WHY DO THEY STAY? A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE
LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS WHO PERSIST
IN URBAN K-12 CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

by

Marie Crusco Teodori

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Liberty University
2015
WHY DO THEY STAY? A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS WHO PERSIST IN URBAN K-12 CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

by

Marie Crusco Teodori

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2015

APPROVED BY:

Gary Kuhne, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Lucinda Spaulding, Ph.D., Committee Member

Kendall Nicholson, Ed.D, Committee Member

Scott Watson, Ph.D., Associate Dean, Advanced Programs
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education at five Association of Christian Schools International schools located in the United States. The central research question was: *What are the lived experiences of teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?* Sub-questions explored the source of motivation, role of intrinsic goals, and contextual/environmental supports for teachers who persist in this setting. Methodology utilized a transcendental phenomenological design, purposeful participant sampling, data collection primarily through in-depth interviews and focus groups, and data analysis using Moustakas’ (1994) recommended procedures. The centrality of faith and calling to educational ministry and the emphasis on value congruence were indicated as strong contributors to participant long-term persistence.

Implications for administrators underscored the efficacy of (a) exploring the role of faith and calling with prospective and current faculty and (b) promoting an autonomy-conducive environment (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) in supporting longevity and effectiveness for teachers in urban K-12 Christian education.

*Keywords:* urban teachers, Christian education, K-12 education, motivation, persistence, teacher attrition/retention, faith, calling, educational ministry, value congruence, Self-Determination Theory
Dedication

I dedicate this work to my precious family, beginning with my husband, Peter. You are the rock who loves me, strengthens me, and has given so much for me to bring this journey to completion. Words cannot express how much I love and appreciate the wonderful man you are.

My children, Meriel, Tiffany, Matthew, and William, since your arrival on this planet, you have inspired me to strive for joyful excellence. Thank you for loaning your mom to academia for a long, long time. William, your patient support and expertise in all things technical and creative stimulated me to persevere, and made perseverance possible late into the night! Matt, thank you for trailblazing the doctoral path and for understanding. Tiffany, you constantly encouraged me with, “You can do it, Mom.” Meri, you brought laughter when I most needed to laugh.

To my parents, Mary and Peter Crusco, you taught me what is truly valuable in this life through your words, prayers, and encouragement, but most especially through your actions. There are no better parents.

Dr. and Mrs. Kell, my mentors in faith and teaching, thank you for shepherding me through many challenges and for believing God could use me in some small way to make a contribution to Christian education.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my Heavenly Father. Thank you for giving your Son Jesus so that I can not only live, but also have and share abundant life. Your joy is my strength.
Acknowledgments

Gifted and giving people made invaluable contributions during the research process, facilitating this work. First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the 14 research participants for their willingness to share their experiences. I am humbled beyond measure at the treasures they offered. I have been deeply impacted by their unconditional love for children and their selfless devotion to the educational ministry to which they have been called.

Many thanks to my chair, Dr. Gary Kuhne, for encouraging me long before I became a doctoral candidate and continuing to do so all along the way, as well as to Dr. Kendall Nicholson and Dr. Lucinda Spaulding, the scholars who served on my committee and called me to excellence. Special thanks to Dr. Spaulding for praying for my family during a very difficult time. She is the epitome of the Godly woman and scholar I hope to become.

Thanks to Rev. Gina Maio and Dr. William Kell for contributing expertise respectively as peer reviewer and external auditor. Mrs. Elizabeth Martin generously shared her great knowledge of word usage and syntax that was much appreciated. Thanks to Mrs. Candice Boll, Miss Sally Kwapisz, and Mrs. Allison Nicholson for participating in the pilot study and providing essential insights.

Acknowledgement and thanks to Dr. Vernard Gant and the heads of schools who hosted this research. Dr. Gant supported this study from the beginning and endorsed it through multiple stages. Heads of schools introduced the study to their faculty, opened wide the doorways of their schoolhouses to welcome me, and granted me permission to upend their well-oiled schedules. They are truly fine and faithful gatekeepers. My own head of school, Mr. Jesse Kell, has my thanks as well for allowing me the space and time to complete this journey. God surrounded me with an abundance of blessings through each person - I am so very grateful.
# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................................. 3  
Dedication .................................................................................................................................................. 4  
Acknowledgments ..................................................................................................................................... 5  
Table of Contents ..................................................................................................................................... 6  
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................................. 12  
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................................... 13  
List of Abbreviations ................................................................................................................................. 14  

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview ................................................................................................................................................... 15  
Background .............................................................................................................................................. 15  
Situation to Self ....................................................................................................................................... 19  
Problem Statement ................................................................................................................................. 21  
Purpose Statement .................................................................................................................................. 22  
Significance of the Study ......................................................................................................................... 23  
Research Questions ................................................................................................................................. 24  
  Central Research Question .................................................................................................................. 24  
  Research Sub-question One .................................................................................................................. 25  
  Research Sub-question Two .................................................................................................................. 25  
  Research Sub-question Three ............................................................................................................... 26  
Research Plan .......................................................................................................................................... 26  
Delimitations ........................................................................................................................................... 27  
Definitions ............................................................................................................................................... 28
Summary........................................................................................................................................31

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .......................................................................................32
Overview........................................................................................................................................32
Theoretical Framework.......................................................................................................................32
Related Literature...........................................................................................................................38
  Teacher Attrition............................................................................................................................38
  Attrition, Achievement, and First Year Teachers in Urban Settings ........................................41
  Associated Costs of Teacher Attrition..........................................................................................42
  Factors Alleviating Teacher Turnover...........................................................................................54
  Teacher Attrition and Self-Determination Theory Research.......................................................61
  Understudied Areas.......................................................................................................................65
  Filling the Gap...............................................................................................................................67
Summary........................................................................................................................................68

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS .......................................................................................................70
Overview........................................................................................................................................70
Design............................................................................................................................................70
Research Questions.........................................................................................................................72
  Central Research Question..........................................................................................................72
  Research Sub-question One .........................................................................................................72
  Research Sub-question Two .........................................................................................................72
  Research Sub-question Three ......................................................................................................72
Sites...............................................................................................................................................72
Participants.................................................................................................................................74
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Researcher’s Role</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Demographics/Timeline</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- General Causality Orientations Scale (GCOS)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interviews</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Focus Groups</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Demographics/Timeline</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- General Causality Orientations Scale</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interviews and Focus Groups</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Considerations</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose Statement and Research Questions</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Central Research Question</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research Sub-question One</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research Sub-question Two</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research Sub-question Three</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Amanda</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary - Composite Textural and Structural Descriptions and Essence of the Experience.................................................................................................................. 152

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS ........... 157

Overview .................................................................................................................. 157

Summary of Findings .................................................................................................. 157

Themes ...................................................................................................................... 157

Research Questions ................................................................................................... 159

Composite Textural, Structural, and Essence Descriptions .................................... 161

Discussion ............................................................................................................... 162

Teacher Attrition ..................................................................................................... 163

Factors Alleviating Teacher Turnover ....................................................................... 168

Teacher Attrition and Self-Determination Theory .................................................... 170

Implications .............................................................................................................. 172

Empirical Implications ........................................................................................... 172

Theoretical Implications ........................................................................................ 175

Practical Applications ............................................................................................ 178

Limitations .............................................................................................................. 188

Recommendations for Future Research .................................................................... 189

Summary and Conclusions ....................................................................................... 190

Final Reflections ..................................................................................................... 193

REFERENCES ........................................................................................................ 195

APPENDIX A: ACSI STATEMENT OF FAITH ............................................................... 212

Reproduced with permission of ACSI ....................................................................... 213
List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Demographics .........................................................77
Table 2. Participant Experience and GCOS Scores ........................................78
Table 3. Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions .................................84
Table 4. Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Questions ............................87
List of Figures

Figure 1. Core Relationships .................................................................154

Figure 2. Core and Peripheral Relationships ...........................................155
List of Abbreviations

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
General Causality Orientation Scale (GCOS)
Grade Point Average (GPA)
Self-Determination Theory (SDT)
Socioeconomic Status (SES)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Millions living in American urban population centers grapple with the seemingly insurmountable difficulties associated with their cities’ underperforming public schools (Finnigan & Daly, 2012; Patterson & Silverman, 2013). High teacher turnover and low student achievement are not uncommon (Patterson & Silverman, 2013; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013), and both are associated with a hefty price tag. Studies estimating the cost of teacher turnover have provided alarming evidence of the billions of dollars spent nationally to recruit, hire, and train educators taking the place of those leaving the profession each year (Levy, Joy, Ellis, Jablonski, & Karelitz, 2012; Synar & Maiden, 2012). Above and beyond this staggering cost, the low levels of student achievement associated with underperforming schools ultimately contribute to the ongoing de-vitalization of entire communities (Patterson & Silverman, 2013) – communities already living with “severe economic disadvantage” (Hudley, 2013, para. 1). While much research has delved into this troubling area, the present study zeroes in on the experiences of a particular group of educators - those teaching in K-12 urban Christian schools - who persist in their field despite obstacles.

Background

A significant number of commonalities contributing to teacher attrition have been identified in the literature, with the majority of research focused on the public sector. Multiple stressors on teachers resulting in turnover include inadequate professional development (Huisman, Singer, & Catapano, 2010; Luneta, 2012; Schaefer, Long, & Clandinin, 2012; Smith & Smith, 2009), feelings of isolation (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009), low salaries (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005), student behavioral issues (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Kauppi & Pörhölä,
A major research study of more than 850,000 students in Grades 4 and 5 over a period of eight years indicated a link between high teacher attrition and low student academic performance in mathematics and language arts (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Furthermore, the researchers noted “these effects are particularly strong in schools with more low-performing and Black students” (Ronfeldt et al., 2013, p. 4).

The pathway from compounded multi-source stress to teacher attrition to low student achievement leads to a detrimental impact on communities. In particular, this pathway has a seriously injurious impact on urban areas in which challenges are exacerbated by a low resource environment (Hudley, 2013). The urban schools with the longest histories of challenges are most often the ones least likely to overcome those challenges (Finnegan & Daly, 2012). The costs of increased economic pressure and generations of poorly educated citizens extend beyond the population-dense metropolitan areas and impact all of America.

One source of possible oases in urban educational deserts is the service provided by private K-12 Christian schools (StreetSchool Network™, n.d.). Endeavoring to provide a safe environment for learning and a financially accessible alternative to public schools, urban Christian schools have demonstrated significant increases in student grade point averages (GPAs), graduation rates, college enrollments, and enrollments in trade schools when measured by the same benchmarks as area public schools (StreetSchool Network™, n.d.). In 2013, for example, one urban Christian school in Central Virginia reported a graduation rate of 87% (Covenant Academy [pseudonym], 2014) as compared with the area’s public high school rate of 52% (Public School Review, 2014).
While these urban Christian schools offer a glimmer of hope to the urban areas in which they operate, the educators serving in these schools face stressors similar to those experienced by their colleagues in the public sector. They may even be susceptible to additional pressures because educators in urban K-12 Christian schools have a dual role in the lives of their students – they are both educators and disciplers in the Christian faith (Schultz, 2002; Yount, 1999). Used in this context, a discipler is one who makes disciples for Christ, as directed in the New Testament. Jesus states, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always...” (Matthew 28:18b-20a, New King James Version). Flowing from belief in and obedience to the Word of God, Christian discipleship is “the unique relationship between the risen Lord and the contemporary believer-follower in the context of the living church” (Harder, 1963, p. 358).

To further unpack the idea of a dual role or calling as an educator-discipler, it is necessary to examine what is meant by calling. Swezey (2009) noted the term may be “variously described as a spiritual process or endeavor or as a summons by God to fulfill a specific purpose or task in life” (p. 316). Although the concept of calling has been traditionally thought of in a religious sense (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012; Serow, 1994; Swezey, 2009), it has also for some time now been linked specifically with teaching (Blevins & Maddix, 2010; Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012; Serow, 1994; Shedd, 2012; Smith & Badley, 1998; Yount, 1999). The idea of calling has been further associated with helping professions such as nursing, counseling, and social work (Serow, 1994) and more recently with career pathways in general (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Galles & Lenz, 2013). Palmer (1998) unfolded a teacher’s sense of
calling as “the voice of the teacher within, the voice that invites me to honor the nature of my true self” (p. 29). Serow (1994) conceptualized calling similarly, but included the idea of “a special linkage between the teacher’s work and his or her innermost self” (p. 66).

A call to teach may be experienced apart from a religious context; however, within the context of Christian education there is a connection between the call to teach and the call to disciple (Blevins & Maddix, 2010; Schulz, 2002; Yount, 1999). Blevins and Maddix (2010) noted, “Often we use the concepts of discipleship and Christian education interchangeably” (p. 17). Although Blevins and Maddix were referring to Christian education within the Wesleyan church tradition, virtually all school leaders within the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) network, for example, consider the discipleship of their students to be a paramount aspect of their educational mission (V. Gant, personal communication, September 29, 2014) regardless of denominational affiliations.

Because of this calling to be disciplers, teachers in Christian education may be subject to some of the same stressors experienced by ministers. Research has noted pressures associated with ministers’ departures from their places of service, including high frequencies of intrusive demands (Lee, 2010), feelings of inadequacy (Berry, Francis, Rolph, & Rolph, 2012), exhaustion and burnout (Berry et al., 2012; Innstrand, Langballe, Falkum, & Aasland, 2011), high levels of conflict (Berry et al., 2012), a lack of feeling appreciated or affirmed (Joynt & Dryer, 2013), and inadequate support for mental health needs (Trihub, McMinn, Buhrow, & Johnson 2010). Teachers are not in pastoral positions; however, those in urban K-12 Christian education may share these ministry challenges to some degree, further compounding those stressors already endemic to their school setting.
Although the literature contains articles pertaining to Christian educators from several perspectives, including those working within higher education (Deulen, 2013; Estep, 2012), those working within a church setting (Edie, 2012), those who need to be cognizant of the legal rights of students with disabilities within Christian schools (Russo, Osborne, Massucci, & Cattaro, 2011), and those working internationally (Bosede, 2013), the articles are frequently non-empirical. The few empirical studies found in the general literature focused on Christian educators in higher education (Kang, 2013) or administrators within K-12 Christian school settings (Banke, Maldonado, & Lacey, 2012; Cookson & Smith, 2011). A more specific review of the dissertation literature pertaining to urban K-12 Christian education uncovered a small number of studies on student reading achievement (Blackmon, 2008), student mathematics achievement (Washington, 2010), community development (Gentle, 1996), leadership attributes (Giglio, 2009), and teacher perceptions related to race (Baker, 1999). Of this handful, only tangential alignment with the focus of the current study was discovered. There exists a lack of empirical research addressing the experiences of classroom teachers who are the heartbeat of urban K-12 Christian schools. As those devoted to providing the oases in the urban educational deserts and endeavoring to enlarge those oases to encompass expanding territory within America’s cities, their experiences, needs, concerns, and efforts are worthy of being addressed with the aim of better supporting and undergirding this unique group of teachers.

**Situation to Self**

My motivation for conducting this study began several decades ago. I grew up in a small, working class town in New Jersey. My first experience of living in a city was when I became a freshman in college. I found my new environment to be disorienting, and in an effort to find my
place, I became a Big Sister in the city’s Big Brother/Big Sister program. It was through this program that the devastation of poverty in urban America became real to me.

Some months later, I experienced a defining moment. I was flying back into the city following a college break, and when the plane began to approach the airport, the city skyline came into view. As I saw it from the air for the first time, I somehow knew that this was not just any city – it was my city. I believe the Lord called me in that moment to be part of a change for His Kingdom, a call that would eventually lead to my work in urban K-12 Christian education. This study is a doorway for those of us who serve the next generation of urban educators to learn to do so more effectively. It begins with hearing – really hearing – what it means to be a teacher in urban K-12 Christian education in the city to which one is called.

I brought several philosophical assumptions to this research, beginning with the one that is the bedrock of my life, my faith in Jesus Christ. I believe Absolute Truth exists in the Person of Jesus Christ and is revealed through His Word, the Bible. It is through accepting Christ’s finished work on the cross for me that I am able to have a relationship with my Creator and a desire to further His Kingdom. Within this most fundamental belief, I brought a set of ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions that align with a qualitative perspective on research as presented in Creswell (2013):

- Ontologically, I understand reality as seen through many views.
- Epistemologically, I attempt to lessen distance between myself and that being researched.
- From an axiological perspective, I acknowledge that research is value-laden and that biases are present.
- Methodologically, I use inductive logic and study the topic within its context, utilizing an emerging design.
The paradigm I brought to research is an amalgamation of pragmatism and constructivism. The pragmatist side of me focuses on practical implications, and the constructivist side of me believes that meaning is formed through interactions with others (Creswell, 2013). Although a constructivist view may seem inconsistent with a belief in Absolute Truth, I find them oddly compatible as I acknowledge God’s Word as the straight-edge for my life while simultaneously walking out what this means in relationship with others. Philippians 2:12b-13 highlights such a juxtaposition, stating “. . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” This set of philosophical assumptions and hybrid paradigm were the foundational philosophical guide for this research study.

**Problem Statement**

Although teachers in urban K-12 Christian education wish to positively impact and serve their communities, the problem is they experience a high level of stressors that present a challenge to their ability to be effective. While the stressors to be dealt with are considerable for educators in general (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Schaefer et al., 2012), they are particularly intense for those in urban education (Finnigan & Daly, 2012; Huisman et al., 2010). Comprehensive studies by Ingersoll (2001) and Provasnik and Dorfman (2005) found the highest teacher attrition rates associated with schools having the following characteristics:

- Urban (as compared with rural and suburban)
- High percentage of minority and low socio-economic status students
- Small and private (as compared with public or larger private schools)
- Religious affiliation other than Catholic (as compared with Catholic and nonsectarian private schools)
Many urban K-12 Christian schools fit all of the above criteria – they are small, private, religious (but not Catholic), and serving low socio-economic minorities in urban areas – putting them at the pinnacle of teacher attrition rates. Furthermore, not only are the teachers in urban K-12 Christian education already at greatest risk for attrition among their peers, but also their dual role as educators and disciplers in the Christian faith may present them with considerable additional challenges.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education at five Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) schools located in the northeastern, mideastern, midwestern, and southeastern United States. For the purposes of this study, *teachers who persist* are those who have served for approximately three or more years in urban K-12 Christian education and have state certification and/or are ACSI certified at a level of standard or above; *urban education* refers to K-12 education in schools serving high-density population centers of over 250,000 with more than 50% of the students eligible for free or reduced meals. It should be noted that non-profit private schools are currently eligible for the federal government’s free or reduced meals program (United States Department of Agriculture, 2014). *Christian education* refers to education grounded within a biblical worldview, utilizing biblical principles as the foundation for theoretical and applied learning, and requisite for ACSI accreditation.

The theory guiding this study was Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; 2000; 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This theory elucidates the constructs of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation used to frame a description of teachers’ lived experiences in this setting.
Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is four-fold. First, it focused on the experiences of a group of teachers who had not been previously studied, yet who had made a substantial contribution to the education of those in areas where public schools are neither safe nor effective (StreetSchool Network™, n.d.). A number of empirical studies have explored urban education from multiple perspectives (Finnigan & Daley, 2012; Levy et al., 2012; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Scheopner, 2010; Smith & Smith, 2009), but not from the perspective of teachers of urban K-12 Christian education. Therefore, a gap in the literature was addressed through this research.

Second, this study can inform those who serve this group of teachers in pre-service education, induction programs, and professional development programs. University professors, mentors of novice teachers, principals, and professional development directors with a deepened understanding of the essence of what it means to be a teacher who persists in urban K-12 Christian education will provide enhanced training, encouragement, and undergirding. While pockets of progress have been made in stemming the tide of teacher attrition (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Doney, 2013; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Huisman et al., 2010; Ingersoll, 2012; Lambson, 2010; Luneta, 2012; Patterson & Silverman, 2013), there is more to be learned.

Third, the significance of this study may go beyond the intrepid but relatively small group of urban K-12 Christian educators. Many educators in both public and private sectors recognize what they describe as “a calling” or a desire to care for their communities in this vocation (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012; Garza et al., 2014; Huisman et al., 2010; Swezey, 2009; Tosolt, 2009). What is of benefit to one has pertinence and benefit to the profession as a whole. Those who teach and those who teach the teachers are part of a larger academy, one
endeavoring to provide the next generation a brighter future for themselves, for their communities, and for their country.

The fourth area of significance for this study is its potential to extend the applicability of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; 2000; 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Utilizing the Self-Determination Theory as the theoretical framework for research into the field of urban Christian K-12 education may demonstrate the theory’s relevance to this educational arena, as well as further illuminating the role of faith and calling in motivation.

**Research Questions**

One overarching central question and three sub-questions were used to guide this phenomenological study.

**Central Research Question**

*What are the lived experiences of teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?*

The overarching research question targeted the central focus of this study. The aim was to explore the experiences of several teachers in order to develop “a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 81) they shared as persistent urban K-12 Christian educators. The literature is replete with substantiation that (a) teacher attrition is a serious issue (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Keigher, 2010), (b) attrition is of great concern in America’s urban areas (Finnegan & Daly, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001; Ronfeldt et al., 2013), and (c) attrition is greatest in small, private religious schools (Ingersoll, 2001; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005; Scheopner, 2010). Therefore, given teachers in urban K-12 Christian schools are at highest risk for attrition, the question of why those that persist do so was an important one to ask. The answers to this question provided valuable insights into this issue.
Research Sub-question One

What is the source of motivation for teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?

