions will be shredded, all documents pertaining to the study stored on the jump drive will be deleted and audio tapes used will be destroyed.**
 - b. Where appropriate, describe any alternative procedures or treatments that might be advantageous to the participants. **n/a**
 - c. Describe provisions for ensuring necessary medical or professional intervention in the event of adverse effects to participants or additional resources for participants. **n/a**
2. **Benefits.** Describe the possible direct benefits to the participants. If there are no direct benefits, please state this fact. **Benefits to the participants may be the ability to discuss the findings of the study with other teachers who may be interested in becoming a National Board certified teacher, or administrators**

who may be curious about National Board certification's impact on a teacher he/she may want to hire. Additionally, it may be a means for NBCTs to validate their experiences.

- a. Describe the possible benefits to society. In other words, how will doing this project be a positive contribution and for whom (keep in mind benefits may be to society, the knowledge base of this area, etc.)? **This study will potentially be the first truly qualitative study in which National Board certified teachers' voices will be heard about their experience. Many articles use qualitative research terminology in their titles, but they are not actually qualitative research studies. This will add greatly to the knowledge base regarding National Board certified teachers. It will be different from most studies in that it is not a quantitative analysis of the differences in test scores between NBCTs and non-NBCTs. Because the part of the requirement for becoming a NBCT require in-depth reflection, a simple quantitative study may not reveal all there is to know about NBCTs.**
3. **Investigator's evaluation of the risk-benefit ratio.** Please explain why you believe this study is still worth doing even with any identified risks. **Since the risk of this study is no more than everyday life, the study is worth doing. At the very least, it will add to the knowledge base regarding National Board certified teachers.**

APPENDIX B: Interview Consent

UNDERSTANDING GEORGIA'S NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS: A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Kimberly Brantley
Liberty University
School of Education

You have been selected to be interviewed for a research study of Georgia's National Board Certified teachers. You were selected as a participant because you are a NBCT currently teaching in Georgia. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Kimberly Brantley, School of Education

Background Information:

The purpose of this study gain an understanding of what it means to be a National Board certified teacher; more specifically the study seeks to understand the impact that becoming a National Board certified teacher has personally and professionally.

Procedures:

- I will ask you a series of questions with regards to your experience as you went through the NBCT process and as a National Board Certified Teacher.
- I will audio record the interview.
- I will transcribe the interview and upload it into a qualitative data analysis computer program. You will be given a pseudonym and only I will have access to any identifying information.
- I will use qualitative data analysis techniques in order to describe what it is like to be a GA NBCT.
- This interview may take up to 1 hour to complete.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

This study's risks are minimal and are not more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The benefits to participation are to help others understand what it's like to be a National Board certified teacher and what the process has meant to you

Compensation:

You will receive no financial compensation for participating. However, you will be sent a copy of the study when it is complete.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

All audio tapes, field notes and journals will be kept in a locked, fireproof box in the Principal Investigator’s home. They transcripts of the interviews will be uploaded into a qualitative data analysis computer program. However, no identifying documents will be saved onto this computer directly. They will be saved on a jump drive that will be stored in a locked fireproof box which will be kept in the PI’s home.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University the National Board of Professional Teaching standards, nor any other entity affiliated with Georgia National Board Certified Teachers. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study. I understand that the interview that I will participate in will be audio recorded and transcribed for research purposes only.

Signature: _____ Date:

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date:

IRB Code Numbers: 1462
IRB Expiration Date: 1/31/2014

APPENDIX C: Survey Consent

UNDERSTANDING GEORGIA'S NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS: A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Kimberly Brantley
Liberty University, School of Education

You have been selected to be interviewed for a research study of Georgia's National Board Certified teachers. You were selected as a participant because you are a NBCT currently teaching in Georgia. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Kimberly Brantley, School of Education

Background Information:

The purpose of this study gain an understanding of what it means to be a National Board certified teacher; more specifically the study seeks to understand the impact that becoming a National Board certified teacher has personally and professionally.

Procedures:

- I will ask you a series of questions with regards to your experience as you went through the NBCT process and as a National Board Certified Teacher.
- I will audio record the interview.
- I will transcribe the interview and upload it into a qualitative data analysis computer program. You will be given a pseudonym and only I will have access to any identifying information.
- I will use qualitative data analysis techniques in order to describe what it is like to be a GA NBCT.
- This interview may take up to 1 hour to complete.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

This study's risks are minimal and are not more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The benefits to participation are to help others understand what it's like to be a National Board certified teacher and what the process has meant to you

Compensation:

You will receive no financial compensation for participating. However, you will be sent a copy of the study when it is complete.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. All audio tapes, field notes and journals will be kept in a locked, fireproof box in the Principal Investigator’s home. They transcripts of the interviews will be uploaded into a qualitative data analysis computer program. However, no identifying documents will be saved onto this computer directly. They will be saved on a jump drive that will be stored in a locked fireproof box which will be kept in the PI’s home.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University the National Board of Professional Teaching standards, nor any other entity affiliated with Georgia National Board Certified Teachers. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study. I understand that the interview that I will participate in will be audio recorded and transcribed for research purposes only.

Signature: _____ Date:

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date:

IRB Code Numbers: 1462
IRB Expiration Date: 1/31/2014

APPENDIX D: North Carolina A & T State University

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) Survey for School Teachers

PART 1: Please respond to each of the questions below either by checking the applicable response or writing in the requested information.