Deci and Ryan (2000, 2008) theorized that an intrinsic or autonomous source of motivation is associated with a higher degree of a person’s well-being than an extrinsic or controlled source of motivation. A person with a strong autonomy orientation would have his or her needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness met and would therefore express self-determination in motivated behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2008). Sub-question One addressed motivation orientation. This question also explored the role of calling (Blevins & Maddox, 2010; Palmer, 1998; Serow, 1994) as an intrinsic source of motivation.

Research Sub-question Two

What is the role of intrinsic goals for teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 2000; 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000) proposed that persistence in goal attainment is related to the framing of the goal. If a person’s needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008) are met, she or he is able to set aspirations and life goals that are intrinsically framed. This intrinsic goal framing is associated with short-term and long-term persistence toward goal attainment. An extrinsically framed goal may be associated with short-term persistence in some settings, but is not associated with long-term persistence in goal attainment (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). Sub-question Two probed the link between intrinsic goals and persistence in participants. This question also investigated the role of calling (Blevins & Maddox, 2010; Palmer, 1998; Serow, 1994) as a contributor to or link with persistence.
Research Sub-question Three

*What contextual or environmental supports do teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education perceive to be of value?*

Research Sub-question Three was also grounded in the theoretical framework. In accord with the Self-Determination Theory, supports to autonomy, competence, and connectedness have been shown to impact motivation and performance (Cheon, Reeve, Yu, & Jang, 2014; Gillet, Fouquereau, Forest, Brunault, & Columbat, 2012; Sheldon & Filak, 2008; van den Berg et al., 2013; Van den Berghe et al., 2014; Wilkesmann & Schmid, 2014). Autonomy-reinforcing environments may provide a context for teachers in which intrinsic, autonomous motivation with associated boosts to long-term persistence can be stimulated (Jang, Kim, & Reeve, 2012; Jansen in de Wal, den Brok, Hooijer, Marten, & van den Beemt, 2014; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Additionally, multiple studies have indicated the efficacy of positive supports to teacher motivation, resilience, and persistence (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Doney, 2013; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Huisman et al., 2010; Lambson, 2010; Lunetta, 2012). Sub-question Three sought to discover what teachers perceive as an autonomy-supportive environment, one that would enhance a teacher’s ability to thrive despite great challenges.

Research Plan

This study was qualitative in nature and employed a transcendental phenomenological design. The purpose of this study was to better understand the lived experiences of a group who have all shared the phenomenon of teaching for approximately three or more years in an urban K-12 Christian school. Therefore, the qualitative (answering *how* and *why*) and phenomenological (providing textural and structural descriptions leading to the “essence” of the experience) methodology was the apt means through which understanding was gained.
Further, this phenomenological study followed a transcendental approach (Moustakas, 1994). Not only does transcendental phenomenology provide a clear structure for data analysis, but it also recommends the process of bracketing out one’s own experiences as a researcher in order to view the phenomenon under study from a fresh viewpoint (Moustakas, 1994). As a teacher and principal of urban K-12 Christian education since 1998, I wished to put aside my preconceptions and undertake as unbiased a study of this phenomenon as possible.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations provided the boundaries for the major elements of this study. Teachers who were participants in this research held state licensure and/or ACSI certification at the level of standard or above and served in urban K-12 Christian education for approximately three or more years. State licensure and/or ACSI certification at the level of standard, professional, or lifetime are associated with educator competence and served as an indicator of effectiveness rather than mere longevity. Three or more years of service was an indicator of a teacher who had progressed beyond the level of novice and had demonstrated a degree of persistence. In studies on teacher retention, teachers no longer considered to be novices may alternately be designated as those with three or more years of teaching experience (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009), or as those with five or more years of teaching experience (Smith & Smith, 2009). It was thought likely to prove difficult to find teachers with a great deal more than three years of service due to the high attrition rate among groups such as this (Scheopner, 2010). ACSI urban schools (i.e., schools serving in metropolitan areas of 250,000 or more, with at least 50% of students eligible for free or reduced meals) in the northeastern, mideastern, midwestern, and southeastern United States provided a source of ACSI certified teachers and a relatively uniform Christian context, as
all ACSI schools share a fundamental Statement of Faith (see Appendix A). The five school sites were also accessible to me for the purpose of this study.

**Definitions**

To assist the reader, definitions and abbreviations of some of the specific terminology used in this study are given below.

1. *Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)* – ACSI is an international association of Christian schools founded in 1978, serving approximately 24,000 schools in over 100 countries. ACSI provides Christian educators with resources and training in order to advance excellence in academics and discipleship (Association of Christian Schools International, 2012a).

2. *Calling* – A calling, as used in this study, is a spiritual sense of purpose given by God toward the carrying out of a particular life path or intention (Swezey, 2009).

3. *Christian education* – Christian education, as used in this study, refers to education based on a Christian worldview and incorporating the truths of God’s Word in all aspects of teaching and learning (Schultz, 2002).

4. *Constructivism* – Constructivism is the view that people form knowledge as individuals or through interactions with others (Van Brummelen, 2002) and construct what is seen as reality through their own worldview perspective (Patton, 2002).

5. *Discipleship* – Discipleship, as used in this study, is a lifelong process in which one who is a believer in Christ becomes, through relationship with Him and other believers, more Christ-like in thoughts, words, and actions (Schultz, 2002).

6. *Emerging design* – An emerging, or emergent, design is an aspect of qualitative research in which the research plan, rather than being strictly regimented, is loosely held (e.g.,
interview questions may be altered, research sites may be changed) in order to gain optimal information about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

7. **Extrinsic motivation** – Extrinsic or controlled motivation is a construct of the Self-Determination Theory in which a person is externally motivated to act. Examples of extrinsic motivation include desire for fame, beauty, wealth, or to avoid shame or punishment (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

8. **General Causality Orientations Scale (GCOS)** – The GCOS is an instrument developed by Deci and Ryan (1985a) for use in identifying a person’s general orientation to daily events. A person’s general orientation may fall predominantly into an autonomous orientation, a controlled orientation, or an impersonal orientation. For example, a person with a generally autonomous orientation may view an event as providing useful information, a person with a generally controlled orientation may respond to the same event with cynicism or anger, and a person with a generally impersonal orientation may respond to the same event with anxiety. The three causality orientations are each associated with Self-Determination motivation types as follows: (a) autonomous orientation is associated with autonomous or intrinsic motivation, (b) controlled orientation is associated with controlled or extrinsic motivation, and (c) impersonal orientation is associated with amotivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985a, 1985b).

9. **Intrinsic motivation** – Intrinsic or autonomous motivation is a construct of the Self-Determination Theory in which a person is internally motivated to act. Examples of intrinsic motivation include desire for growth, interest, enjoyment, or to maintain congruence with one’s values (Deci & Ryan, 2008).
10. **Qualitative research** – Qualitative research is research methodology that investigates a human problem or social issue through in-depth participant reports, natural (rather than laboratory or contrived) settings, and the analysis of data to produce multifaceted understandings of the problem or issue under study (Creswell, 2013).

11. **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** – Self-Determination Theory is a theory in which human motivation is seen to exist along a quality spectrum from amotivation, through levels of controlled or extrinsic motivation, to autonomous or intrinsic motivation. Autonomous or intrinsic motivation, the highest quality of motivation along the spectrum, is associated with self-determined behavior, energy, vitality, and well-being, and stems from the fulfillment of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

12. **Teacher Attrition** - See **Teacher Turnover**

13. **Teacher Turnover** – Teacher turnover is a term often used in conjunction with *teacher attrition*. Teacher turnover refers to a major alteration in a teacher’s assignment and encompasses leaving the teaching profession (teacher attrition); transferring to another school (school migration); or transferring from one teaching area to another (area migration), as when moving from special to general education (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008).

14. **Transcendental phenomenology** – Transcendental phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology in which the researcher puts aside his or her own preconceptions concerning the participants’ experiences of the area of study (the phenomenon) in order to develop unbiased textural (*what*) and structural (*how*) descriptions of the phenomenon; these lead to a description of the phenomenon’s essence (Moustakas, 1994).
Summary

The struggling status of urban schools throughout America carries financial, academic, community, and countrywide problems with repercussions threading from the past, through the present, and into the future. One possible instrument for positive change is the urban Christian K-12 school – an instrument that has already demonstrated its potential in small pockets of the country’s inner city areas. However, the teachers laboring within these schools are quite literally among all teachers the most at risk for leaving their positions while still novices. While the literature is replete with studies pertaining to teacher attrition and retention, this particular group has been underexplored. It was the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study to examine the experiences of urban K-12 Christian school educators who have persevered in this field in search of the answer to the question, Why do they persist?
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Teachers in urban K-12 Christian education are faced with a plethora of challenges and stressors that combine to hinder their efficacy and contribute to their attrition. In this way, they share common concerns with their colleagues in both the general public and urban public sectors of education. It is also possible that teachers of urban K-12 Christian education may experience challenges and stressors unique to their particular vocation and sense of calling. My research study sought to examine this possibility through sharing the voices of the teachers themselves.

A review of the literature in this chapter encompasses several key areas. First, the theoretical framework is discussed, including a brief background of the pertinent theory, its constructs as they have evolved and continue to evolve, its usefulness within the field of education, and its applicability to the current study. Second, the literature is considered in the following major aspects: (a) teacher attrition, (b) first year urban teacher attrition, (c) associated costs of attrition, (d) factors contributing to attrition, (e) factors alleviating attrition, (f) teacher attrition and Self-Determination Theory research, (g) understudied areas, and (h) identified gap in the literature my study sought to fill – the gap in which teachers of urban K-12 Christian education dwell. Finally, a summary of the literature review will conclude this chapter.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 2000, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In SDT, Deci and Ryan (1985b) initially sought to address human motivation as not only present in high versus low amounts, but also as present in varied types of motivation. As the theory later evolved, it broadened into a human motivation macrotheory, encompassing “basic issues of personality development, self-regulation, universal
psychological needs, life goals and aspirations, energy and vitality, nonconscious processes, the relations of culture to motivation, affect, behavior, and well-being” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 182). The theorists explained, “to be motivated means to be moved to do something” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 54). In contrast, amotivation “is a state of lacking an intention to act” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 61).

To describe human motivation and behavior, SDT has addressed people’s internal pre-dispositions as interwoven with their environmental contexts (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 2000, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Deci and Ryan (2008) delineated three categories or types of motivation: autonomous motivation, controlling motivation, and amotivation. Autonomous motivation is associated with people’s intrinsic or internal desire to engage in an activity for the joy of doing so, although it may also include engagement in an activity because it is valued or “integrated into their sense of self” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 182). Controlling motivation stems from a person’s desire to engage in an activity to gain an extrinsic or external reward, or to evade unpleasant repercussions or negative feelings such as shame or guilt (Deci & Ryan, 2000). While autonomous and controlling motivations both lead to action, only autonomous motivation is associated with high levels of self-determination, well-being, creativity, and “deep or conceptual learning” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 182).

SDT holds that each person may behave out of autonomous motivation, controlling motivation, or amotivation, depending on the particular situation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, overall, people generally operate more often in one of the three types, a phenomenon Deci and Ryan (2008) termed “causality orientation” (p. 183). Causality orientations are defined as
general motivational orientations that refer to (a) the way people orient to the environment concerning information related to the initiation and regulation of their behavior, and thus (b) the extent to which they are self-determined in general across situations and domains. (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 183)

The terms for the three causality orientations are (a) autonomous orientation, (b) controlling orientation, and (c) impersonal orientation, closely echoing the motivation types with which they are associated (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

One question SDT has sought to address is what causes a person to have a particular causality orientation as opposed to one of the other two? Deci and Ryan (2008) attributed this to the degree to which a person’s universal needs for “autonomy . . . competence and relatedness” are met (p. 183). If satisfaction of all three of these needs is met, a person experiences well-being and has the ability to exhibit a strong autonomous orientation. If satisfaction of competence and relatedness needs are met, but not the need for autonomy, the person experiences weakened well-being and exhibits a strong controlling orientation. If none of the necessary needs is met, the person experiences ill-being and an impersonal orientation; he or she believes there is no hope of acting for a positive outcome (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

A person’s causality orientation is interrelated, according to SDT, to his or her response to environmental contexts (Deci & Ryan, 1985b) and to his or her life goals and aspirations (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Deci and Ryan (1985b) theorized that a person with an autonomous orientation will likely view events or environmental contexts as delivering information (i.e., providing opportunities to make autonomous choices, promoting competence, stimulating intrinsic motivation). A person with a controlling orientation will likely view the same events as producing pressure (i.e., diminishing choices, decreasing creativity, stimulating extrinsic
motivation). A person with an impersonal orientation will likely view the identical events as amotivating (i.e., leaving one in a state of helplessness, unraveling any ability to be motivated).

In the realm of life goals and aspirations (Deci & Ryan, 2008), human beings with an autonomous orientation have (as noted above) had their universal needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy met. From this place of self-determination, they can create intrinsic aspirations and life goals such as “affiliation, generativity, and personal development” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 183). Those setting extrinsic aspirations and life goals such as “wealth, fame, and attractiveness” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 183) have had the meeting of their universal needs impeded and are responding from an impoverished sense of self-determination. Sadly, even if their extrinsic goals are attained, it is at the expense of personal well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

SDT constructs have figured largely in a number of studies pertaining to student learning and educational settings. Vansteenkiste et al. (2006) noted the applicability and pertinence of this theory to the classroom environment:

According to SDT, the more autonomy-supportive the social context the more it maintains or enhances intrinsic motivation and the more it facilitates the internalization and integration of extrinsic motivation because such contexts tend to satisfy rather than thwart the learners’ basic psychological needs. Intrinsic and well-internalized extrinsic motivations, in turn, are expected to promote adaptive learning outcomes. (p. 22)

Autonomy-supportive classroom environments are distinguished by opportunities for student choice; constructive comments on student work; the use of positive language (e.g., you can instead of you must); promotion of experimentation, problem solving, and creativity; and explanations of the significance of assigned tasks (Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, & Ryan, 1981; Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987). Autonomy-supportive
classrooms also assist students to good effect by framing goals intrinsically, such as learning with the aim of furthering personal or community growth. Vansteenkiste et al. (2006) observed, “students whose goal framing had occurred in an autonomy-supportive condition also evidenced enhanced deep processing, test performance, and persistence compared with those whose goal framing had been done in a controlling fashion” (p. 24). Externally controlling classroom environments forego supports to autonomy in favor of controlling language (e.g., *you must* instead of *you can*), high pressure deadlines, and conditional rewards (Assor, Roth, & Deci, 2004). In such classrooms, goals may be framed extrinsically, such as aiming for high grades or avoiding disciplinary action (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006).

Of great interest is this effect of autonomy support on deep learning and student persistence. Although controlling motivation and extrinsic goal framing may result in student rote learning and short-term persistence, autonomous motivation and intrinsic goal framing have been associated with deep learning and both short-term and long-term persistence (Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004). Short-term persistence may be stimulated by extrinsic goals, but persistence thus stimulated is deprived of staying power. In their review of goal-framing studies, Vansteenkiste et al. (2006) concluded, “it is clearly better to focus on the intrinsic goals that could result from the learning, and it even appears to be better not to do any goal framing than to do extrinsic goal framing” (p. 26).

These findings based on SDT research into learning have significant applications in education. For example, there are times when instructors must ask students to accomplish learning tasks that may not be intrinsically motivating to all – or even to many – members of the class. Nevertheless, as instructors provide intrinsic rationales in an autonomy-supporting,
relevant, creative, relational manner, the benefits appear to be profound (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006).

The constructs of Self-Determination Theory are in close accord with my study’s research sub-questions regarding motivation, intrinsic goal framing, and contextual or environmental supports for teachers who persist in K-12 urban Christian education. Teachers in this setting have need of deep wells from which to draw motivation and persistence. SDT’s emphasis on intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation offered a structure within which the current study could be built and upon which its findings could be interpreted.

Research in the field of education utilizing Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 2000, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000) as an informing lens has been done in a plethora of areas, including:

- Higher education (Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall, & Abel, 2013; Köseoğlu, 2013; Oliver, Markland, & Hardy, 2010)
- Medical education (Kusurkar & Ten Cate, 2013; Lyness, Lurie, Ward, Mooney, & Lambert, 2013; Ten Cate, Kusurkar, & Williams, 2011)
- Secondary and special education (Denney & Daviso, 2012)
- Public education policy (Denney & Daviso, 2012)
- Elementary education (De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, & Rosseel, 2012)
- Physical education (Ntoumanis & Standage, 2009)
- Online education (Chen & Jang, 2010)

Recent studies have focused specifically on physical education and medical education issues such as autonomous motivation, efficacy, and well-being in teachers (Cheon et al., 2014); reciprocal influences between teacher and student motivation (Jang et al., 2012); empirical tests
of the deleterious effects of need thwarting (i.e., undermining basic psychological needs satisfaction) upon autonomous motivation (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Ryan, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2011); and the influence of feedback upon motivation (Ten Cate, 2013). More will be explored within SDT research areas later in this chapter.

Despite this abundance of educational research related to SDT, studies of teachers in K-12 urban Christian education using this theory as a framework are absent from the literature. This gave opportunity for my study to expand the theory’s realm of applicability into this area. It is also possible that findings from this study indicating the role of faith and calling in intrinsic motivation offer a contribution to the advancement or extension of Self-Determination Theory in these directions as well. Chapter 5 will address this further.

**Related Literature**

As noted in this chapter’s introduction, the numerous interconnections in the literature related to this research study form an overall broad picture of the problem of teacher attrition. From this broad picture gained through an overview of the literature, findings from recent studies funnel into more specific areas such as costs, related factors, and potential means of averting attrition. The narrowest literature foci include understudied aspects of this issue and the gap that had yet to be addressed.

**Teacher Attrition**

The literature on teacher workforce mobility frequently describes teachers as movers, leavers, or stayers (Ingersoll, 2001; Keigher, 2010; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). The term *mover* is used to describe a teacher who vacates a position in one school to take a position in another school. The term *leaver* designates a teacher who leaves a position in one school, but does not take a position in another school. A leaver adds to teacher attrition statistics. Movers
may relocate due to staffing actions or personal events in teachers’ lives. Leavers may begin a new, non-teaching career after a period of service, or retire after an entire career in teaching. Stayers obviously continue in their present positions. Stayers add to teacher retention statistics.

In 2010, the United States Department of Education released a study authored by Keigher in which 1988-2009 attrition and mobility data from public and private K-12 schools was reported. The data was gathered from a broad base of teachers. For example, the study’s 2008-2009 school year data came from more than 3 million public and nearly half a million private school teachers (Keigher, 2010, p. 6). While many descriptors of leavers, movers, and stayers were amassed, a comparison of teachers with the least classroom experience was illuminating. Among public school teachers with 1-3 years of experience, 9.1% left teaching in 2008-2009 (Keigher, 2010, p. 3). During the same year, 20.6% of private school teachers with 1-3 years of experience left the profession (Keigher, 2010, p. 3). As public and private school teachers reached 4-9 and 10-19 years of experience in the classroom, the percentage of those leaving decreased before climbing again at 20 or more years in the public (but not private) sector (Keigher, 2010, pp. 7, 9), perhaps reflecting retirement eligibility within public school systems.

The fact that teachers leave teaching is well documented. But the question of why teachers leave is less straightforward, as permutations of multiple factors play a potential role. The most frequently cited reason for a teacher voluntarily leaving the classroom is “personal,” a sweepingly broad category (Ingersoll, 2001; Keigher, 2010; Odland & Ruzicka, 2009; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). In a landmark study by Ingersoll (2001), personal reasons (e.g., childbirth, health issues, family relocations) were given by 45% of those leaving all public and private school teaching positions.
Following the personal circumstances category, 25% of all leavers from both public and private schools in the Ingersoll study (2001) listed dissatisfaction as an impetus for vacating positions. A comparison based on Ingersoll’s data between several reasons for dissatisfaction given by urban, high poverty public school leavers and several reasons for dissatisfaction given by small, private school leavers underscored important distinctions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Dissatisfaction</th>
<th>Urban Low SES Public Schools</th>
<th>Small Private Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate Administrative Support</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Salary</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Student Motivation</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe Environment</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas almost half of the teachers in urban, low SES public schools cited poor salary and half noted a lack of student motivation, almost three fourths of small private school teachers pinpointed poor salary, with over one third dissatisfied with the adequacy of administrative support they received (Ingersoll, 2001). Overall, the Ingersoll (2001) study indicated “teachers in small private schools leave the teaching occupation at a rate over double of that of teachers in urban, high-poverty public schools” (p. 21). A similar finding was noted in the Keigher (2010) research. Likewise, in the Provasnik and Dorfman (2005) study, the authors stated teachers in private schools “are more likely to leave teaching than public school teachers” (p. 24).

Because America’s private schools have a higher degree of independence from United States government regulations and monitoring than public schools, data on private school teacher movements has been difficult to come by. This may also be the case among international schools (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009). Despite this dearth of data, it is informative to compare available information on teacher attrition in international schools with the information gleaned
from the Ingersoll (2001) and Provasnik and Dorfman (2005) United States studies. Odland and Ruzicka’s (2009) work with 281 international teachers indicated the three primary reasons given by teachers for departure from their field as follows: personal reasons, salaries, and issues with administration. These results offer a rather neat alignment with Ingersoll’s (2001) private school results discussed above. Public and private schools share many parallels; however, these teacher attrition factors point to underlying dissimilarities between the two sectors.

**Attrition, Achievement, and First Year Teachers in Urban Settings**

High levels of teacher attrition associated with low levels of student achievement have been documented generally in America and particularly in many of America’s urban areas (Finnigan & Daly, 2012; Hudley, 2013; Patterson & Silverman, 2013; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Scheopner, 2010). The underlying contributors to this problem in schools serving urban, low socio-economic communities are widespread and multifaceted, spanning the gamut from fundamental lack of funding for essentials such as safe, clean buildings and basic, up-to-date curricular materials (Hudley, 2013), to a debilitating administrative mindset at failing schools that can cause an almost numbing blindness to potential solutions (Finnegan & Daly, 2012). The poor reputation of a school within its surrounding community can exacerbate the woes of an already declining neighborhood, as “neighborhood decline and the demise of public education often occur in conjunction” (Patterson & Silverman, 2013, p. 1). A negative synergy is pervasive.

Entering into this context are beginning teachers, coming to fill the void left by those who recently vacated their positions. In many regions of the country, and especially in urban areas, the positions available to first year teachers are those in the less prestigious schools where teacher attrition rates are especially high (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Finnigan &
Daly, 2012; Hudley, 2013). Aragon, Culpepper, McKee, and Perkins’ (2013) study of pre-service teachers noted an ambiguity in stated preferences for urban versus suburban job placements. Although many pre-service teachers expressed no preference, upon further investigation it appeared that a significant number of the no preference group had mentally prepared themselves to work in an urban setting initially (because of the higher number of openings) until moving into more coveted suburban positions (Aragon et al., 2013). As troubled schools continually take in teachers with the lowest levels of experience and a possible view of the urban teaching position as a stepping-stone, the urban schools’ challenges propel them on a downward trajectory. Other factors contributing to teacher attrition as noted in the literature are considered further in this chapter. However, the multidimensional nature of this issue is already emerging.

**Associated Costs of Teacher Attrition**

Although the cost of teacher turnover may lead one to think first of dollars and cents, a number of studies have indicated the need to consider a far more comprehensive view of the turnover price tag. For example, less obvious, non-dollars-and-cents costs associated with teacher attrition included the following:

- Time and effort expenditures involved in recruiting, hiring, training, supporting, and mentoring new teachers (Levy et al., 2012)
- Lower morale among teachers left behind when their experienced, efficacious colleagues leave (Ronfeldt et al., 2013)
- Possible emotional costs (e.g., bitterness) for departing teachers (Buchanan, 2012)
- Lower levels of student learning, especially for at-risk students, as a result of the loss of seasoned teachers (Ronfeldt et al., 2013)
• Poor perceptions of schools with high turnovers, producing a “vicious cycle . . . where cities are unable to sustain their housing stock and related tax bases” (Patterson & Silverman, 2013, p. 1)

• Poor perceptions of students who attend high-turnover schools in devitalized urban communities (Patterson & Silverman, 2013)

These often unmentioned costs are not only considerable for the school communities affected on a daily basis, but also for all citizens who are concerned about the educational investments being made in the future generation of the country.

Having noted the non-financial price of attrition that may be a largely hidden burden to the average taxpayer, the fact remains that the actual dollars and cents financial costs are staggering. Levy et al.’s (2012) well-designed study utilized a cost-of-turnover process to evaluate one urban school district’s costs for teacher separation, recruitment and hiring, new teacher support, and professional development in the 2006-2007 school year. The total district base level cost of turnover was $12,110,102 for the school year; after adjusting for salary differentials between incoming and outgoing teachers, the single year district cost was $3,329,939 (Levy et al., 2012, Table 2a). This figure did not take into account funds spent at the local school level for recruiting, hiring, and supporting new teachers – a cost amounting to an extra $2,089 per new hire per year (Levy et al., 2012, Table 3).

These numbers bring into focus the deep economic impact of teacher turnover. On a national level, teacher turnover has been estimated to cost United States taxpayers billions of dollars per year (Levy et al., 2012; Synar & Maiden, 2012). To say this should be a matter of concern for Americans is an understatement.
A Deeper Look at Attrition Factors

A number of major factors contributing to teacher attrition as well as attrition-related costs have been discussed above; however, the multifaceted and highly complex nature of the attrition problem (Torres, 2011) warrants a deeper look at additional factors brought to light by the literature’s empirical studies. Several methods of ordering the many factors into two or three categories for more organized study appear in the literature (Schaefer et al., 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Schaefer et al.’s (2012) literature review of 65 studies sorted issues pertaining to teacher attrition into two categories – individual factors and contextual/environmental factors. Despite a tendency for attrition factors to defy strict categorization, for the purposes of this literature review I am adopting the two-category system used by Schaefer et al. (2012) in which issues contributing to teacher attrition are organized into those pertaining more directly to the individual teacher, and those pertaining more directly to the work environment.

Attrition factors pertaining to individual teacher characteristics. The first category of attrition factors, those pertaining more directly to individual teacher characteristics, have been noted in research on teacher demographics (Keigher, 2010; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005); degree of teacher resilience or motivation (Doney, 2013; Huisman et al., 2010; Yariv, 2011); personal life situations such as divorce or financial pressures (Ingersoll, 2001; Yariv, 2011); susceptibility to stress and burnout (Purvanova & Muros, 2010; Yariv, 2011); inability to acclimate to the culture of the school (Yariv, 2011); or low levels of competence in communication, organization, and/or time management/classroom management skills (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Smith & Smith, 2009; Yariv, 2011).

Although teachers may leave the profession at any time during their careers, and for any one or any combination of the aforementioned factors, teacher turnover is most closely aligned
with the demographic of teacher “newness” to the field. DeAngelis and Presley (2011) studied over 30 years of data from Illinois public school records spanning 1970-2001. For each cohort of new teachers entering Illinois public schools between 1987-2001, 40% became either movers or leavers within their first five years (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011). The loss of a teacher negatively impacts the school regardless of whether the teacher leaves the profession forever, moves to another school, or takes an extended break from teaching before returning at some point in the future. For this reason, DeAngelis and Presley (2011) also studied the effect of teacher departures upon the school, noting “Illinois schools lost on average 2 out of every 3 of their new teachers within 6 years of hiring them. Moreover, the rate of loss was remarkably stable across the 14 cohorts between 1987 and 2001” (p. 611).

The characteristic of newness to the teaching profession is strongly tied to elevated levels of teacher attrition; however, teachers’ lives can also change significantly at any point in their career (Yariv, 2011). Therefore, personal situations are also closely aligned with teacher characteristics precipitating attrition. Events such as expecting a child, raising a child, divorcing a spouse, experiencing health issues, relocating a family, or dealing with financial pressures (Ingersoll, 2001; Yariv, 2011) have been referenced as reasons for leaving one’s teaching position. While not specifically noted in the literature, it is reasonable to add to this list the necessity of caring for a special needs child or an aging family member.

In addition to these characteristics of newness to the field and the inevitability of changing life circumstances, some teachers are more vulnerable to the stresses that are part of virtually every teaching position. As is the case in other helping professions (e.g., social work, nursing), teachers interface with a wide variety of stakeholders in the midst of a demanding day-to-day job assignment (Aloe, Amo, & Shanahan, 2014), which can contribute to stress and
burnout (Aloe, et al., 2014; Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012; McCormick & Barnett, 2011; Yariv, 2011). A useful tool for assessing burnout syndrome, the Maslach Burnout Inventory, was devised by Maslach and Jackson (1981). The Maslach Burnout Inventory evaluates burnout syndrome as a state comprised of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and/or a sense of low personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The association between these three aspects of burnout and teacher attrition has been noted in a large number of studies in the literature (Aloe et al., 2014; Oakes, Lane, Jenkins, & Booker, 2013; Purvanova & Muros, 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Research findings in which the demographics of teachers such as gender, age, and time spent in a teaching career have indicated both men and women might experience burnout syndrome (McCormick & Barnett, 2011; Purvanova & Muros, 2010). However, women experienced burnout more often as emotional exhaustion, while men experienced burnout more often as depersonalization and low levels of personal accomplishment (McCormick & Barnett, 2011; Purvanova & Muros, 2010). This is an important distinction, as administrators may be less likely to observe, and therefore less likely to address, aspects of burnout in men as compared with their female colleagues (Purvanova & Muros, 2010).

Related to a teacher’s susceptibility to burnout is an insufficiency of the resilience needed to cope with stressors. Resilience is a complex construct with professional, emotional, motivational, and social dimensions (Mansfield, Beltman, Price, & McConney, 2012). It has been perceived by teachers as “being closely allied to their everyday capacity to sustain their educational purposes and successfully manage the unavoidable uncertainties which are inherent in the practice of being a teacher” (Gu & Day, 2013, p. 22). Although resilience can be
intentionally fostered by the academic community (Mansfield et al., 2012), it is “driven by teachers’ educational purposes and moral values” (Gu & Day, 2013, p. 39).

A lack of resilience can be especially detrimental for the new teacher and tied to attrition (Doney, 2013; Huisman et al., 2010). Doney’s (2013) qualitative study examined four teachers within the first two years of their careers to determine their capacity to respond to stressors in ways that would protect them from resulting stress. Stressors such as conflict between personal and professional life, family situations, lack of teaching experience, and time pressures presented opportunities for participants to succumb to stress or find positive ways to deal with the stressors (Doney, 2013). The participants’ primary methods of successfully dealing with stressors were through individual abilities (e.g., problem solving, sense of humor) and creation of supportive relationships (Doney, 2013). As new stressors appeared, or former stressors reappeared under a new guise, the ability to confront them with new coping mechanisms produced increased resilience (Doney, 2013). Lack of meaningful pre-service teacher training in the skills necessary for resistance-building may contribute to teacher attrition by leaving some teachers poorly prepared to counteract stressors endemic to the profession.

The literature has indicated the impact each of the teacher characteristics already addressed (newness to the field, personal issues outside the schoolhouse, susceptibility to burnout, and insufficient resilience) may have on teacher attrition. A number of additional teacher characteristics have also been recognized as impacting turnover. Measures of competence in managing a classroom, time management, organizational skills, and communication skills (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Smith & Smith, 2009; Yariv, 2011), as well as the ability to acclimatize to the school environment (Yariv, 2011) are needed. Teachers reporting for their first teaching assignment may arrive with disparities in how well their pre-
service preparation programs have equipped them for success in these vital areas. Goldhaber and Cowan (2014) found “substantial differences in mobility and rates of attrition associated with different preparation programs,” a remarkable finding despite – or perhaps because of - the fact that their study considered only traditional teacher preparation programs within a single state (p. 459).

Great variability in the quality of teacher preparedness has been linked with differences between and within traditional and alternative teacher preparation tracks throughout the United States (Cibulka, 2013). A few of the difficulties experienced by alternatively certified new teachers have included heightened classroom management issues and the eruption of violent confrontations (Schonfeld & Feinman, 2012), placement in difficult classroom settings, a lack of pedagogical background knowledge, inadequate practice in planning developmentally appropriate and differentiated instruction (Tricarico & Yendol-Hoppey, 2012), and insufficient support as one is simultaneously learning to be a teacher while attempting to teach (Casey, Dunlap, Brister, Davidson, & Starrett, 2011; Foote, Brantlinger, Haydar, Smith, & Gonzalez, 2011). With such a “welcome” mat laid out at the schoolroom door, it is not surprising that exercising additional necessary skills such as acclimatization and time management may prove a bit beyond a newcomer’s capabilities.

**Attrition factors pertaining to the work environment.** The second category of attrition factors encompasses those pertaining more directly to work environments. The learning community context within which teachers serve has been consistently noted throughout the literature as having a major impact on teacher attrition. Characteristics of school environments that may be linked with increased rates of teacher attrition include the following:
• Schools serving urban, low socioeconomic, minority, and/or cross-cultural populations (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Garza et al., 2014; Smith & Smith, 2009)

• Schools requiring a high level of differentiated instruction (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009) or work with special needs students (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009)

• Schools in which administrators were perceived to provide inadequate, poor, or improper supervision (Yariv, 2011)

• Schools in which salaries were not perceived to be commensurate with job responsibilities (Ingersoll, 2001; Keigher, 2010; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005)

• Schools in which teacher characteristics and teaching assignments were mismatched (Yariv, 2011)

• Schools that did not support teacher autonomy (Wilkesmann & Schmid, 2014) or resilience (Doney, 2013)

• Schools in which time pressures contributed to emotional exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011)

• Schools that did not connect teachers with suitable mentors (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009)

• Schools in which teachers experienced bullying from students, student discipline problems, and/or other challenging student issues (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Smith & Smith, 2009)

• Schools in which teachers considered parents to be uncommunicative (Smith & Smith, 2009)
• Schools in which teachers perceived a lack of support, professional training, and collaboration within the school community (Schaefer et al., 2012)

• Schools in which teachers lacked a sense of belonging (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011) and/or experienced isolation (Doney, 2013; Huisman et al., 2010)

• Schools in which teachers felt a misalignment of their personal values with the values of the larger school community (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Torres, 2012)

Of the many characteristics associated with schools suffering from high levels of teacher turnover noted above, three appear to be particularly challenging for early career teachers. These include school settings in which student behavioral challenges are perceived to be at a high level (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2009; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011), school settings in which new teachers experience a lack of belonging or feelings of isolation (Doney, 2013; Huisman et al., 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011), and school settings in which comprehensive supports (e.g., efficacious induction programs) for new teachers are lacking (Ingersoll, 2012; Schaefer et al., 2012; Shockley, Watlington, & Felsher, 2013; Smith & Smith, 2009).

In a study of work environment conditions contributing to teacher mobility, Kukla-Acevedo (2009) examined the influences of classroom autonomy, support from administration, and student behavioral issues on attrition. A spectrum from “lesser offences (e.g., student tardiness) to significant behaviors (e.g., possession of a weapon)” was included in the behavioral issues (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009, p. 445). In the decision to leave the teaching profession, student behavior challenges were significantly more important than lack of support from administration or too little classroom autonomy, although lack of administrative support was second in importance (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Discipline problems involving students contributed to stress
and emotional exhaustion, which in turn add to job dissatisfaction and intent to leave the field (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). In Chicago city schools, for example, “teachers tend to leave high schools with high rates of student misbehavior, where students frequently face disciplinary problems and where many students feel unsafe in schools” (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2009).

It is not only the students who feel unsafe in an environment where student behavior is an issue. Bullying perpetrated against teachers by students (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012) is a form of student behavior challenge that could be considered an environmental factor in the etiology and/or exacerbation of attrition-producing burnout. Certainly the experience of being bullied by a student can erode a teacher’s confidence and amplify stress leading to attrition. The purpose of Kauppi and Pörhölä’s (2012) study on bullying of teachers by students was not to relate teacher turnover to teacher bullying by students. Nevertheless, the student bullying behaviors found in their study such as “repeatedly coming late to class and hiding from the teacher” (Kauppi and Pörhölä, 2012, p. 408) could serve as contributors to the stress and burnout associated with teacher attrition. This type of behavior toward teachers “can be used to prevent them from performing their duties to their own satisfaction and from fulfilling the requirements of their position” (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012, p. 409) – a recipe for turnover.

Ingersoll’s (2001) research into teacher turnover and the reasons teachers gave for either moving from their present school or leaving the field altogether indicated the significance of discipline and behavioral issues. For all schools in the study, 48% of teachers dissatisfied with their position cited “student discipline problems” as a reason for their departure (Ingersoll, 2001, Table 5). For urban, low SES public schools in the study, 56% of dissatisfied teachers cited
“student discipline problems” as a reason for their departure (Ingersoll, 2001, Table 5). It should be noted that this was not as significant a factor for private schools in the Ingersoll study, as only 15% of dissatisfied teachers attributed their departure to behavioral challenges with students (Table 5).

Student misbehavior, while undoubtedly a major environmental component in teacher attrition, is not the only factor. Feelings of isolation or lack of belonging play a key role as well. Education has long been associated with a tradition of teachers acting in isolation for what they perceive to be in the best interests of their students (DuFour, 2011). Despite this tradition, multiple attrition studies have pointed to the feelings of isolation or lack of belonging often experienced by new teachers as contributors to job dissatisfaction and/or turnover (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Doney, 2013; Huisman et al., 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) examined the interrelationships between variables contributing to job dissatisfaction, considering factors within the work context that might motivate a teacher toward departure. The factors were categorized into two groups: Group 1 consisted of factors that contributed to a sense of belonging, including value consonance, supervisory support, relationships with colleagues, and relationships with parents; Group 2 consisted of factors that contributed to emotional exhaustion, including time pressure and discipline problems (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011, Figure 1). Findings indicated

value consonance and positive social relations result in a stronger feeling of belonging . . . [which] results in higher job satisfaction. . . . Time pressure and discipline problems increase emotional exhaustion, which in turn reduces teachers’ job satisfaction. . . . A lack of belonging may be perceived as a psychological strain that may cause emotional exhaustion. (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011, p. 1036)
Work done by Brown and Wynn (2009), Doney (2013), and Huisman et al. (2010) supported Skaalvik and Skaalvik’s (2011) findings on the importance of new teachers’ sense of belonging to the learning community. Belonging may even mitigate the effects of emotional exhaustion associated with burnout (Aloe et al., 2014; Oakes et al., 2013; Purvanova & Muros, 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). However, when a teacher experiences a sense of isolation, one may more easily disengage from the community and slip away (Huisman et al., 2010).

In addition to student discipline challenges and feelings of isolation, new teachers are particularly hampered in their efforts to become strong contributors to their learning communities because of a lack of effective supports in their work environment. Ingersoll (2001) reported “inadequate administrative support” as a major reason dissatisfied teachers gave for their departure. Dissatisfied teachers listed “inadequate administrative support” as a reason for leaving 68% of the time in all schools studied, by 43% of dissatisfied teachers in low SES urban public schools, and by 59% of dissatisfied private school teachers (Ingersoll, 2001, Table 5).

What teachers consider inadequate support from their administrators encompasses many characteristics of the work environment. New teachers may require undergirding and training in such disparate arenas as, on the one hand, dealing appropriately with unfamiliar cross-cultural situations (Garza et al., 2014; Smith & Smith, 2009; Tosolt, 2009) to, on the other hand, attempting to reconcile the disparity between the realities of teaching as compared with their expectations prior to entering the field (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; McCormick & Barnett, 2011).

Since the 1980s, educational researchers have examined the first three years of a teacher’s career, considered the induction period, to gain understanding into new teacher attrition (Hoover, 2010). The provision of adequate support for new teachers has been one goal of
mentoring and induction programs (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Hoover, 2010; Ingersoll, 2012; Kutsyuruba, 2012; Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2010; Shockley et al., 2013; Smith, 2011). However, researchers contributing to the literature have asked if such programs result in teacher perception of this goal as being met. The characteristics of mentoring and induction programs vary widely within different school environments, precluding an unequivocal answer to this question (Shockley et al., 2013).

Where induction programs have utilized mentoring as the primary induction strategy, issues with mentor-mentee incompatibility and/or insufficient time together have arisen, giving mixed results (Shockley et al, 2013). Multifaceted induction programs incorporating “principal and new teacher interactions; mentor teachers; collaborative structures; professional development; and new teacher orientation” were more likely to meet the support needs of new teachers (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010, p. 1006). Ingersoll’s (2012) review of induction program research noted a similar association, with the more comprehensive induction programs providing a greater new teacher retention rate than those programs consisting of mentor time plus discussion opportunities with an administrator. While it may be cost effective to put new teachers together with veterans and provide opportunities for new teacher chats with the principal, induction programs at this level are unlikely to significantly alter the percentages of dissatisfied, departing teachers who note “inadequate administrative support” in follow up surveys (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Ingersoll, 2001; 2012).

**Factors Alleviating Teacher Turnover**

Despite the bleak vista provided by the literature’s indicators of multitudinous factors contributing to teacher turnover, a number of factors that tend to alleviate the problem have been identified. Some reversals in the turnover trend have been attributed to specific positive supports
to retention (Amparo, 2013; Brown & Wynn, 2009; Doney, 2013; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Huisman et al., 2010; Lambson, 2010; Luneta, 2012; Smith & Smith, 2009; Tosolt, 2009). A review of the retention literature below highlights several beneficial areas, including teacher training, the role of the principal, and resilience skill development. These serve as focal points for avenues leading toward teacher retention.

The quality of pre-service training, professional development training, and participation in well-designed, multidimensional mentoring and/or induction programs are widely noted in the literature as having provided a boost to novice teacher retention (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Hoover, 2010; Ingersoll, 2012; Lambson, 2010; Schaefer et al., 2012). Especially efficacious in producing positive results were pre-service training programs that incorporated strong components of practical training (as opposed to purely or primarily theoretical training), professional development training directed specifically toward the needs of new teachers, and time spent with a mentor of the novice teacher’s own choosing (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Lambson, 2010; Luneta, 2010; Smith & Smith, 2009).

Smith and Smith’s (2009) study underscored the importance of professional development specifically for urban educators working in low socio-economic districts. The researchers found that 78% \((n = 91)\) of their study’s participants \((N = 116)\) “felt they were ‘not at all’ or only ‘somewhat’ prepared” for their position (Smith & Smith, 2009, p. 340). Zero respondents “thought that most universities were preparing teachers ‘quite well’ for working in that setting” (Smith & Smith, 2009, p. 341). As a counter to this lack of preparation, three avenues toward ensuring professional development adequacy and pertinence for new teachers were noted in Lunetta’s (2010) literature review conclusions. These included (a) assessing the needs of novice
teachers prior to designing a relevant program, (b) integrally including the novices in all aspects of developing and evaluating professional development programs, and (c) correlating professional development with evidence of improved student outcomes (Lunetta, 2010).