1. I am:

- Female Male

2. My ethnic/racial background is:

- African/American Hispanic/American Asian/American
 Native/American Caucasian/American Other (Specify) _____

3. I have been a teacher for:

- 1-3 years 4-7 8-11 12-15 16-19 More than 20

4. I currently teach in a/an:

- Elementary School Elementary School Assistant
 Middle School Middle School Assistant
 High School High School Assistant
 Other (Please Specify) _____

5. I earned a:

- Master's Degree Bachelor's Degree Doctorate Degree

PART 2: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below:

Selecting Responses – Section I

1. For each item, check the box below the response that best matches how much you agree with the statement - “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree.”
2. If you do not have enough information to form an opinion about the topic of an item, select “Do Not Know.”

3. If you have enough information to form an opinion but are simply split between “Agree” and “Disagree,” select “Neither Agree nor Disagree.”
- 4.

		Agree	Agree	nor Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Do Not Know
Instructional Skills	1) NB certified teachers have higher expectations for student learning than their non-NB certified teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2) NB certified teachers communicate more effectively with students than their counterparts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3) NB certified teachers effectively integrate technology in the classroom more than their counterparts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4) NB certified teachers are stronger motivators of student learning than others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5) NB certified teachers are better reflective classroom practitioners than non-NB certified teachers..	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom Skills	6) NB certified teachers are effective classroom managers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	7) NB certified teachers possess stronger classroom organizational skills than non-NB certified teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	8) NB certified teachers control disruptive behavior of students more effectively than their counterparts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	9) High behavioral expectations for students are associated with NB certified teachers than with non-NB certified teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal Skills	10) NB certified teachers are caring professional educators.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	11) Low teacher turnover is associated with NB certified teachers as compared to non-NB certified teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	12) NB certified teachers in my school possess adequate dispositions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	13) NB certified teachers in my school love their students and the teaching profession.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Part 3: Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your perception on National Board certification as a measure of teacher quality?
2. Could you describe your feelings about the National Board Certification process?
3. Based on your opinion, in what ways do National Board certified teachers differ from non-National Board certified teachers?
4. Please provide additional comments on the quality of NB certified teachers

APPENDIX E: Permission to Use Okpala Survey

Hello Kimberly Brantley,

Attached, please find the instruments for the study. You can modify it or use as is. Both instruments were constructed after a thorough review of literature on teacher quality, and they contained multiple items to increase reliability and validity in the measure of teacher quality components. We also pilot-tested the instrument a year before the study with two groups of preservice teachers, three administrators, and three teacher education faculty and deleted several items based on the recommendations of those individuals in our effort to establish high reliability of the instrument.

Finally, we used Cronbach's index of internal consistency to test the reliability of the scale and the coefficient was = .8012 which suggest an acceptable reliability rate (Creswell, 2003).

Take care,

Dr. Comfort O. Okpala
Associate Professor
Department of Human Development and Services
School of Education
North Carolina A & T State University

APPENDIX F: Permission to Post on Georgia National Board Certified Teacher Facebook Page

Kim Brantley

Hi R!

I've been a GA NBCT since 2005. I'm also a doctoral student at Liberty University Online. I'm in the process of writing my dissertation and need your help before I can start. The title of my dissertation will be "Understand Georgia's National Board Certified Teachers" A Teacher's Perspective". This will be a qualitative study which will allow some NBCTs to share what it is like to be a GA NBCT. I'll gather data via surveys and interviews. I'd like to recruit NBCTs using this Facebook page and from what I can tell, you're the person who started this page so that is why I'm contacting you first. I'm going to send you a second message, the "official" request for permission to post on this page. If you could kindly reply to the "official" request and indicate if you grant permission for me to use your page for this project, I'd really appreciate it.

Of course, I will understand if you'd rather not grant permission.

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Kim Brantley

Kim Brantley

Here is the "official" request! Thanks again!
Request for use of FB page.docx
Brantley_1462InterviewConsentRevision1 Original.docx

RMB

I wasn't able to pull up documents on mobile device. I will be sure to look at them on my computer today :)

RMB

Hey Kim,

It is fine with me if you post this on the Georgia National Board Teachers Facebook page. It is an open group; therefore, anyone can post anything. I do try my best to keep all relevant conversation positive. Good luck!!

Kim Brantley

Thank you so much! I am so excited about doing this study. I don't plan on having any communication on the page other than the requests.

Just to let you know, I will repost the invitation 4 times: The first time will be on the first Saturday after IRB approval, then the following Wednesday, the next Saturday and the following Wednesday.

Kim Brantley

Appendix G

Survey Questions

1. Why did you decide to pursue National Board certification?
2. Could you describe your feelings about the National Board certification process?
3. How, if at all, did becoming a NBCT impact you personally?
4. How, if at all, did becoming a NBCT impact you professionally?
5. In what ways do National Board certified teachers differ from non-National Board certified teachers?
6. What does it mean to be a NBCT?
7. What is your perception on National Board certification as a measure of teacher quality?
8. Is there anything else related to this issue that you would like to add?

APPENDIX H: Interview Questions

1. Why do teachers pursue National Board certification?
2. Could you describe your feelings about the National Board certification process?
3. How does becoming a NBCT impact on personally
4. How does becoming a NBCT impact one professionally?
5. In what ways do National Board certified teachers differ from non-National Board certified teachers?
6. What does it mean to be a NBCT?
7. What is your perception on National Board certification as a measure of teacher quality?

Additional questions were asked based on responses of participants in order to clarify answers.