In addition to the effective teacher-retention path of proper preparation and professional development, a second factor of noteworthy significance in reversing the attrition trend is the pivotal role of the principal. Brown and Wynn (2009) studied 12 principals chosen for their extremely low teacher turnover statistics despite their schools’ locations in otherwise high teacher turnover districts. Three fundamental commonalities shared by the 12 were noted by Brown and Wynn, as follow:

1. Principals looked for shared values when interviewing new hires, emphasizing the reason for the learning community’s existence was to serve the children.

2. Principals actively endeavored to provide novice teachers with necessary resources, encouraged them to ask for what was needed, and generally provided overarching support.

3. Principals valued flexibility and emphasized the importance of building a community.

In a sense, the principals of low attrition schools became coaches and mentors to their new teachers, as exemplified in the following interview excerpt:

I assign a buddy [to a novice teacher], and it’s someone that I feel who’s [sic] personality is very similar. And then I also assign myself, and I make it definitely clear in the interview that they’ll see me a lot, and it has nothing to do with the fact that you’re not doing well. It has to do with I want to make sure that everything is going well in your room. And I want to provide you with support. I want to provide you with resources, and know what’s going on. (Brown & Wynn, 2009, p. 48)
The significance of the commonalities shared by these principals in combination with their notable success in retaining their new teachers provided a bright spot in the literature. In contrast, Huisman et al. (2010) observed the negative results produced by principals who criticized novice teachers, yet failed to provide the supports to improvement. These two studies’ findings are among indications that this line of research should be actively pursued.

A third factor in this review of the literature pertaining to turning the tide of teacher turnover is the role of developing teacher resilience (Doney, 2013; Huisman et al., 2010). Aiding pre-service or novice teachers in understanding resilience and utilizing a process that intentionally grows resilience may be a tool in the quest for teacher retention (Doney, 2013). Interfaces between “stressors and protective factors constitute the driving force of the resilience process and stimulate responses to help counteract negative effects of stress” (Doney, 2013, pp. 658-659). The resilience process, in part, counterbalances multiple sources of stress stemming from either in-school or out-of-school situations with an array of positive supports such as a network of supportive people or personal coping skills (Doney, 2013). Resilience strategies used by novice teachers working in stressful placements (e.g., urban, rural, special education) incorporated “help-seeking, problem-solving, managing difficult relationships, and seeking rejuvenation/renewal” (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010, p. 622). Personal characteristics contributing to resilience for novice teachers in urban schools included “significant adult relationships, mentoring others, problem-solving, hope, high expectations, sociocultural awareness, and professional development” (Huisman et al., 2010, p. 487). These studies add support to the model of resilience proposed in Mansfield et al. (2012) that incorporated both contextual and individual factors into a resilience framework consisting of professional, emotional, motivational, and social aspects.
The number of total participants in the 2013 Doney study (four female secondary science teachers, none of whom taught in an urban school) and the 2010 Huisman study (12 female K-4 teachers, all serving in urban schools) was small. The participants in the 2010 Castro et al. study included 15 first year teachers in Australian urban, rural, and special education placements, described as “high-needs areas” (p. 623). Yet despite the small number of participants, these studies have shed insight into the relationship between teacher resilience and teacher retention. They are worthy of attention, especially as they interconnect with other studies cited in this review of literature that share elements (e.g., mentoring, professional development, motivation) impacting teacher retention.

In this section, some of the bright spots found in the literature’s empirical retention studies have been highlighted. Further information can be gleaned through comparisons between findings from studies sharing substantial similarities in order to gain a deeper perspective. Two studies on Illinois teacher retention and attrition serve as case in point. The first study used data from 2002 to 2007 to highlight the difficulties of retaining teachers in Chicago city schools located in high crime areas and serving high percentages of African American, low SES families (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2009). The authors noted that the vast majority of [Chicago] schools with chronically low teacher stability struggle with very low levels of student achievement. These schools desperately need to show improvements in teaching and student learning, but year after year they struggle to hold on to teachers. (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2009)

In the second study, DeAngelis and Presley (2011) used Illinois data from 1987-2001 and determined 10% of all Chicago city schools maintained an average 56.3% teacher retention rate while another 10% retained only 15% (Table 1). For Illinois rural schools during the same
period, 10% maintained an average 55% teacher retention rate while another 10% retained only an average of 5.9% (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011, Table 1).

Interestingly, there were some Chicago schools that defied the odds with retention rates close to their rural counterparts, while some rural Illinois schools lost teachers to attrition at higher rates than Chicago schools. While the two pictures painted by both of the above studies were supported by their data, a more complex picture emerged from viewing them side-by-side. The interplay between those factors contributing to attrition and those factors contributing to retention obviously go beyond school locations and student demographics (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011), flouting overly simplistic attempts to categorize them.

In addition to gaining a deeper perspective through comparisons between findings from studies sharing significant contextual similarities, it is also informative to consider personal and professional similarities among teachers who have persevered in overcoming early career obstacles. After 26 cohort members of the University of California at Berkeley’s Multicultural Urban Secondary English Credential and MA Program completed their course of study, Freedman and Appleman (2009) followed them through their first five years of teaching and identified factors shared by those who persisted in urban schools serving low SES students. Several of the characteristics possessed by tenacious teachers were noted by Freedman & Appleman as follows:

- A sense of mission, which was reinforced and developed by the teacher education program
- A disposition for hard work and persistence, which was reinforced and developed by the teacher education program
• Substantive preparation that included both the practical and the academic and harmony between the two
• Training in assuming the reflective stance of a teacher researcher
• Ongoing support from members of the cohort as well as other supportive professional networks across the years (p. 323)

Freedman and Appleman found 69% of the cohort members remained in urban, low SES schools at the five-year mark. This significant retention rate may be attributable at least in part to teacher characteristics honed by targeted preparation and ongoing support.

The positive effects of the factors identified in this section as having a notable impact on reversing – or at least stemming – the tide of teacher attrition are bright spots in the K-12 education landscape literature. High quality, comprehensive mentoring and induction programs (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009); the significant impact of the school principal (Brown & Wynn, 2009); and skill training in resilience and support system development (Doney, 2013) offer pathways away from attrition. Nevertheless, these pathways lack an identifiable unifying framework. Without a unifying framework, progress may be limited to a one-study-at-a-time pace beset by often-contradictory findings. Ingersoll (2012), a leading researcher in the field of teacher attrition, stated,

In educational research, as in many other fields, the existing base of research evaluating particular programs or reforms often yields contradictory findings and mixed conclusions. Whether the target of evaluation is a new curricular product, the value of teachers’ credentials, the performance of charter schools, or whatever, typically some studies find negative effects, some find no effects, and some find positive effects. (p. 51)
Within the framework of Self-Determination Theory, however, a consistency of research findings and conclusions has been amassed over more than three decades of educational studies (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014). The following section presents a review of the literature relevant to teacher attrition that is built upon a Self-Determination Theory understanding of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 2000, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Teacher Attrition and Self-Determination Theory Research

The literature related to teacher attrition and retention discussed above has predominantly fallen into two broad categories. The first major category encompassed key studies done on teacher attrition within an approximate time frame of the past fifteen years (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2009; DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Keigher, 2010; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005). These studies focused on the scope of the attrition problem within the United States as a whole or within individual states. The second major category discussed in this literature review has included studies done primarily on specific aspects or factors contributing to teacher attrition or retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kaplan, 2013; Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012; McCormick & Barnett, 2011; Oakes et al., 2013; Purvanova & Muros, 2010). Not reviewed thus far is the literature on studies pertinent to teacher attrition and retention done from the viewpoint of Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 2000, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

It should be noted that although SDT research has examined aspects of education such as student learning for the past three decades, only recently has it explored teacher motivation (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014). The advent of SDT research into teacher motivation has brought a potential alteration of perspective into the attrition literature. Whereas non-SDT research often has viewed teacher attrition as a complex composite of single factors (e.g.,
Schaefer et al., 2012), SDT studies have facilitated a more holistic approach to understanding of teacher attrition. Instead of considering it as a conglomerate of single factors, an SDT viewpoint may perceive attrition as a negative result of thwarting a teacher’s basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Cuevas, & Lonsdale, 2014; Fernet, Guay, Senécal, & Austin, 2012; Van den Berghe et al., 2014).

A study by McCormick and Barnett (2011) may provide an example of differing perspectives on the major attrition issue of burnout. The researchers examined four areas to determine their possible role in teacher burnout, including personal domain, student domain, on site (e.g. supervisory) domain, and external (e.g., governmental) domain (McCormick & Barnett, 2011). Their findings indicated “the centrality of stress attributed to student misbehaviour in predicting each of the three dimensions of burnout: depersonalisation, emotional exhaustion, and personal accomplishment” (McCormick & Barnett, 2011, p. 278). In the study’s conclusions, the authors noted,

Perhaps one of the most important conclusions that can be made in the context of this study is that stress attributable to student misbehaviour appears to be the most salient in relation to burnout. Arguably, this makes sense in terms of the centrality of managing student behavior in the work of teachers. To experience high levels of stress consistently from an inability to manage student behaviour successfully, is tantamount to failure, and likely to be associated with the depersonalisation of students, experiencing of an exhausting range of negative emotions, and a sense of diminished personal accomplishment. (McCormick & Barnett, 2011, p. 298)

The study included a recommendation that teachers more likely to burn out be given classroom management training (McCormick & Barnett, 2010).
When viewing the findings from this same study through an SDT lens, one might consider a teacher’s inability to provide a learning-conducive classroom environment due to student misbehavior as a potentially crippling blow to intrinsic motivation to teach. While the presence of student amotivation may present a challenge and potentially contribute to an environment that does not provide a high level of teacher need satisfaction (Cheon et al., 2014; Cheon & Reeve, 2015), student misbehavior falls into the more serious category of teacher need thwarting. Bartholomew et al. (2014) defined need thwarting as “the negative experiential state which occurs when individuals perceive their psychological needs to be actively undermined by others” (p. 102). When students are intentionally obstructing instruction through “making noise, disruptive talk, walking around the classroom, refusing to follow teachers’ requests or rules” (Nie & Lau, 2009), a teacher is diminished in volition (autonomy), efficacy (competence), and ability to positively interact with students and colleagues (relatedness). One might imagine teachers in such a position to feel the schoolhouse is better off without them.

In the same way many studies have shown factors that contribute to attrition as a conglomerate of single issues, so too have studies aimed at enhancing retention been largely addressed in a similar fashion (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Doney, 2013; Huisman et al., 2010; Lambson, 2010; Lunetta, 2012; Smith & Smith, 2009). Again, SDT research has brought a potential alteration of perspective into the study of teacher retention by providing constructs through which one may view teacher retention more holistically. Instead of considering retention as a complex composite of single factors to be explored individually, one may understand it as a positive outcome of meeting a teacher’s basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Cheon et al., 2014; Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014; Lyness et al., 2013).
For example, a number of retention studies have examined the role of the principal in boosting new teacher retention, such as the Brown and Wynn (2009) study mentioned above. As previously noted, principals who have demonstrated skills in recruiting teachers with similar values to the school community, providing necessary resources to new teachers, and incorporating new teachers into the life of the school have been associated with increased retention rates (Brown & Wynn, 2009). Viewing this same study through a SDT lens, these principals could be considered to have promoted teacher retention through their provision of an autonomy-supporting environment (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

This vital aspect of principals as autonomy-support for their schools is difficult to overstate. Fernet et al. (2012) considered multiple aspects of the principal role in initiating and maintaining a thriving learning community:

Principals who adopt autonomy-supportive behaviors can make themselves available to provide information, clarify ambiguities related to their role or tasks, respond to questions, and offer assistance or guidance as needed. Furthermore, they can foster a positive perception of resources by creating an autonomy-conducive environment, sharing information, and acknowledging teacher contributions. (p. 516)

As administrators create autonomy-supporting environments for their teachers, teachers create autonomy-supporting environments for their students (Cheon & Reeve, 2015; Lyness et al., 2013). As students learn within autonomy-supporting environments formed by their teachers, the teachers receive benefits in turn from giving such support (Cheon et al., 2014). The reciprocal interrelationship between teacher and student motivation in an autonomy-supporting environment has been studied by Jang et al. (2012), who noted,
students’ own autonomy need satisfaction can be viewed as a likely antecedent to changes in teachers’ classroom motivating styles. That is, students’ classroom autonomy need satisfaction may work as an antecedent to increases (or decreases) in teachers’ provision of autonomy support. (p. 1185)

Although much can be gleaned from the vast literature on teacher attrition and teacher retention, it is enlightening to compare the findings from non-SDT studies with findings from SDT studies. While the non-SDT studies can overwhelm with sometimes seemingly fractured snapshots of the attrition problem, use of the SDT lens can assist in bringing the picture into sharper focus. One final example may serve to underscore the distinction between a non-SDT and SDT view. Several studies reviewed in this chapter have discussed the role of teacher pre-service and professional training as it impacts teacher attrition (Luneta, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kaplan, 2013). An SDT view would agree that teacher participation in training is important (Jansen in de Wal et al., 2014). However, it is the teachers who are autonomously motivated toward training who will be apt to participate, and it is the teachers who are autonomously motivated toward putting the training into actual use who will be apt to do so (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014).

Understudied Areas

Although the extent and cost of the teacher attrition issue as well as the factors both contributing to and alleviating the issue have been addressed in the literature to varying degrees, several areas pertinent to my study appear to be empirically understudied. For example, attrition rates and factors associated with attrition in K-12 educators in urban areas have been explored (Huisman et al., 2010; Patterson & Silverman, 2013; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Smith & Smith, 2009), but there is a deficiency of information in the literature about those teaching in Christian
K-12 urban schools. Linked to this specific group is a potential for additional stressors associated with the dual role of serving as both educator and discipler in the Christian faith. While the presence of additional stress seems logical, studies are lacking that would indicate confirmation or refutation of this assumption. Similarly, the potential impact of faith and calling on the motivation and persistence of teachers in Christian K-12 urban educational ministry has yet to be explored.

A teacher serving in Christian education has a dual, overlapping role as both an educator and as a discipler of children in the Christian faith, as many Christian educators agree that “the education of children and youth must have as its primary goals the salvation and discipleship of the next generation” (Schultz, 2002, p. 159). This dual role produces similarities between a teacher in this setting and a pastor (Yount, 1999). Studies of pastor attrition in the literature (Edie, 2012; Innstrand et al., 2011; Joynt & Dreyer, 2013; Lee, 2010; Trihub et al., 2010) may therefore provide an avenue for additional insight.

In research studies of pastors who have left their churches, factors similar to those contributing to teacher attrition have been noted. These factors included, for example, inadequate preparation for ministry, a poor relationship with a mentor, and incompetent leadership (Joynt & Dreyer, 2013). Also noted as issues faced by pastors at risk of or having already left their congregations were high levels of stress (Joynt & Dreyer, 2013; Trihub et al., 2010), and burnout (Lee, 2010; Trihub et al., 2010). Interestingly, all of these factors have been observed in the studies on teacher attrition reviewed earlier in this chapter. Two factors also mentioned by pastors in the Joynt and Dreyer (2013) study were a lack of being appreciated, and a lack of being affirmed. Although these were not directly mentioned in the teacher attrition
studies above, they can perhaps be seen to be analogous to the sense of isolation experienced by teachers in the 2009 study by Fantilli and McDougall.

Teachers, even those who consider themselves called to educational ministry, do not carry the same degree of responsibility as is given by church governance to pastors who lead their congregations (L. Spaulding, personal communication, September 25, 2014). However, in comparing the attrition literature between teachers and pastors, the similarities appear to be more than coincidental. Perhaps these analogous features are tied to the sense of calling presumably shared by teachers to their students and ministers to their congregations. Because this area has yet to be fully studied, it is possible that the supposition of a dual role carrying a higher stress load for those in an educational ministry may not be supported. Further research may conceivably indicate that teachers of urban K-12 Christian education consider themselves better equipped to persist in their calling due to their dual role as educators and disciplers.

**Filling the Gap**

Research studies examining the issues faced specifically by teachers of K-12 urban Christian education are notable for their absence in the literature. Challenges that impact all teachers, including this special group, are certainly well-represented in the literature, especially those pertaining to stress and burnout (Yariv, 2011), sub-par pre-service and novice teacher training (Lunetta, 2010), urban educational blight (Finnigan & Daly, 2012; Ronfeldt et al., 2013), and discipline issues (Smith & Smith, 2009).

Similarly, bright spots in the literature impact all teachers, including this special group. As discussed above, new teachers may benefit from well-designed professional development (Lambson, 2010; Lunetta, 2010), a supportive principal (Brown & Wynn, 2009), an environment that purposefully promotes a resilience-building process (Doney, 2013) and an intentionally
autonomy-supporting environment (Wilkesmann & Schmid, 2014). Yet despite these many studies swirling all around the teachers of K-12 urban Christian education, this group sits in the eye of the surrounding hurricane, relatively untouched by empirical research studies.

My study aimed at the eye of the proverbial hurricane. Urban schools serving low SES, minority students and small, private, religious schools have already been associated with the highest rates of teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005); this phenomenological study particularly focused on the lived experiences of those teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education. An exploration of challenges present and challenges overcome in this particular group will contribute to a greater understanding and new insights to benefit them and those that prepare, hire, train, mentor, develop, and support them. Further, this study may be of benefit to the larger fields of public urban and public general education.

Summary

This chapter investigated four areas pertinent to the current research, including (a) the theoretical framework, (b) the current literature, (c) the missing links in understudied areas, and (d) the identification of the gap in the literature. Each of the four areas is briefly summarized here, with a final statement regarding the practical value of and need for my study.

The theoretical framework chosen to scaffold this research is the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 2000, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The constructs of this theory concerning motivation, intrinsic goals, and contextual supports to autonomy and self-determination dovetail with the research sub-questions. Discovering the type of motivation, quality of goals, and specific environmental supports of teachers who persist in K-12 urban Christian education provide an avenue toward understanding and describing this distinctive group.
The review of current literature attempted to provide a picture of the research from the widest possible angle to the most specific: The problem of teacher turnover in America → the problem of teacher turnover in America’s urban areas → the problem of teacher turnover in urban K-12 Christian schools. However, despite review of the studies investigating visible and hidden costs, factors contributing to turnover, and factors alleviating turnover, the picture provided by the literature remains incomplete. The most specific angle, the problem of teacher turnover in urban K-12 Christian schools, was barely touched by the review of literature. This understudied aspect of the problem is the missing final link in the chain - the identified gap in the literature.

Through enhanced understanding of the lived experiences of those who persist in urban K-12 Christian education, this study endeavored to provide practical value in real-world improvements to teacher support. If gains can be made for this group of teachers at highest risk for leaving their profession too soon (Ingersoll, 2001; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005), perhaps bigger gains can be made for those at lower risk. Those who may benefit from any contribution made in the area of teacher retention include not only the teachers who have invested such a large portion of their time, financial resources, energies, and emotions in preparing to become educators, but also their administrators, their students, and their communities. The case for the need for this study hinges on the utility of its gleaned insights in addressing the pervasive and severe teacher attrition problem in America.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of teachers who persisted in urban K-12 Christian education at five Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) schools located in the northeastern, mideastern, midwestern, and southeastern United States. Chapter Three outlines the methodology through which the study’s purpose was met, beginning with a discussion of the design of the study and statement of the research questions. Next, sites, participants, and procedures are described, as is the role of the researcher. The four instruments for data collection and the system for data analysis are then detailed. Finally, the chapter concludes with the procedures used to establish trustworthiness and address ethical considerations.

Design

A transcendental phenomenological design was utilized in this qualitative research study. Husserl has been credited with providing the philosophical foundations for transcendental descriptive phenomenology (Gill, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Perry, 2013; Silverman, 1980). Husserl’s phenomenological method was proposed “as a way of considering features of the world according to their manner of appearance (as phenomena) for an inquiring consciousness” (Silverman, 1980, p. 704). Moustakas (1994) recognized Husserl as a “pioneer” (p. 25). He expanded on Husserl’s phenomenological thinking, and stated,

The challenge facing the human science researcher is to describe things in themselves, to permit what is before one to enter consciousness and be understood in its meanings and essences . . . . The process involves a blending of what is really present with what is
imagined as present from the vantage point of possible meanings; thus a unity of the real and the ideal. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 27).

A number of phenomenological methodologies in addition to transcendental phenomenology have been developed and used in qualitative research, including, for example, hermeneutical (van Manen, 1990) and transformative (Perry, 2013). The reasoning I used in choosing a qualitative research design based on transcendental phenomenology for the current study follows.

Because the purpose of this study was to better understand the lived experiences of a group who had all shared the phenomenon of teaching for approximately three or more years in an urban K-12 Christian school, the qualitative (answering how and why) and phenomenological (providing textural and structural descriptions leading to the essence of the experience) methodology was an apt fit (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Further, this phenomenological study followed a transcendental approach. Not only does transcendental phenomenology provide a clear system for data analysis, but it also recommends the process of bracketing out one’s own experiences as a researcher in order to view the phenomenon under study from a fresh viewpoint (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas (1994) used the term Epoche to describe the process of setting aside preconceived notions in order “to be completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated” (p. 22). As a teacher and principal of urban K-12 Christian education since 1998, I wished to put aside my preconceptions and undertake as unbiased a study of this phenomenon as possible. One consideration that led to the choice of transcendental (Moustakas, 1994) as opposed to hermeneutical (van Manen, 1990) was the concept of transcendental phenomenology’s focus on
description of lived experiences rather than hermeneutical phenomenology’s focus on their interpretation (Creswell, 2013). Principals do a great deal of interpreting as academic leaders, and the ability to do so often stands them in good stead. However, constant interpretation can lead to a certain deafness to what is actually being said. In this study, I wanted to put aside whatever interpretation I might have made in order to truly hear the voices of this unique group of teachers - and enable those voices to be heard by others.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study included one overarching question and three sub-questions as follows:

**Central Research Question**

*What are the lived experiences of teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?*

**Research Sub-question One**

*What is the source of motivation for teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?*

**Research Sub-question Two**

*What is the role of intrinsic goals for teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?*

**Research Sub-question Three**

*What contextual or environmental supports do teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education perceive to be of value?*

Each of these questions is grounded in the theoretical and empirical literature reviewed.

**Sites**

Five sites were used in the northeastern, mideastern, midwestern, and southeastern United States. The sites were selected based on the delimitations set for this study. They were private (non-profit), urban (within population centers of 250,000 people or more), serving a population
in which 50% or more of the children qualified for free or reduced meals, offering education in at least a portion of the K-12 range, and Christian (providing an education based on biblical worldview, utilizing biblical principles as the foundation for theoretical and applied learning, and members of ACSI).

I delimited this study to sites in which 50% or more of their children qualified for free or reduced meals because this is a parameter used to identify schools serving families at or below poverty level. The National School Lunch Program (2013) reported, “Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals” (para. 5).

I further delimited this study to ACSI schools because of the potential for wide variations that exist among groups that consider themselves to be Christian. ACSI schools all share a common Statement of Faith (ACSI, 2012; see Appendix A); therefore, a measure of commonality exists between beliefs and the ways in which those beliefs are foundational to the educational ministry of the school. Additionally, schools that fit these criteria were chosen because they employed the specific group of teachers who have experienced the shared phenomenon at the center of this study (i.e., serving as educators in K-12 urban Christian schools for approximately three or more years). Pseudonyms were chosen by each participant to maintain confidentiality.

Information concerning the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced meals was sought from heads of schools during the site selection process to ensure a minimum of 50%. Heads of schools were also asked to verify their urban location, status as a private school
offering a Christian education within at least a portion of the K-12 range, and their membership with ACSI as part of the site selection process (see Appendix B).

Participants

A purposeful sample of participants for this research was drawn from each site’s population of teachers who shared the experience of teaching in an urban K-12 Christian school for a period of approximately three or more years. Purposeful sampling aims to obtain the richest information from those who have experienced the central phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix C), the snowball-type procedure (Patton, 2002) for finding this purposeful sample began with contacting the heads of schools at urban K-12 ACSI schools with information about the proposed study. Those heads of schools granting permission were asked to list all state licensed and/or ACSI certified (standard level or above) teachers with approximately three or more years of experience in the urban K-12 Christian school setting. This list served as the source of prospective participants.

After the heads of schools created the lists of the teachers fitting the study’s criteria, they sent emails asking for participation. The email (scripted by the investigator - see Appendix H) contained a short introduction of the researcher, a brief description of the research, and an invitation for the prospective participant to consider taking part in the study by clicking on a link to SurveyMonkey. The SurveyMonkey link included multiple sections, opening first with an informed consent for the initial questionnaire portion of the study (see Appendix I). Those prospective participants granting informed consent next completed the questionnaire (see Appendix T), which included a demographic survey, brief timeline of key life events, and the General Causality Orientation Scale (GCOS) instrument (Deci & Ryan, 1985a), described in the Data Collection section below. The purpose of the questionnaire’s demographics survey and
timeline was to obtain a general background of potential participants who fit the study’s criteria and to facilitate choosing a wide variety of participants from those available (i.e., gender, ethnicity, age, grade level taught, subjects taught, level of education, years of experience beyond three). The purpose of the GCOS (Deci & Ryan, 1985a) was to further facilitate choosing participants who exhibited autonomous motivation, an orientation associated with long-term persistence according to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 2000, 2008; Ryan and Deci, 2008). The final SurveyMonkey questionnaire section inquired as to participant willingness and availability for an interview and focus group. Interested potential participants then completed the contact information portion of the questionnaire. Participants selected to continue to the interview and focus group portion of this study received a second informed consent to sign and return (see Appendix J) before the in-depth interview and focus group session.

To summarize the criteria for this study’s purposeful sample of participants, preferred teachers were those who were/had:

- Currently teaching in an urban K-12 ACSI Christian school
- Certified with ACSI at the level of standard or above and/or state licensed
- Approximately three or more years of experience teaching in urban K-12 Christian schools
- GCOS (Deci & Ryan, 1985a) score indicative of a generally higher autonomous motivation orientation than a controlling motivation orientation or amotivation
- Representing a demographic that varied from fellow participants
- Willingness and availability for interview and focus group participation

Fourteen participants were selected from the potential pool, a number within the phenomenological parameters of 5-25 participants discussed by Creswell (2013). An additional
pool of two participants was also identified as “in reserve” in the event they had been needed to reach thematic saturation. Thematic saturation was defined as the point at which participants had provided shared concepts and themes – along with descriptions and examples – and no new ground was being revealed (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The two “in reserve” participants were not needed, as thematic saturation was reached within the initial group of 14.

As noted above, this purposeful sample of participants was selected for maximum variation in age, gender, level of education, years of experience beyond three, ethnicity, content area, and grade level taught. The reason for seeking maximum variation among the participants was to enhance transferability of study findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each participant selected a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality throughout the research process. Table 1 indicates participant demographics, education and licensure, and school setting experience. Table 2 outlines specific participant experience within the urban K-12 Christian setting as well as GCOS scores.
Table 1

Participant Demographics, Education/Licensure, and School Setting Experience
(N = 14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Highest Degree</th>
<th>ACSI Certified Standard or Above</th>
<th>State Licensed</th>
<th>School Setting Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, S, P-r, P-s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, P-r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>U, P-r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, P-r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, P-r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, P-r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, P-r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, R, P-r, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, P-r, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, P-r, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, S, P-r, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, P-r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, P-r, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>U, P-r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. U = Urban; S = Suburban; R = Rural; P-r = Private Religious; P-s = Private Secular; P = Public. Dash – indicates answer skipped/omitted. Participants included 13 females and 1 male.
Table 2

Participant Experience in Urban Christian Education and GCOS Scores
(N = 14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Years Completed in UCE</th>
<th>Currently Employed in UCE</th>
<th>Current Subject(s) Taught</th>
<th>Current Grade Group</th>
<th>GCOS Autonomy Score</th>
<th>GCOS Controlling Score</th>
<th>GCOS Impersonal Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>SS/H, LA, B</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>SS, LA, M, B</td>
<td>K-2</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>S, PE, B</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>SPED</td>
<td>K-2, 3-4, 5-8</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>38*</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>SS/H, LA, M, S, B</td>
<td>K-2</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>R, Sp, M, LA, SS, S, B</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>73*</td>
<td>47*</td>
<td>30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>SS, LA, P, R, M, S, B</td>
<td>K-2</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>SPED, SPED LA</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>SPED S</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>SS, LA, M, S, B</td>
<td>K-2</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>SS, LA, M, S, B</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>5-8, 9-12</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. “Currently” and “current” refer to the time of data collection. UCE = Urban Christian Education; SS = Social Studies; H = History; LA = Language Arts; M = Math; S = Science; Sp = Spelling; P = Phonics; PE = Physical Education; R = Reading; B = Bible; SPED = Special Education. Asterisk * indicates one skipped/omitted question. GCOS scores per category: Maximum = 84, minimum = 7.
Thirteen of fourteen participants held state licensure. One participant had completed all state licensure requirements but had not submitted them at the time of data collection. This participant was ACSI certified at the level of standard or above (see Table 1). ACSI certification at the standard level and above (e.g., professional, lifetime) is comparable in academic requirements to licensure in states such as the Commonwealth of Virginia with some variations. ACSI secondary teacher certification (ACSI, 2012; see Appendix D), for example, calls for biblical studies courses (ACSI, n.d.; see Appendix E) and philosophy of Christian education (ACSI, 2013; see Appendix F) not required by the commonwealth, whereas the Commonwealth of Virginia asks for a level of technology competence (Virginia Department of Education, 2012; see Appendix G) not specified in ACSI requirements. In general, teachers in ACSI accredited schools who are ACSI certified may also already hold or be eligible for state licensure; teachers with state licensure who come to teach full time in an ACSI accredited school are asked to obtain ACSI certification. For this study, it was important to purposefully select ACSI certified and/or licensed participants to ensure that participant “persistence” was unlikely to be due to lack of qualifications for teaching positions in settings other than urban K-12 Christian education. The time frame of approximately three or more years of service in the urban K-12 Christian education setting for participants was used as an indicator of persistence despite exposure over time to the challenges endemic to this setting.

**Procedures**

The procedures for this study’s methodology progressed through a series of phases. In Phase 1, I obtained a general preliminary approval from the heads of school at the five potential sites. Also during this phase, I completed the IRB documents and requested approval for research. In Phase 2, after receiving IRB approval, I began the participant sampling process in
concert with the site gatekeepers (heads of schools) as described in the Participants section above. The demographic/timeline and GCOS (Deci & Ryan, 1985a) were included in the sampling process as initial data collection instruments (described in the Data Collection section). These instruments facilitated participant selection and provided descriptive data on participants. Phase 3 consisted of in-person interviews (Moustakas, 1994) and focus groups (Patton, 2002) at each of the sites, with audio and video recordings of each of these sessions. Creswell (2013) recommended the use of audiotaping for individual interviews and focus groups, and Patton (2002) noted an increasing and beneficial role of video in qualitative data collection. The video element provided an added dimension, as it allowed for observation of an interviewee’s facial expressions and body language while responding to questions. Video recordings also served as backup in the event of audio equipment malfunction and vice versa. The purpose of the interviews and focus groups was to obtain descriptions of each participant’s experiences (Patton, 2002) used in the data analysis phase. From this collected data emerged the themes and essence of the phenomenon. During Phase 4, Moustakas’ (1994) data analysis system was utilized. Data analysis ultimately led to this study’s findings, discussion, and conclusions.

The Researcher's Role

Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered the qualitative researcher to be a “human instrument” because, in part, “all instruments interact with respondents and objects but . . . only the human instrument is capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of that differential interaction” (p. 39). My role was to serve in the “human instrument” capacity. As an educator working in an urban K-12 Christian environment, it was important for me to understand that I brought biases and assumptions to this study. It has been challenging to pour heart and soul into training novice teachers who come to work in the urban educational mission field, only to have
them leave after one or two years. However, through interviewing those I had not previously met and putting aside my own preconceptions, I endeavored to see and hear in a novel way. The term Epoche was used by Moustakas (1994) as a process for dealing with preconceptions; he defined Epoche as “setting aside prejudgments and opening the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence” (p. 180). Prior to meeting with participants, I took time for reflection, journaling, and prayer. I made a conscious effort to put aside my own experiences, any expectations of what each participant would say, and how I would respond. Because I performed the analysis of data myself rather than employ a computer program to do so, I utilized member checking, a peer reviewer, and an external auditor to assist in pointing out any slanting of which I may have been unaware.

**Data Collection**

Prior to the collection of any data, IRB approval was sought and obtained (see Appendix C). The gatekeepers at each of the five sites were also informed and their approval was sought and received before contacting teachers and beginning data collection. As is the case with qualitative methodology in general, and phenomenology in particular (Moustakas, 1994), the major method of data collection was through interviews. Three additional methods of data collection were also used, including demographics/timelines, the General Causality Orientations Scale (Deci & Ryan, 1985a), and focus groups. These instruments and their specific purposes will be described in the order the participants received them.

**Demographics/Timeline**

Once the IRB and the gatekeepers granted permissions and access to the teachers who would be potential participants, those who met the sample criteria received an email (see Appendix H). As discussed in the participant section above, the email contained a short
introduction of the researcher, a brief description of the research, and an invitation for the prospective participant to consider taking part in the study by clicking on a link to SurveyMonkey. The SurveyMonkey link included multiple sections, opening first with an informed consent for the questionnaire portion of the study (see Appendix I). Those prospective participants granting informed consent next completed the questionnaire (see Appendix T), which included a demographic survey and brief timeline of key life events, and the General Causality Orientation Scale (GCOS) instrument (Deci & Ryan, 1985a), which is described below. The purpose of the questionnaire’s demographics survey and timeline was to obtain a general background of potential participants who fit the study’s criteria and to facilitate choosing a wide variety of participants from those available (i.e., gender, ethnicity, age, grade level taught, subjects taught, level of education, years of experience beyond the required three).

**General Causality Orientations Scale (GCOS)**

Prospective participants took the GCOS as part of the initial SurveyMonkey questionnaire (see Appendix T). This instrument, developed by Deci and Ryan (1985a), could be completed by potential participants in approximately 15 minutes and provided an assessment of motivation orientations. The GCOS presented 12 scenarios, offering 36 possible categories of responses. For each response category, participants rated the likelihood of responding in the described manner on a Likert-like scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely). The resulting data was compared to a response key that indicated the respondent’s general orientation to motivation as autonomous, controlling, or impersonal (Deci & Ryan, 1985a). I obtained permission (see Appendix K) to use this instrument for non-profit research through completion of the Self-Determination Theory website registration process. Deci and Ryan’s (1985b) research with data from 636 participants indicated reliability and validity for the GCOS. In my
study, the purposes of this instrument were to gain a general sense of potential participants’ orientations to motivation, better inform participant selection, fine-tune interview questions, and add to a richer depiction of each participant.

**Interviews**

Those participants selected from their responses to the demographics/timeline/GCOS and through providing their signatures on the second informed consent (see Appendix J) then went on to an in-depth interview. Interviews were recorded and videotaped with the prior permission of the participants, and I also took notes during the interviews. Patton (2002) noted an increasing and beneficial role of video in qualitative data collection. Observing body language can facilitate thicker, richer descriptions and contribute to a solid analysis of data.

I did not write exhaustive notes because I wished to be attentive to the participants during our time together. Interviews were semi-structured, in that an interview guide (see Table 3) was used. However, the questions were open-ended and follow up questions varied based on the particular responses of each individual (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The purpose of the interviews was to obtain descriptions of the participants’ experiences as educators who have persisted in urban K-12 Christian schools.
Table 3

*Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Background Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Please share a little about yourself – where you grew up, your family, your background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What kind of education did you have (i.e., elementary through college)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How did you come to your current position at this school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences as a Teacher in an Urban K-12 Christian School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How would you describe what it means to be a teacher in an urban K-12 Christian school? (As a teacher, discipler, colleague, partner with parents, partner with pastors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How would you describe what a teacher in an urban K-12 Christian school does? (In the classroom, outside of the classroom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How would you describe what is challenging about being a teacher in an urban K-12 Christian school? (Follow-up questions pursued elaboration/additional insights)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How would you describe what is simple about being a teacher in an urban K-12 Christian school? (Follow-up questions pursued elaboration/additional insights)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How would you describe your motivation for teaching for _______ (length of service) in a Christian school? An urban school? (Sources of motivation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How would you describe your goals as they relate to teaching for _______ (length of service) in an urban K-12 Christian school? For the future? (intrinsic vs. extrinsic goals as associated with long-term persistence vs. short-term persistence)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. How would you describe what you consider to be essential supports to your motivation teaching for ______ (length of service) in an urban K-12 Christian school? (Spiritual, emotional, academic, physical, mental, cultural, contextual, environmental, autonomy-supporting)

11. How would you describe what you consider to be essential supports toward your goals as they relate to teaching for ______ (length of service) in an urban K-12 Christian school? (Spiritual, emotional, academic, physical, mental, cultural, contextual, environmental, autonomy-supporting)

Parenthetical notes (Questions 2, 4, 5, 8-11) served as cues for the interviewer during response follow up rather than itemized formal questions. The purpose of the general background Questions 1-3 was to provide a sense of ease (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), to “invite the interviewee to open up and talk” (Creswell, 2013, p. 164), and to gain a sense of the participant’s personality, background, and dispositions about education. Questions 4-7 aimed to explore the participant’s experiences of the research phenomenon without “leading” the participant to answer in a specific direction (Moustakas, 1994). Questions 8-11 probed the constructs of motivation, intrinsic goals contributing to persistence, and ideas about contextual and environmental supports to those constructs. Self-Determination Theory has proposed that source of motivation has an integral role in sustaining the “mindfulness, . . . energy, . . . and vitality” that facilitate persistence in the activities that matter to a person (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 184).

As means of providing trustworthiness for this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), member checks of transcribed interviews were sought via email to allow participants the opportunity to confirm, amend, add further details, and/or clarify their intended communication. Several of the
participants responded to this opportunity, primarily filling in passages in which original answers were unintelligible and providing correct spelling.

**Focus Groups**

Two to five participants were interviewed in each of the five sites. Following the completion of the interviews at each location, a focus group was be held for all of the participants at that site. All one-on-one interviewees also participated in their location’s focus group. Patton (2002) noted focus groups as a means to obtain valuable data about a phenomenon because “the extent to which there is a relatively consistent, shared view or great diversity of views can be quickly assessed” (p. 386). As in the case of the interviews, focus groups were audio and video recorded with the prior permission of the participants, and I also took notes during the interviews. As the focus group facilitator, I did not intend to write extensive notes; rather, I wished to be attentive to the participants during the focus group time. Focus groups were semi-structured, in that a question guide (see Table 4) was used. However, as in the case of individual interviews, the questions were open-ended and follow-up questions varied based on the particular responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As an additional means of providing trustworthiness for this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), member checks of focus group transcriptions were sought to allow participants the opportunity to confirm, amend, and/or clarify their intended communication. This was done through email of the focus group transcripts at the same time the interview transcripts were sent, as described in the interviews section above. One participant responded to the opportunity for focus group member checking, requesting one alteration in a quoted passage to provide more gracious phrasing of content.
Table 4

*Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What essential advice would you offer to the college or university education programs that prepare pre-service teachers? (Urban settings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Why? (Follow up to Question 1, plus how would this advice assist in teacher motivation, intrinsic goal framing, and/or contextual/environmental supports?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What essential advice would you offer to first time teachers entering urban K-12 Christian schools?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Why? (Follow up to Question 3, plus how would this advice assist in teacher motivation, intrinsic goal framing, and/or contextual/environmental supports?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What essential advice would you offer to administrators of urban K-12 Christian schools?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Why? (Follow up to Question 5, plus how would this advice assist in teacher motivation, intrinsic goal framing, and/or contextual/environmental supports?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the same literature support as individual interview questions, the focus group questions were an alternate way to explore descriptions of the lived experiences of urban K-12 Christian school teachers. The purpose was to provide a group setting in which all participants had an opportunity to expand on their experiences and synergistically interact with others who have experienced the phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

The primary goal was to conduct face-to-face interviews and focus groups with participants until thematic saturation was reached, and this occurred during the final site visit. In
the event thematic saturation had not been reached during the site visits, two additional prospective participants were identified. These prospective participants could not meet for face-to-face interviews, but were willing to participate if needed through an e-conferencing method (e.g., Skype). This alternative plan was slated to utilize the identical interview guide questions, focus guide questions, and audio/video recording methods following participant informed consent (see Appendix J) as those used in the face-to-face sessions.

Ongoing study of the literature prior to the proposal defense continued to inform, fine-tune, and anchor both interview and focus group questions. In addition, two educators reviewed the questions and provided feedback. Once IRB approval to collect data had been obtained, a pilot study was conducted to test the demographics/timeline, GCOS, interview questions, and focus group questions for further needed refinements (see Appendices M, N, O, T). Participants for the pilot study were sought from the urban K-12 Christian school in which I served at the time of this study, and were asked to sign informed consent letters. Data from the pilot study was not used as part of the larger research study.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis process began even while data collection was taking place. For example, an examination of the demographic/timeline information and the GCOS offered opportunity to make reflexive notes and be vigilant for potential areas of bias and pre-conceptions (see Appendix P). While it is not possible for a researcher to completely remove herself or himself from the research, I attempted to bracket out the notions I had coming in to this study. I was also alert for thematic saturation during the data collection stage by transcribing interviews and scanning them for recurring ideas and themes (Moustakas, 1994). Data from each
instrument was analyzed, noted below in the same order as the instruments appear in the Data Collection section.

**Demographics/Timeline**

Demographics/timeline data was analyzed to obtain descriptive data from each of the prospective participants. This data, including gender, ethnicity, age, education, years of experience in teaching in Christian education, years of experience teaching in urban education, certification/licensure, grade levels, and subjects taught, was used as an aid in participant selection to assure a maximum variation sampling (see Table 1 and Table 2 in Chapter 3). Further, it was used to develop participant portraits for each individual participant.

**General Causality Orientations Scale**

The prospective participant responses to the GCOS were examined to obtain additional descriptive data indicative of autonomous, controlling, or impersonal orientations to motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985a). This information was used as an aid in participant selection, because SDT hypothesizes - with much empirical support - that only autonomous motivation orientations are associated with both short-term and long-term persistence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Therefore, the purposeful sample included those with an autonomous motivation orientation as indicated by the GCOS (see Table 2 in Chapter 3). The GCOS results are given as three numerical values, one for each motivation type. For example, a person scoring a 58 in autonomous motivation, a 30 in controlled motivation, and a 12 in impersonal motivation would generally have an autonomously motivated orientation to many life situations (Deci & Ryan, 1985a).

Not only was the GCOS useful in selecting a purposeful sample, but also this information further contributed to data analysis as a point of triangulation. Triangulation is a process that utilizes corroboration of data from multiple sources in support of evidence (Creswell, 2013). In
this study, the GCOS results indicated an autonomous orientation for each participant, an indication upheld by (a) interview and focus group responses pertaining to autonomous motivation, intrinsic goal-framing, and long-term persistence; (b) survey and timeline data confirmation of long-term persistence associated with autonomy; and (c) emergent themes, particularly those associated with problem-solving, motivation, goals, and persistence (see Themes, Chapter 4).

**Interviews and Focus Groups**

For data analysis of interviews and focus groups, Moustakas’ (1994) procedures were used. I personally transcribed the data obtained (see Appendix Q for excerpts). Beginning with obtaining and transcribing verbatim data, I followed Moustakas’s (1994) prescribed system for the analysis of transcendental phenomenological data:

1. Using a phenomenological approach, obtain a full description of [the] experience of the phenomenon.

2. From the verbatim transcript of [the] experience complete the following steps:
   a) Consider each statement with respect to significance for description of the experience.
   b) Record all relevant statements.
   c) List each nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statement. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience.
   d) Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes.
   e) Synthesize the invariant meaning units and themes into a *description of the textures of the experience*. Include verbatim examples.
   f) Reflect on your own textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct a *description of the structures of your experience*. 
g) Construct a *textural-structural description* of the meanings and essences of your experience.

3. From the verbatim transcript of the experience of *each* of the other *co-researchers*, complete the above steps, a) through g).

4. From the individual textural-structural descriptions of all co-researchers’ experiences, construct a *composite textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience*, integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole. (p. 122)

To assist in assigning and organizing the interview/focus group invariant horizons into codes, the Atlas Ti computer program was utilized (see Appendix R). Each set of data from the demographics/timeline, GCOS, interviews, and focus groups was analyzed separately, in part for the purposes of triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, because each data set was also synthesized into a compilation of thick, rich descriptions of the participants’ lived experiences as teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education, the essence of this shared, lived experience (Moustakas, 1994) emerged. As noted above, member checks were sought once again at this point (see Appendix L), contributing to the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the findings.

**Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of a qualitative study “is tied directly to the trustworthiness of the person who collects and analyzes the data – and his or her demonstrated competence. Competence is demonstrated by using the verification and validation procedures necessary to establish the quality of analysis” (Patton, 2002, p. 570). A trustworthy study includes methods to increase credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.
The research study addressed credibility (i.e., internal validity; the extent to which findings accurately describe reality) through triangulation of multiple data sources, including demographics, timeline, GCOS, interviews, and focus groups, as well as through member checks of the transcribed interviews, focus groups, and a summary of findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) commended the member check as a way to “obtain confirmation that the report has captured the data as constructed by the informants, or to correct, amend, or extend it, that is, to establish the credibility of the case” (p. 236). Expert review (see Appendix O) and peer review also contributed to credibility of this study. The peer reviewer was head of an urban K-12 Christian school with no connection to the research sites or participants in this study.

Transferability (i.e., external validity; generalizability) was addressed through the use of data offering a depth of description, enabling others to determine how applicable this study’s context will be to the context of other situations. Lincoln and Guba (1982) stated that transferability in qualitative studies is possible under circumstances in which “enough ‘thick description’ is available . . . to make a reasoned judgment about the degree of transferability possible” (p. 247). Maximum variation in the participant sample was also used, as it “increases the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives” (Creswell, 2013, p. 157).

Dependability (i.e., consistency; reliability) and confirmability (i.e., minimization of researcher bias) was delivered through the use of audit trails (see Appendix P) and an external auditor. For the purpose of this research, an audit trail is defined as “a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings” (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, para. 1). The external auditor was the founder of an urban
K-12 Christian school with over 27 years of experience in this field, but with no connection to the research sites or participants in this study.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical issues are a primary consideration in research involving human participants. During the course of a research study, there are at least six points at which ethical concerns must be addressed, including prior to the study, at the beginning of the study, during data collection, while analyzing data, when data is reported, and when the study is published (Creswell, 2013, pp. 58-59).

Before beginning any data collection for this research study, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and the site schools administrators’ approvals was sought and obtained. When getting underway, participants were given the true purpose of the study and their informed consent was obtained. Participants were teachers over whom I had no authority or influence. All of the participants in the study chose code names (pseudonyms) to protect their confidentiality. Digital data was stored in a password-protected computer and all hard copy files were housed in a locked file cabinet. In accordance with federal regulations, data will be retained for at least three years following the completion of the research (Liberty University IRB, n.d.).

Additionally, the purpose and time frame of researcher-participant interactions were presented to participants from the start of the study. Through providing clarity on these points, withdrawal from these interactions at the conclusion of the study did not come as a surprise (i.e., participants were debriefed from the beginning of the study onward).

**Summary**

This chapter has outlined the methods used for this study. Research utilized a transcendental phenomenological design. Data collection was predominantly through participant
interviews, and data analysis followed Moustaka’s (1994) method for obtaining textural and structural descriptions that coalesced into an essence of the lived experiences of teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education. Attention to elements such as triangulation, peer review, member checking and the use of an external auditor assisted in establishing the trustworthiness of the study. Finally, and most importantly, it was my desire and intent to follow established IRB protocols while conducting each phase of this research in an ethical manner.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter begins with a review of the purpose of the study and the research questions. Participant profiles then introduce each of those who completed the survey, GCOS, interview, and focus group. Using a narrative format, the findings generated by data analysis of the GCOS, interview data, and focus group data are presented in two modes. First, themes resulting from analysis of data are presented. The second mode in which data analysis results are given is as explicit answers to the research questions. Throughout the presentation of findings, the voices of the participants are utilized to provide the rich, evocative descriptions that are the mark of the qualitative phenomenological methodology. A summary of findings concludes this chapter and includes the composite textural, structural, and essence descriptions of the participants’ experience as teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education at five Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) schools located in the northeastern, mideastern, midwestern, and southeastern United States. One question provided the central focus for the study, with three sub-questions designed to provide greater illumination in answering the primary one.

Central Research Question

*What are the lived experiences of teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?*
Research Sub-question One

*What is the source of motivation for teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?*

Research Sub-question Two

*What is the role of intrinsic goals for teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?*

Research Sub-question Three

*What contextual or environmental supports do teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education perceive to be of value?*

The study’s purpose informed the development of the research questions. In a similar manner, the analysis of the data was undertaken within the framework and context provided by the research questions. The analysis results in this chapter can be examined from complementary perspectives of a thematic view and a presentation of answers to research questions.

**Participants**

Each of the 14 participants in this study had taught in urban Christian K-12 schools for three years or more and had state teaching certification and/or ACSI teaching certification. One of the participants had just completed her third year, and one was just completing her 15th year in the urban Christian setting. In Chapter 3, the demographic information on the participants is given in Table 1.

The participants possessed a variety of characteristics with regard to age, ethnicity, grade levels taught, content taught, areas of the country in which they resided, experience in public education, and number of years of service represented. One participant was male; 13 were female. One participant had just completed her 39th year as an educator, having come to the
Christian school in which she was currently working after retiring from 30 years in an urban public school setting.

Despite these diverse characteristics, participants shared significant commonalities. Interview data and survey results indicated each participant considered himself or herself to be a person of faith in God and a person called by Him to teach. While sharing their stories, all of the participants except for one mentioned growing up in a family in which going to church was a regular part of their upbringing. A brief portrait of each participant listed alphabetically by pseudonym is presented below. Each participant chose his or her own pseudonym, and personal information has been minimized to maintain anonymity. It should be noted that participants often used conversational spacers (e.g., um, like, you know) in the course of the interviews and focus groups. Most spacers have not been included in the actual quotes to increase readability.

**Amanda**

At the time of the interview, Amanda had completed her third year of teaching. Her first year, she taught pre-kindergarten in an urban Catholic school, then moved to her current position where she had taught 1st grade for the past two years. In sharing her story, she offered insight into her path toward becoming a teacher, beginning with her upbringing as a pastor’s kid.

My parents, since my dad was a pastor, I did a lot of nursery work and babysitting. He’s a church planter, so we had small churches and usually a lot of kids, and not too many adults that were excited about running the nursery. So that’s how I ended up figuring out that I had a gift with children. And I continued to enjoy them more, and I worked as a camp counselor as well, which, still a different setting than teaching, but it continued to instill the desire to work with kids in me.
Blue

Blue was a second grade teacher, and especially loved working with this age group because it gave her the opportunity to lay a strong foundation in a child’s life. A pivotal moment in Blue’s childhood occurred on her first day of school. Her teacher said, “Welcome to your home away from home!” From that moment, she wanted to become a teacher. Years later, she welcomed her own students with the same greeting. Blue believed her students would thrive in an ordered classroom.

Children love structure. They love to know that things are organized and, you know, they’re like, they’re tiny humans . . . But they like to be as organized as we do. So if we’re chaotic, then they’re chaotic, and then they’re uncomfortable. So I try to stay organized, and I try to show them, like the other day I cleaned off my desk, and they’re like, “Miss [Blue]! You cleaned off your desk very quick!” “Yeah, I like to stay organized.”

Bugs

Bugs had taught in Christian schools for all of her 30-year teaching career. Bugs loved science and math, and entered college as a geology major. However, she realized opportunities for a career in geology were limited in her geographical area, took some education courses, and loved them. In the position held at the time of her interview, she taught high school mathematics and described herself as a “no nonsense” teacher. Her gusto for math carried into her desires for her high school students. She noted,

My goal is just to keep on going and hope that I make a difference in these kids’ lives, that they get enough mathematical background they can do well in college. My goal is to prepare them for life, and math is a big part of life whether they want to believe it or not.
Carol

After earning a degree in English and working for a non-profit, a close friend asked Carol to consider a teaching aide position. She accepted, opening the door to quickly taking on her own classroom and becoming certified to teach 7th-12th grades Language Arts. At the time of the interview, Carol taught high school Language Arts, and used words such as “inspiring” in describing her experiences.

I liked inspiring students to look at things in new ways, and that’s something really easy to do with Language Arts, especially when we get into novels. Here we have a Christian worldview – when I worked in the other school, we did not have that. But it was easy to sprinkle it in. So it’s a lot of fun to do that. It’s fun to watch them make connections that they hadn’t made before, and to increase, of course, in their comprehension and fluency. I enjoy that as well, but I really like when they learn about their own lives while sitting in a safe environment.

Chris

Chris had been an urban Christian school educator for 22 years. At the time of her interview, she was teaching middle school science and Bible as well as coaching volleyball and basketball. While majoring in pre-medicine in college, Chris taught swimming lessons. She recognized an ability to teach during this experience.

Along the way I had started teaching swimming lessons. And I found out that I just loved it. I looked forward to teaching, and I realized I was good at it. And I would look around at other people as they were teaching, I’m like, “Oh, they should do this, they should really try this with the kids, ‘cause this would work better.” And as a teacher, when you have the gift of teaching, I found since then – I didn’t know at the time, but since I’ve
learned more about the gifts, I realize that you just naturally move into a teaching position.

**Giselle**

Giselle’s early education in a densely populated urban area was a cycle of upheaval as teacher after teacher left within weeks of arrival. When her family moved out of the city, her new 6th grade teacher quickly discovered Giselle did not know basic terms such as *noun* or *verb*. Her younger sibling’s new 2nd grade teacher recognized a previously undiagnosed hearing impairment in Giselle’s sister. In this fresh setting, Giselle began to make up lost ground, but her experiences made a lasting impact.

[The dean of my college education program] said, “I want you guys to think about your best teacher . . . your worst teacher, and why you went into this profession.” And I was like, “Why did I go?” And everybody in the room were like, “Oh, I had the best teacher,” whatever, and I was like, “Wow, I can’t even say that.” And so I told the dean, I said, “I’m the opposite of all of you. I had a horrible schooling that I don’t want any kid to ever go through what I went through. And that’s why I’m doing what I’m doing.”

**Gmom**

With 30 years of experience as an educator, Gmom was a veteran problem solver. She continually looked for ways to make concepts clear to the first graders she taught. If one strategy did not bring adequate student understanding, she would search for – or invent – another, often getting up in the middle of the night to record ideas. She felt she had a dual role as an educator in a Christian school, intertwining the biblical with the pedagogical. Gmom used many word pictures as she explained her thought process during the interview and focus groups, such as in the following description of sharing biblical principles with her children.
When seeds are planted, sometimes we don’t know when they’re going to sprout. And I feel that if I can instill some Godly principles, later on in life, when it’s watered by another teacher, then those seeds can bloom. But they at least had a start somewhere.

LaToya

LaToya grew up in an urban area and personally experienced the racial integration of the schools she attended as a child. Although she left the area to attend college, she returned home to work in public school for many years before beginning her position as an elementary teacher in an urban Christian school. She had a vibrant sense of her teaching – both in public and private schools – as ministry. However, she noted a few distinctions.

I think urban Christian ministry as a whole is ministry in and of itself because you’re sowing into the lives of children, not only the importance of the educational side of it, but also the fact that I also have the opportunity to sow the Word of God into their lives. . . . I had to kind of bootleg the Gospel when I was in public school, but I always did it because that’s my, that’s who I am and I could not separate that, you know. And then when I came here, I just became, like I said, the Christian teacher in the Christian school where I didn’t have to bootleg the Gospel, whereas it was more – now just like I teach reading and math, I teach Bible as a subject. And, you know, I realize everyday how much I’ve grown, even from those opportunities to be in urban Christian ministry.

Leslie

When Leslie was three years old, she asked her preschool teacher to teach her to read. When she later became a teacher, Leslie realized the sacrifice in terms of time and creative planning it had been for the preschool teacher to honor her request. Thus began a life-long love
of the written word for Leslie, something she endeavored to pass on so her 3rd grade students could cherish it as well.

Leslie: . . . I want to instill that love of something so simple in my kids. I don’t push them to love what I love, but I feel like in society today, it’s almost like you’re taught not to enjoy the little things. Like if it’s not big and flashy and comes with a song and a dance.

Investigator: And expensive

Leslie: Yeah . . . it’s not something that should be valued. So I try to read to them as much as possible, and they - their little faces – that’s usually, I mean, that’s why I like teaching Language Arts and reading. To watch them, ‘cause they’re like, “Okay, we’re going to read!” And some of them will be like, “Okay.” But by the end of it, they’re just [enrapt] and I have to stop the chapter and they’re like, “Can we skip recess?” And I’m like, “No, you need to go to recess.” But that always made me happy to hear, that they just wanted to read a little more. ‘Cause I don’t think a lot of kids get read to anymore, and it’s so important.

Margie

Margie used the stories of her own life experiences to connect with and build relationships with her upper elementary students. When she was given the classic new teacher advice to avoid smiling and laughing with her students, she immediately discarded that advice. Margie smiled, she laughed, and yet her children knew clearly when it was time to buckle down and get the job at hand done. Margie considered her role as teacher to have many aspects in common with the role of pastor. She constantly prayed for her children, treated each as a unique individual, exercised discernment, dealt with their families, listened, and guided.
Sometimes, all people want is just a listening ear. And sometimes, you know, I’ve got so much stuff to do myself, but God’s just like, “No, just listen,” and just more so guiding them on how to think as a Christian, too. Like, “What does God feel about this,” or, “Okay, is this giving God glory? Is this helping the Kingdom?” . . . . We were just talking about our heart. Even as a pastor, you have to kind of help them to learn how to deal with the issues of their heart.

**Maria**

Maria began her career in urban Christian education, moved to public education, and then returned to an urban Christian school to teach 2nd grade. She enjoyed being creative and providing an atmosphere in which she and her students had fun learning. Maria was hired to fill an opening at her current Christian school only one week before school started, with her own children already slated to attend public school. However, that plan was quickly rewritten.

I wasn’t planning on changing my kids that week, the week before school – they looked around this school, they started getting to know the kids, because the week before school, there was activity going on. Kids were here and there, showing them around, and my son comes to me and says, “Mom, can we go to this school?” And I said, “It’s the week before school! No, we can’t do that! We’ll try it out, I’ll be here for a year, and then maybe next year.” And he said, “But do the teachers [here] pray with their students?” And I said, “Yes.” And he said, “I want to try that.” So I pulled them from [public] schools that very day and enrolled them here. . . . they’re thriving here.

**Marsue**

Marsue’s public sector teaching career spanned 30 years of working with special needs children, ages preschool through teenagers. Coming out of retirement to work in Christian
education, she has served as teacher and administrator, and at the time of the interview, oversaw special needs children in Grades K-6. She eloquently portrayed her love for special needs children.

Marsue: Many, many people don’t see especially with the special needs kids or those who don’t have much, they don’t see the neediness there. They can’t get beyond the dirt, the grime, the home life, the back talk and the mouthy – they can’t get beyond that. When you can get beyond that and really see the child, then you’re good.

Investigator: How do you do that? I mean, how do you personally do that – get beyond that?

Marsue: I tell myself, “God loves them, and I have to love them, too.” I wasn’t always lovable. I wasn’t always – but God still loved me. And when He sees worth and value in the child, I have to look for it, too. Sometimes you have to look deeper, but you have to look for the worth of a child. You just have to.

Rocky

An ex-Marine, Rocky completed a career as a geologist before entering urban Christian education as a high school science teacher. A pivotal event in his teen-aged years radically opened his eyes to racial strife in his city. Years later, that event became an impetus to choosing to spend his retirement teaching rather than, as he related, beach combing for seashells. Because he was a combat veteran, the following description of his teaching role is especially weighty.

You know, this is the hardest work I’ve ever done in my life, and I’ve done a lot of things . . . . it can be very discouraging at times. It can also be very rewarding when we see kids that come in here that are several grade levels behind in reading, the ability to read, and to do math and so forth. When they graduate from here as seniors, they’re productive;
they have a renewed vision of what God created them to be. And a number of them, well, I guess for the last 9 years, I think it is, all of them have been accepted to college, 100% of the seniors.

**Smiley**

Smiley loved staying after school to help her teachers when she was in elementary school. Having completed her 39th year as an educator at the time of the interview, she was still helping teachers, as well as students and their parents. She described her style as “firm and fair,” and throughout her career, she had been faithful to her strong moral and ethical values. Smiley attributed her ability to persevere and be effective over nearly four decades to the baptism by fire she received as a brand new public school teacher.

I’ll never forget my first week. I was 21, junior high school, the bell rang, and the kids all said, “Where’s the teacher?” I says, “You’re looking at her, get in your seats and let’s get started.” I’ll never forget that. My grit came from working in an inner city and it was the best times and the worst times in my teaching career. We had to bond. When I first started teaching there was 19 new teachers [out of 21] because they couldn’t keep ‘em. My daughter says, “Mom, how did you make it?” By the grace of God, seriously. I would never give up on a kid.

These 14 participants completed the GCOS, an interview, and a focus group. The data from these was analyzed according to Moustakas’ (1994) methodology. Findings are presented below, first in the form of themes, and second in the form of answers to this study’s research questions.
Themes

Findings from data analysis indicated five major themes, including (a) faith; (b) hearts wide open, eyes wide open; (c) unsolvable problems, problem solvers; (d) receiving and giving; and (e) the fuel source - motivation, goals, and persistence. With the emergence of themes, theme components or sub-themes also developed. Each of the five major themes had two or more components or sub-themes. In some cases, sub-themes were further divided. A full outline of the themes is detailed in Appendix S.

Faith - “Faith is, is Me”

The theme of faith in God was the first theme identified through data analysis. As participants shared their stories, beginning with their upbringing, a strong thread of faith was interwoven throughout the narratives. Identifying faith as an integral aspect of who she is as a person and what she does as a teacher, Smiley noted,

My faith makes me who I am. My faith helps me to understand, “Hey, these are kids. They are coming to me with needs. All the kids, no matter what their ability is.” My faith is, is me. And that’s why I feel I fit in here so well. Because I can speak it here. I can talk about God and science, I can talk about how can people not believe in a God with all these beautiful things in nature? It is - and I’m so excited about that, because when I was in a public school for 31 years, one time I actually got in trouble for teaching Creation plus evolution, and I said, w-e-l-l, but we ironed that out. But here it’s so - it’s awesome to be able to talk about God and His goodness, and that’s just a part of this school. And a part of me.

The theme of faith in God encompassed three subthemes, including (a) calling, (b) gifting, and (c) sending.
Called to teach – “I knew that was God’s call on my life.” The path along which participants journeyed toward becoming teachers varied widely. Blue, for example, knew the very first day of school that she wanted to become a teacher and never wavered from that decision. Rocky, on the other hand, completed a lengthy non-teaching career before going into secondary education. Despite the different trajectories, each participant expressed a sense of “calling,” “mission,” “feeling led,” or “pulled” toward teaching. Chris agonized over leaving her beloved rural setting to teach in one of the largest cities in the United States. However, the day before her teaching job began, she happened to hear a sermon that impacted her dramatically.

The pastor . . . was speaking about how God was calling people out of the country, into the city, where they’re not comfortable, and they’re afraid, and they think it’s a wrong decision, but that’s exactly where God wants them to be! Right? And I’m just like, my eyeballs are popping out of my head, I’m like, “This guy is talking right to me!” It was exactly what I needed to hear. So God just confirmed, “You’re good, I got you. Don’t worry.” So I’m like, “Okay.” So that was a Sunday, the next day it was Monday, we started school – not school, but we started teacher stuff, right? So I came in, and I just jumped in with both feet. I said, “This is where God wants me . . . I’m going to go and do it.”

Because children spend most of their waking hours with their teachers, LaToya described the call to teach as a call to be the “primary discipler” of the children in her care.

I’ve been a Christian for many years, but there was an adjustment coming from public education even though I’ve always known that that was what God called me to do and He called me to make a difference in the lives of all of my children. I’ve always known that.
But when I came here, I learned a greater depth of how much He has called me to be the primary discipler of those children whose lives are entrusted into my hands. LaToya included praying for her children, sowing into their lives, and helping them grow in godliness as facets of her discipler calling.

**Gifted to teach – “He has given me a gift.”** Giftedness emerged as a subtheme under faith, as abilities necessary to respond to the call to teach were seen as endowments or equipping from the One who called them. Participants found essential not only particular giftings that facilitated their effectiveness as teachers, but also an affinity for teaching a specific group.

**Gifts facilitating teacher effectiveness.** Amanda considered creativity, organizing information, and being “never satisfied” as gifts that helped her teach.

I would definitely say creativity. . . . Because that’s one of the biggest ways to engage, by being creative in some way, shape, or form. And then I think it would be fair to say as well that He has given me a gift for organizing information in a way that helps people to grasp it. I’m still honing that, certainly, but, and figuring out different approaches to things as well, goes along with that. Different ways to organize when the way that I’m trying to help the child isn’t working. I think that another one is both a blessing and a curse, that I’m never satisfied with where I am. Which I think sometimes can cause me to view myself from, maybe not accurately and more negatively. But it also means I’m growing at a lot faster rate than I might otherwise.

Chris saw her aptitudes to take on a teaching role and convert almost anything into a learning opportunity for her children as part of her gifting.

I looked forward to teaching, and I realized I was good at it. And I would look around at other people as they were teaching, I’m like, “Oh, they should do this, they should really
try this with the kids, ‘cause this would work better.” And as a teacher, when you have the gift of teaching, I found since then – I didn’t know at the time, but since I’ve learned more about the gifts, I realize that you just naturally move into a teaching position. And you think, “Oh, I could use that in the classroom.” All the time, pastor’s speaking, I’m like, “Oh, man, I could share that with the kids, I could do this activity,” and you just transform everything as a teacher.

**Gifts connecting teacher with particular groups.** All but two participants spoke specifically about groups they felt best equipped to teach. One participant acknowledged an appreciation for an administration that understood the importance of this connection. Some used positive phrases to describe this preference, including “definitely middle school’s my favorite,” “I want to stay with the younger ones,” “the junior highs, they’re really special to me,” and (referencing the special needs population), “my passion is those that can’t fight for themselves. It always has been.” Others used less positive terminology to make their preferences known, such as, “I did a youth ministry internship one summer in college and I discovered that the Lord gave me a patience to about 5th grade, and then I have no more,” and “I don’t like teenagers. I did not like teenagers when I was a teenager. And I don’t like them now.”

One participant knew “no good reason” for feeling drawn to an urban Christian school setting, other than the belief that God had moved her heart accordingly. She observed,

I’ve never had any desire to teach in a middle class suburban White Christian school. That’s just not – that hasn’t been where my heart has been. And I know that they need equally passionate and committed educators there, but . . . for some reason, God had placed the poor and – really the poor more than anything, but also people of color - on my heart.
Sent to teach – “I always felt like I was going into the missions field while I was working.” Three of the study’s participants discussed how their concept of missions had undergone a shift from something one was “sent” to do on a foreign field to something one could be “sent” to do within a local school community for the purposes of sharing God’s Kingdom and love with others. All of the participants acknowledged a sense of mission or ministry in connection with their current assignment that was connected to their faith in and calling from God. Within the overall context of faith, calling, gifting, and sending, two dimensions of educational ministry and freedom were identified and seemed to be most closely associated with the idea of sending.

Educational Ministry – “I can’t imagine separating God from school.” In much the same way medical personnel might share their medical knowledge and faith through participating in a medical mission, or cooks might share their meal preparation abilities and faith through a soup kitchen, teachers in this study described their experiences as sharing their educational expertise and faith through the urban Christian schoolhouse. The words “integrate” and “integration” were used to illustrate the duality of education and ministry in the following description of what Chris experienced.

[Faith in Christ] has to be part of our worldview, it has to just flow naturally out of everything; it’s not just about Bible class. And that’s something we’ve really been working on the last couple years is making it curriculum wide, whether we’re in phys ed or in science, or wherever, that not only are we tying each class into itself, like English combining with science combining with history, you have to integrate. And it’s not just throwing a Bible verse in there that applies to that topic, it’s discussion and integrating it
into everything that we do so the kids have an understanding that God is everywhere, and it’s just it’s part of your life, it’s part of who you are.

Marsue also referred to the integration of the biblical and the academic.

I try and integrate, especially in reading – it’s a little bit easier – and find some biblical principles for what we read. I’m allowed to do that here. Before our testing, we can pray. I can bring out the biblical spiritual part of it with the kids. That’s what gets them to finally realize that Christ is real in their lives. When it’s separate, all they see is, “Well, that’s for over here,” but you don’t take it in real life. . . . [We are] a ministry in that we are sponsored by the church, but I believe first and foremost that we are a school that is privileged to also teach the Word of God and how He influences it. And we have to look upon it as just that – we are giving kids an opportunity to learn about Christ, to bring Him into their lives, and on top of that, have a pretty good academic education.

The idea of educational ministry was indicative of a dual role for participants in the urban Christian school setting. They not only saw themselves as educators, but also as missionaries, ministers, or disciplers in the Christian faith. In describing her role, Gmom stated,

It’s dual. First of all, is to help instill Godly principles in the children. And the reason I say that is this. When seeds are planted, sometimes we don’t know when they’re going to sprout. And I feel that if I can instill some Godly principles, later on in life, when it’s watered by another teacher, then those seeds can bloom. But they at least had a start somewhere. So [the first part of the duality] is to instill in them the principles of God. So that they will understand that . . . at one point in their life, they will have to face Him. [The second part of the duality is] the pedagogical, instruction. Because they need that to
move forward, so . . . that would be the second. But then I’d like, you know, to entwine both when I’m doing my teaching, as much as I can.

Margie saw her role as an educational minister as analogous to a pastoral role - she saw herself praying, discerning, listening, guiding, and dealing with issues of the heart, much as a pastor would, in the normal course of her teaching duties. Carol viewed the duality of roles as actually making her job easier rather than more challenging, “because I think if you are addressing those other needs, then the teaching’s going to be easier. You know, because you’re building that relationship with them.” It should be noted that when describing the roles participants took on in the course of their day, duality did not adequately cover their perception of themselves as “mentor,” “cheerleader,” “not-quite-a-parent-but almost,” “spiritual guide,” “teacher of how to work through emotions and think through social situations,” “facilitator of what God is trying to do,” “nurse,” “custodian,” “role model,” “support system,” “intermediary,” “arbiter,” and “disciplinarian.”

**Freedom – “As a public school teacher, I had to kind of bootleg the Gospel.”** Of the 14 participants in this study, 13 had had previous exposure to teaching in public schools. Eight had experienced public school teaching as part of their pre-service preparation programs’ internships and student teaching requirements. Five had taught in the public sector over time periods ranging between 4-31 years. All of these 13 expressed an element of freedom in coming from the public to the private Christian arenas.

I felt like I was making a big difference at the other [public] school. . . . But I was dancing around really what it was that God wanted me to do. And here I don’t have to do that. I can – I feel like it’s more impactful because you don’t have to, you know, try to
sneak in God here and there. . . It’s woven through everything. So I think it makes the biggest difference. (Carol)

Whereas Carol had been “dancing around” what God wanted her to do while in public school, LaToya described this as “bootlegging.”

I think urban Christian ministry as a whole is ministry in and of itself because you’re sowing into the lives of children, not only the importance of the educational side of it, but also the fact that I also have the opportunity to sow the Word of God into their lives. And even as a public school teacher, one of the things that I always say, I had to kind of bootleg the Gospel when I was in public school, but I always did it because that’s my, that’s who I am and I could not separate that, you know. And then when I came here, I just became, like I said, the Christian teacher in the Christian school where I didn’t have to bootleg the Gospel, whereas it was more – now just like I teach reading and math, I teach Bible as a subject. And, you know, I realize everyday how much I’ve grown, even from those opportunities to be in urban Christian ministry.

Chris compared discipline in the public sector to the private Christian school.

Even in your discipline, you bring God’s Word and prayer into it, and that’s where you have to reach the heart of the problem. And you just can’t in a public school situation; you’re just putting a Band-Aid on it.

Freedom from compartmentalizing her life was liberating for Leslie.

I feel like we have a lot more freedom. From a Christian aspect, I did all of my field experiences, all of my student teaching in public schools. I can remember, I had a ring, I’ve lost it now, but I wore it every day. And it had a cross and angels on it, and I wore it every day and of course the kids noticed that. ‘Cause they notice everything. And I can
remember when they would ask me about it, being scared, “Oh, God, what can I say? What can I not say? I don’t want to hide my faith, but I also don’t want to get in trouble.” And I didn’t like that. I didn’t like feeling like I had to censure that I go to church. Like, ugh. So the Christian aspect is so liberating, as a human, to, you know, when my kids are having a problem, to be like, “You know, let’s pray about it.” Or when they’re having issues with each other, being able to show them to the example that Christ set. Like, “This is our goal. How do you think we should behave in this way?” So the Christian aspect has been incredible. It’s like I don’t have to compartmentalize my life. I am able to be a teacher and a Godly woman all at the same time, like I don’t have to leave that at the door. In the urban setting, I have found that this is really where my heart is.

The theme of faith was the first identified from the data, and was integrally interwoven with the ideas of calling, gifting, sending, educational ministry, and freedom to incorporate faith into the participants’ daily mission field. Faith remained an integral part of and inseparable from the other themes discussed below.

**Hearts Wide Open, Eyes Wide Open – “I Wasn’t Always Lovable . . . But God Still Loved Me”**

The second major theme was the theme incorporating the deep love that participants had for their students while simultaneously holding a firm grasp of the reality of some of the unlovable aspects present in the urban environment. Participants had hearts open to love their children, passionately and emphatically expressing that love. Participants also had eyes open to see some of the suffering, heartbreak, and turmoil swirling around and deeply affecting their students. Teachers were not mere observers of student suffering, heartbreak, and turmoil – these
had an impact on the teachers as well. “There’s just no way around getting in there and getting your feet dirty and your hands dirty.”

Open hearts – “I guess the simplest thing is to love these kids like I love my own.”

The most basic and straightforward of the themes that developed through data analysis was the theme of love for the participants toward their children. The words shared about love for students were simply stated, without elaboration, and transparently genuine. The statements below were offered by seven of participants, representing the abundant love teachers in this study shared for their children.

- “I think my biggest gift is my love for children.” (Blue)
- “I love these kids.” (Bugs)
- “And the kids, I love them! I love them!” (Smiley)
- “I guess the simplest thing is to love these kids like I love my own.” (Rocky)
- “So the kids, they get to know . . . I do love ‘em, I appreciate them . . .” (Margie)
- “I fell in love with the kids, I fell in love with the culture . . . they were so open, they were so fun. . .” (Leslie)
- “Every single year, I never think I could love the next class as much as I love the one that left, and I always do.” (Amanda)

This love was not based on rosy storybook pictures of cherubic children who always obey their elders and speak kindly to one another. Rather, it was enthusiastically and generously given despite eyes of the teacher seeing “the dirt, the grime, the home life, the back talk and the mouthy” (Marsue).
Open eyes – Kids “bringing their garbage to my classroom.” The participants in this study taught some of America’s neediest children on a daily basis. The children’s needs and the needs of their families impacted the participants and their classrooms in fundamental ways.

[The biggest challenge I face] is them bringing their garbage to my classroom. It sounds very harsh. . . . but it’s just, if it weren’t for all that outside stuff going on in their house or their home, that’s the challenge. Getting their mind off of that, whatever’s going on in their house or their home, and just teaching them. Just getting the information in. . . . I have a boy [whose] mother passed away, his father’s in jail, and his grandparents are taking care of him. (Maria)

Her children’s contact with the ugliness of life was difficult for Blue.

They’re exposed to so many things that I would have never thought of when I was a child. Like, they’re exposed to the violence, and the sexual nature and you know, just watching their parents do drugs, alcohol, everything, and it broke my heart, because when I grew up, I didn’t grow up with it. . . . But just knowing that these children are being exposed to that at young ages, I mean, before they even start school. . . . You can’t fully understand unless you’re in their shoes, but it gives you a sympathetic heart to understand and being in an urban community, it happens more often.

Poverty issues were a part of what Maria dealt with daily.

As an urban school, of course, you are going to have kids just coming from poverty and dealing with issues. Just in our [prayer] circle today, [children shared about] drugs problems, domestic violence problems, just all kinds of needs.
Despite the reality of the unlovely and undesirable brought by their children into the classroom every day, the participants clearly had a deep well from which to draw the love they offered each child.

**Unsolvable Problems, Problem Solvers – “Their Needs are so much Bigger than My Ability and My Resources”**

The third main theme revealed by analysis of the data was the theme of dealing with the unsolvable while solving the solvable.

**Unsolvable problems.** Participants in this study understood firsthand the effects of poverty and real possibility of death by violence in the communities they served. At the urban public school where Carol worked before coming to her position in a Christian school, she “lost probably half a dozen students to violent crimes.” After the loss of a student she was especially close to, Carol was unable to teach for an extended period. Rocky tracked violent crimes in his community over a span of years, recounting with tears the funerals he attended of young Black men who had been friends of his students. The recognition that life can be cut short has driven Chris to share the Gospel every chance she gets. As she explained,

Because you don’t know when these – when am I not gonna see these kids – they could get shot down the block, I mean, I’ve had people shot, you know, and kids killed and people break into their apartment and who’s going to tell them the truth while they’re still here, when they come into the building?

While the hostile environment outside the schoolhouse seemed unsolvable, participants recounted many seemingly unsolvable challenges within the schoolhouse, primarily involving parents, administrators, or the policies under which their schools operate. Among challenges described were parents who lash out at teachers because they are angry or in denial about their
child’s challenges, poorly run or disorganized administrative functions, absentee administrators, lack of confidentiality, exhaustive demands on teacher time over and above already rigorous schedules, inconsistently applied or inadequate policies, miscommunication, frequent loss of planning period, lack of administrative support, inaccurate or insufficient placement testing, overcrowded classrooms (over 25 students with no assistant), and failure by administration to ask for teacher input when making decisions impacting the classroom. Of these, major concern was expressed over two areas, the first being decisions impacting the classroom.

I would think [my biggest challenge is] not always having a voice in . . . some of those areas. And you know, I’ve even mentioned things to administrators; we have an end of the year meeting, every teacher every year, with the administration. And those are things I’ve brought up in the past that a lot of the times, I think decisions are made for us as primary disciplers, us as classroom teachers, especially for elementary, since we have our children all day. There are decisions that are made for us that I think they should get the input of us as educators because they don’t know how our children work, and they don’t know how our schedule works even though they give us a schedule and say, “This is the time you have lunch, this is the time you have PE.” But life doesn’t work under that schedule in the classroom.

The second major concern expressed was in the area of placement testing and retention policies. Participants in three of the study’s five focus groups considered this a serious problem. The following excerpt is from one of the focus groups in which much discussion on these issues took place.

Participant 1: I think our admissions test is bogus, and I think the retention policy is bogus. And I’m going to leave it at that.
Participant 2: I never saw the admissions testing.

Participant 3: And, and the thing is, if you don’t pass the admissions test, you should not be able to come here.

Investigator: Well, that’s what admissions tests are for.

Participant 2: Or, or take a lower level. (General agreement in background) If you can’t pass that test, then you come lower. . . .

Participant 3: Yeah, it’s just that – the whole point is, are we worried about numbers? Are we worried about actually letting this be an academic Christian school? Because you’re going to make us lose if we have 15 kids in the class who are below, and 5 who are [on grade level], so now my class really becomes a below basic class, and those 5 kids, they are not going to be as advanced, they’re (someone in the background says, “cheated”) cheated, and that’s not fair to them.

These issues weighed on the participants as significant parts to seemingly unsolvable but severely draining enigmas. However, it was the next theme - solving the solvable - in which participants primarily focused their considerable energies.

Problem solvers. Data analysis indicated a theme of participants as problem solvers. This group of teachers had remarkable successes in areas including relationship building, classroom discipline, engaging students in learning, and learning to trust.

Relationship - solving the problem of classroom discipline. Despite the fact that the literature is replete with studies linking teacher attrition to discipline and behavior issues in the classroom (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012; Schaefer et al., 2012), 13 of 14 participants did not consider classroom management to be a serious challenge. Chris, Rocky, LaToya, and Margie, as they described in comments below, considered the respect given by
students to be attributable to their primary focus on building genuinely caring student-teacher relationships. For Chris, respect for property was built through respect for the people in the property.

They know when you really care. And when you’re trying to help out. You’re not just being churchy, whatever. You are really trying to make an impact. You rarely see – you know, you see the side of this building over here, and it’s totally clean. And you rarely see that in [this city] because the kids just tag up everywhere. But they don’t tag our building because they know this is where they come to play basketball and these are people that they love and so they don’t.

Rocky remarked on respect as well.

You can’t command respect, it’s something you have to earn. I believe just because they see me every day, they see that inside out. I think at some level, they do respect that. Most of them. At least the older ones.

Trust was an important aspect of relationship for LaToya.

I feel if you don’t develop a relationship, a level of trust, then you’re not going to be able to reach the heart of a child. And I believe that’s what God’s called us to do, is to reach the heart of a child. Because even in bad situations, and they do come up, even in Christian education. If the child has not developed a level of trust in a relationship with you, they won’t trust you to come to you with whatever the situation may be. . . . it’s a never ending relationship. And one thing that I’ve told my children, for the 20 odd years that I’ve been in education, I will always keep my telephone number in the phone book so my children can find me.

Disciplining appropriately was a key to relationship for Margie.
that’s how the relationship [between my parents and I] grew, and that’s how it made me responsible for my own actions. A beating doesn’t always make a child responsible for their actions, but if you figure out, “Why are you lying?” “Because I feel like if I tell you the truth, you’re not going to love me.” “Who – who told you that?” So it’s like that relationship building time. That’s what Jesus did. He made them think.

Chris reflected on the transient nature of her city and the impact of building relationship over time.

It takes time to build your credibility. The city is very, what’s the word, transient. People are in and out, in and out. Nobody really wants to stay here ‘cause it’s not a great place. It’s dirty, it’s smelly, people are annoying, it’s expensive, and inconvenient, so people don’t want to live here. And so the kids are used to people in and out of their lives. And so they will not let you in until you prove that you are in it for the long haul, especially a White person from a small town, you know, I’m not a city person. I didn’t understand their language, I didn’t speak their language, I didn’t know what they were talking about, so they really pushed me and, I mean, they still do, but not like it used to be ‘cause everybody knows me here. I’ve been here forever, I’ve worked with the kids forever, I know most of their parents, I know where they live, and so the kids know.

In addition to these descriptions of relationship building as impacting classroom management, the role of boundaries and balance in creating an environment conducive to learning was significant. LaToya described both of these elements in her classroom.

I think it’s important to establish boundaries, first and foremost, and as you establish those boundaries, you also are establishing letting those students know that there has to be a balance in everything that we do. . . . We were finishing a lesson just this week in the
Bible about Proverbs wisdom, going to the ant. And we were talking about the saying,

*All work, no play makes Jack a dull boy.* And on the other side of it, I tell them, *All play, no work makes Jack a dumb boy.* But then to teach them, right in the middle is the balance. You have to have work; you have to have leisure and play. But if you go too far to either extreme, you don’t get the balance that you need. I think it’s the same way in developing, establishing, and maintaining on-going relationships with our children. Set the boundary and let them know there are places, lines that they cannot cross and that you do not allow them to cross. But in that time, and in those places, they still always know that [Miss LaToya] or whomever the teacher may be, that that teacher is there. “They have my best interests at heart, even when they have to correct me.”

Maria emphasized balance in her classroom discipline.

I really do believe that you [can] be too harsh [in your classroom discipline]. I hope I’m not too harsh. It’s a balance. It’s a balancing act. Because if you’re too harsh, you’re not going to get through. If you’re too soft, you’re not going to get through. Very big balancing act.

*Solving the problem of engaging students in learning.* While all of the participants discussed some degree of success in engaging students in learning, seven of the fourteen described a high level of student engagement on a consistent basis. These seven represented grade levels spanning lower elementary through high school. In describing student engagement in the excerpts below, the participants demonstrated their individuality while incorporating elements of fun, creativity, curiosity, enjoyment, love of content, and inspiration. Blue maintained the “kid part” of herself.
You have to be an adult, but when you’re working with little kids, you have to let that kid part of you come out. And I try to do that. I try to have fun, ‘cause I know I learned a lot when I had fun. So my students are doing the same. They’re learning as they’re having fun. They’re having fun, they don’t know they’re learning, but they’re learning.

Amanda loved when her students were so engaged, they did not even think about learning.

. . . that moment when you realize you have everyone’s attention, they’re engaged, they’re having fun, they’re learning. And they’re not even thinking about the fact that they’re learning. I love when I can see that. You know, it’s not work to them, they’re just engaged and curious and exploring. So that’s really, really fun.

Inspiring was one of Carol’s keys to engaging her students.

I liked inspiring students to look at things in new ways, and that’s something really easy to do with Language Arts, especially when we get into novels. Here we have a Christian worldview – when I worked in the other school, we did not have that. But it was easy to sprinkle it in. So it’s a lot of fun to do that. It’s fun to watch them make connections that they hadn’t make before, and to increase, of course, in their comprehension and fluency, I enjoy that as well, but I really like when they learn about their own lives while sitting in a safe environment.

Creativity and engagement were connected for Amanda.

I would definitely say creativity. . . . Because that’s one of the biggest ways to engage, by being creative in some way, shape, or form.

Leslie’s love of reading was something she wished to instill in her children.
I love reading, I love writing. And I want to instill that love of something so simple in my kids. I don’t push them to love what I love, but I feel like in society today, it’s almost like you’re taught not to enjoy the little things.

Chris utilized the natural curiosity of pre-teens and early teens in engagement.

Chris: I like 7th, 8th, 9th, that age where they’re young, they’re so enthusiastic about learning, they’re so interested in everything.

Investigator: Lots of curiosity

Chris: Yeah, and they just want to know stuff and they’re so funny. We had a whole class talking about boogers and farts and poop, and they just want to know, “What is this, why do we do” – and they love having somebody who will talk about it –

Investigator: To explain it, because who are they going to ask?

Chris: Yeah, exactly! And I’m not laughing at them, I’m not, I’m like, “Oh, that’s a good question, well, let’s talk about what that is.”

Passion for her subject was a learning hook for Bugs.

I love what I do. I love mathematics . . . and I just hope that some of my love of it will flow through into them. So many of them come with such a hate of mathematics and it’s like, “This is so much fun!” “That’s what YOU think.” But once they learn how to do, they look back at Algebra II on the board from advanced, “Oh, I wish we were doing now that. That’s so easy!” “Yeah, that’s not what you said when I had you last year.”

Although student amotivation has been a challenge identified in the literature (Cheon & Reeve, 2015), participants in this study were able to problem-solve. For many of the participants, engaging students in learning was described as more of the norm than the exception.
Solving the problem of trusting God with the unsolvable – a work in progress. As has been discussed previously, working in communities that suffer from eruptions of violence and with children at risk for exposure to abuse had taken its toll on some of this study’s participants. The environment could potentially be toxic and anxiety inducing. The subtheme of teachers’ need to trust emerged as these issues were described. Giselle shared,

[My biggest challenge is] trusting, trusting God that our kids will be okay when they leave here. Whether on a daily basis, or even now on summer break. Like a lot of the kids, I was looking at them yesterday, I was like, “Gosh, I hope you come back September just like this.” You know, trusting that they’ll be okay, physically, emotionally, all over, that they’ll be okay . . . . And trust that God is with them every step of the way. But yeah, that’s the hardest part.

Carol also had difficulty letting some of her students leave.

I think that the letting go of the fact that when they leave here, I can’t control the environments that they are going home to is probably the most difficult thing. I had a student that I would adopt him in a heartbeat. My husband’s afraid, we’re trying to sell our house, he thinks, “You want to get a bigger house because you want to start bringing kids home!” “Well, you might be right about that!” [One of my students] had an experience where he was like really afraid of himself, afraid of what was going to happen. And he came to school and was crying and upset about it, and I’m thinking, “Gosh, I have to let him leave and go back there in 7 hours.” You know? I mean, what do you do about that?

Additionally, schools serving in these urban communities are often under-resourced. Teachers may receive compensation that is half of what their public sector peers with equivalent
certifications, experience, and degrees receive. Some are offered few or no benefits such as insurance through their schools. As with learning to trust that students will be safe, participants also talked about learning to trust in the financial area.

When I left public school and came here [to an urban Christian school], I took a $14,000 pay cut. . . . Really, financially, I mean, that was like, whack. But it has helped me grow in my faith, and in recognizing continually the goodness of God, because I have seen God do more with less. (LaToya)

Sadly, living at poverty level was not only a reality for many students, but also for the teachers, as Chris shared.

When you choose to teach at a Christian school, you’re choosing to be at poverty level . . . and people want to spend as if they’re in a public school and you can’t do that. You have to discipline yourself to not spend and not enough Americans know how to do that. . . . It’s so frustrating to me to see the drug dealers on the corners who seem to have it all, all the respect, whatever, all the money and that’s the direction the kids think they should go in. They don’t understand what success is, who’s going to tell them what success really – who’s going to model for them being content, being happy, being successful? I live in a basement apartment, studio apartment, I don’t make money, but I couldn’t be happier. I couldn’t be more content. And who’s gonna give the kids that?

In this third theme, as in the others, the theme of faith was never far from the teachers’ discussions of their experiences.

**Receiving and Giving – “If She Can Help You, She Will”**

Receiving and giving support was the fourth theme revealed through the data analysis process. Participants in this study described their experiences in the urban Christian school
setting primarily in terms of their relationships with God and with their students. However, their ability to receive support from their peers, administrators, and others, as well as their generosity in giving support, was an evident thread running through the data.

**Receiving.** Although challenges with administrators and administrative policies were noted as part of the “unsolvable problems” theme above, participants were quick to point out the myriad ways in which they received administrative support. Teachers noted the provision of needed resources, observation feedback, and quality training from administration. Participants in schools led by “open door” administrators highly valued this policy. They appreciated administrators who were present and knowledgeable about individual students. Caring about the participants as people beyond their teacher roles and daily communication also made teachers feel supported. Participants in one focus group noted the support demonstrated by the administration for the teachers as evidenced by the absence of micromanagement.

Participant Q: One thing they [administrators] don’t do is try to micromanage us. Which we all appreciate.

Participant R: That’s helpful. I agree.

Participant Q: I’ve heard of some other schools where every little nit-picky thing you do is monitored. You know, that gets tiresome. They put a lot of faith in us; we have a lot of freedom to do what we want to do.

Participant R: I agree, I feel the same way.

Participant Q: I said on the one hand they threw me out there to sink or swim, but at the same time, they put faith in my ability to do the right thing, to figure out what should be done, and they’re always very supportive of basically whatever we do. If there’s something that they don’t understand that’s going on, they would be quick to ask for an
explanation, and I don’t know that that’s happened, but it’s always constructive and they’re very encouraging, I think.

Participants also received abundant support toward maintaining their motivation and accomplishing their goals from family members, pastors, friends, and colleagues. Bugs explained positive interactions with supportive colleagues.

Here, nobody is going to bad mouth you behind your back. I mean, if you’re hurting, somebody’s going to be out there to lay a hand on you, say a prayer for you, with you. To come up to you and ask you, “Are you okay today?” I mean, it’s just amazing to work with Christian people all the time, and I have been so fortunate in practically all of my life I’ve done that.

Chris also found support through her network of colleagues.

My middle school *compadres*, we help each other to do things well, and we each have different giftings, so . . . . we work together because we need each other. I need [my colleague] to chill me out, and she needs me to organize her. You know, we all kind of work together to try to have an excellent program. And we learn each other’s gifts so that we can help each other to do better. They know that I’m gifted in organization, so they’ll come to me for help with whatever. And I know that [she’s] great at counseling, so when I have an issue with a kid, I’m like . . . “What do you think, what should I say to this kid?” So we have a great working relationship.

Several participants specifically noted receiving support through their relationship with God. Gmom noted that her support was “in the Word of God.” Chris concurred, stating,

I have a lot of people support, I have a lot of family support, but really God is kind of the One solid thing. Issues come up in the church and issues come up with friends and you
have problems ‘cause we’re human and we say and do dumb things. But God is the One who’s always stable, who’s always there.

Margie, too, found God to be her support.

I can say God definitely supports me. Because He’s always like, “Okay, [Margie], today you could have done better here.” Or this time, “You know what, I really like what you did with so-and-so,” so it feels like, like my dad is like watching me . . . and so God does support me especially when I feel empty. I’m able to lay in His presence and just recover.

**Giving.** Participants in this study expressed gratitude for the support received from others in helping them stay motivated and reach their goals. However, participants seemed more eager to seek out ways in which they could give support to others. Seven of the participants described their efforts to especially support new teachers. As Rocky noted, it was important to offer to someone new what had been lacking in their own first year as teachers.

Rocky: When [a new teacher] came last year . . . I took it on myself to make myself available for him for anything he needed and I said, and I tried to, you know, we were side-by-side, essentially alternating classes, and I was there for him, to help him any way I could.

Investigator: Did he avail himself of that?

Rocky: Yeah

Investigator: What kind of things did he ask you?

Rocky: I don’t recall anything in particular, I just know that he was there, him knowing that I was there, to bounce ideas off of each other. Because my attitude was I didn't want
the new teacher to have to go through what I did when I started teaching, so I did
everything I could to make his entry a little smoother than mine was.

Gmom also committed to helping new teachers avoid difficulties she had faced.

[As the new teacher in the school], I was so overwhelmed, really. I was really
overwhelmed. And I, once I got myself together . . . I told [my administrator], I said, “If
a new teacher ever walks up in this class, I’m going to be at their side and walk them
through the dynamics.” Because I was so overwhelmed, and I wouldn’t want that to be
overwhelming. Until they can learn it, I’m going to be right there with them.

At the time of her interview, Margie was in the process of writing an Operation Manual
for any teachers who may come after her. This manual included not only a wealth of basic
information and exemplars of items such as Progress Reports and standard forms, but also that
esoteric information no one seems to pass along to the new teacher. She explained,

Nobody never told me, let the kids go to the bathroom [before coming to chapel]. So in
the Operation Manual, it will say, “Report to chapel by 9. Between 8:45 and 8:55,
students should be going to the bathroom, students should have their pencils,” whatever.
Because that’s not on people’s mind.

Along with participants who described the giving of support to new teachers, three of the
participants described the giving of support to the families of their students. For example,
Giselle considered the families of her students to be like her own family, and she offered the kind
of tangible support family members would provide for one another.

We have success stories, but we also have even parents who let’s say don’t have it all
together, they know they can count on us, like, “Hey, do you have a bagel that they can
get?” Or, you know, or “Today was a rough day,” or, their sibling, they had to run out, “I
have to leave work early, can I leave them with you?” It’s just family here and I’ve always loved that. No matter, even on the bad days, I’m like, “We’re a family here.” And I love it. . . . I can honestly say I’ve made friends of parents, and it’s like their joys are our joys, their sadness is our sadness.

**The Fuel Source – “Just Because He Purposes You for Something, It’s Not Going to Come Easy”**

The fifth major theme identified through the analysis of the research data was the theme of the fuel source – elements that energized teachers to be faithful to and effective in their calling, benefit others with their giftings, and stay where they believed they had been sent over a period of years. Participants described the ingredients of this fuel in terms of their motivation, goals, and persistence. Although participants were invited to explore each of the three separately, they almost always intertwined at least two of the three, and often all three were present in their descriptions. For example, a participant may have begun answering a question about goals; however, motivations towards achieving those goals and/or the persistence necessary to reach them became quickly woven into the narrative. This tendency was the case regardless of whether the question directly asked about goals (e.g., what one aims to do) or motivation (e.g., what inspires one’s goal) or persistence (e.g., what drives one to continue until the goal is reached). Hence the emergence of a theme of fuel source, contributed to by all three components. The stirring together of motivation, goals, and persistence can be noted in the excerpts for each subtheme below.

**Motivation.** The theme of motivation was a powerful one in that all participants described compelling, deeply personal answers to the question of What motivates you to do what you do? In answer to that question, Bugs, Leslie, Gmom, and Margie shared their passion for
learning, teaching, and education. Smiley and Margie talked about the motivation associated with making a difference in a person’s life. Being able to give back to her community and “the fact that I guess that I’ve been in it long enough to see fruit” motivated LaToya. Seeing kids enjoy learning and discover their own potential was highly motivating to Maria, Blue, and Giselle. Giselle was also motivated to prevent others from experiencing the “horrible schooling” she experienced during her elementary years. Chris explained her motivation as a desire to be a truth-teller, as seen in the excerpt below.

My main motivation is that kids are so lost. They need guidance and where’s their guidance? Their guidance is coming from the computer, from media, the messages, the lies the media is selling them, and they’re buying it ‘cause no one’s telling them any different. They’re lost, they’re angry, they’re confused, and they have so much potential. . . . There’s not enough people who are willing to come into the city and sacrifice to tell these kids the truth. . . . they need someone to model and to show them a different way, a better way.

Rocky saw his motivation as a driving force to do his part in righting a devastating wrong in his community.

[My source of motivation is] just knowing that these kids, they’ve come from, most, a lot of them, come from unfortunate circumstances. Born in the wrong zip code. Having seen what I did see in the 60s, it didn’t really stick with me until I guess I came out here and then I started to reflect back on that [act of racial violence]. And we’ve got single moms that have single handedly raised their kids. They appreciate what we’re doing here probably more than the kids do, ‘cause they know what’s out there. I’m just trying to right the boat. It’s not - I think God is not pleased with what He sees when He looks
across the landscape - He sees that White privilege and Black suppression. So trying to do what little bit I can to straighten that out a little bit. Racial prejudice is real today, it’s subtle, but it’s very real.

Marsue described the motivation of the *Ah Hah!* moments she has experienced.

Seeing a child walk [who, at age 13, had never previously walked independently].

Seeing a parent smile because you’ve found worth and value in their child. Here, having a little boy cry ‘cause he got expelled for a couple days ‘cause he did something naughty, but cried, “This is the best school I’ve ever been in and you’re the best teacher I’ve ever had,” that’s an *Ah hah!* moment. . . . [My motivation is] the kids.

The theme of motivation was a potent, compelling thread throughout the data. As has been noted, it will be seen in excerpts describing goals and persistence below.

**Goals.** Participants shared their short-term and long-term goals primarily in three realms, including professional goals (e.g., Giselle’s plan to earn a doctorate and begin a school for children with learning disabilities), personal goals (e.g., Chris’ desire to rest more and spend more personal time in studying the Bible), and spiritual goals (e.g., Maria’s aim to plant seeds of faith in children wherever she goes). The varied goals described in the words of participants provided further insight into participant goals. Carol’s goals for her students were both academic and spiritual.

So my short term goal for this year, we’re ending the year with my 9th graders, they’re writing a book. It’s an “all about me” book, and I really want them to see how much they’ve developed in their relationship with God. So that’s my short-term goal for them.

The sophomores, we’ve been continuing this longer-term goal. But my short-term goal
with them would be for these 3 students that I have in 9th period to maybe find some peace and help them with their walk [with God].

Rocky wanted to become more forthcoming in sharing faith and science as compatible.

I need to be more aggressive in sharing my faith, my comprehension of why science supports the Bible rather than contradicting it. Which is what I learned in geology, basically, in going to [undergraduate college], a Methodist school, but not a Christian school by any stretch. And then [graduate school], that the earth is billions of years old, slow and gradual processes. Just like I guess it was Peter who said people will say things continue as they have, that’s where we are. I need to counter that at a fundamental level. I need to do better at that.

Maria also expressed goals for the spiritual and the academic realms.

[My goal is] to create . . . a life time learner. Someone who is saying, “Okay, I want to learn forever. I don’t want to learn just for 3rd grade, I want to learn this so that my whole life can be changed.” Not just, “Okay, get this done for the test and we’re done.” I want them to say, “I’ll use this for the rest of my life. I want to learn this so I can be a life-long learner.” And to live for God. Obviously, that’s my main focus for them.

Smiley considered her goals met, but her mission ongoing.

My goals have always been the same, I’ve never changed, my morals have never changed, my beliefs about education, kids are the most important thing. All these different changes they are making in education, all this testing, this isn’t going to help our kids. What’s going to help our kids? Come in that room, be a real person, teach. You know, walking away is going to be hard for me. This is what I mean. My goals have
been met as far as teaching I’ve gone as far as I can go but I’m not giving up the ship, my mission is not done.

These goals were not simple items to check off of the To Do list. Rather, they were complex, motivational in-and-of themselves, and required persistence in their accomplishment. The goals component can thus be seen as an aspect of the fuel source theme, adding its own propulsion quotient to the mix.

**Persistence.** There was an expectation that participants who had taught in an urban Christian setting over an extended period of time would exhibit some degree of persistence. The teachers in this study far exceeded expectations in the depth, degree, and quality of the persistence they described. Further dimensions emerging from data analysis underscored upbringings that cultivated persistence, personality traits that tended toward persistence, life events that honed persistence, intentional choices toward persistence, and faith’s role in persistence.

**Upbringing cultivating persistence.** Giselle and Margie were brought up by parents who cultivated persistence in their children. Giselle wanted to leave her Master’s program to care for her mom who was having serious health issues. “She’d tell me, ‘Don’t quit. We’re not quitters’ . . . . So it wasn’t even an option for me. Once my mom says something, since I was little, it had to be so.” Margie received a double dose from both mom and dad. “My dad’s perseverance side, I get, ‘Never give up.’ My mom’s perseverance side, I get, ‘Go for it! Do what you have to do!’”

**Personality traits tending toward persistence.** Several participants described themselves as having “grit” or as being “stubborn,” but on further hearing their stories, they were clearly describing persistence. Blue described her path very simply: “I want to be a teacher. . . . I said
it, and nothing’s going to stop me. Nothing.” When Gmom encountered children who had challenges in learning to read, she said, “I wouldn’t accept no for an answer.” Rocky began a story about himself with the phrase,

Just stubborn. When I was 16 years old I had this old ’54 Chevrolet and I had taken the engine apart, or the top end of it off, and I was in my parent’s basement. And my daddy was down there watching me trying to get the gasket and the head lined up and get it all in place and it not slip. And he finally went upstairs, he said, “Call me if you ever get it fixed.” So about 2 a.m. I got it and I never, I didn’t call him, it made me mad that he would say that in the first place. So I set my jaw and I did it. And that’s probably, that’s the kind of thing that if you tell me I can’t do something, I’m probably going to do it.

*Life experiences honing persistence.* Every participant described life experiences in which persistence was tested and sharpened. Bugs determined to become a teacher while in college. When no teaching position was forthcoming following graduation, she worked in a grocery store for 12 years. Sixteen years following graduation, she received a job offer and began to teach. She never gave up wanting to teach, and considered the long period between college and teaching as part of God’s timing. “God had it ordained. He had me where He wanted me, when He wanted me.”

Margie needed to work three jobs to fund taking a full 21-credit course load in music education. With little time to sleep, she was still able to maintain a 3.33 GPA and attributed it to the grace of God in her life. She philosophically stated, “So my life has been a life of, you just have to persevere . . . I appreciate it because it’s made me who I am.”

*Intentionally choosing persistence.* Every participant in this study referred to taking a long view with respect to educational ministry. They saw their efforts as having a present day
impact on their students, but more importantly, they considered their efforts as potentially yielding fruit in the long term. Bugs shared her long view in the following excerpt.

The [students] that are more annoying to me, I just reach out the harder, the more, to them. I am bound and determined to do my best to get through to this kid, you know. I may or may not ever succeed, but who knows what it will be like 10 years down the road. I just hope maybe they’ll come back, and [say], “You know what? That was a valuable class. I wish I had paid more attention.” You don’t know.

Smiley had a similar long view.

The general population wants things to happen then and now. Now. Sooner than later. They don’t – and I see this here even in our good teachers that are young. Okay? [Your students are] kids. They are not going to change overnight. They are not going to be quiet every minute. Transition is a big thing – it’s all trained. You’ve got to keep doing it and doing it and doing it and doing it and it will sink in.

Teachers highly valued the intentional choice to be persistent, and endeavored to pass this quality to their students. Giselle and Leslie did not permit their students to say, “I can’t,” or refuse to try. Giselle described always bringing her students back to Philippians 4:13, which states, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” She considered herself a big proponent of, “We’ll try again tomorrow” with her special education students. As Leslie further explained,

Not trying something is not acceptable. I won’t accept your lack of effort. You can do something, even if it’s just writing one sentence, you can do something. And I learned that from just where I came from and learning that from my own life, too, that you are not going to get anywhere if you don’t do things that scare you.
Amanda endeavored to teach self-motivation as well.

I am trying to figure this out, how to teach them to be self-motivated and to continue through challenge. I actually am still trying to figure that one out. . . . I know, I mean that’s one of the most important factors for success, that they will continue to try and not give up. But, how to get them to that point can be overwhelming.

**Faith and persistence.** All participants acknowledged that what they do every day is not easy, and challenges to persistence were rife. Their personal faith in God was of paramount importance in carrying on. Chris cited I Corinthians 15:58, a verse she considered to be her life verse: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Blue recognized that God is “always sending me signs, like, ‘I told you this is where I want you to be, and I’m going to give you what you need to get through it.’” Leslie echoed this recognition, stating, “I think a lot of what keeps me persistent in the urban Christian setting is God. He wants me here for some reason, so I’m gonna keep going here.” Chris shared, “God is continuing to say, ‘Yep, this is where I want you. You are making a difference. This is where you need to stay.’” Carol and Marsue spoke of persisting out of obedience to God.

Elaborating on the concept of obedience, Marsue referenced God’s dealings with Jonah as a cautionary tale.

You know when God calls you to do something, you can be like Jonah and run the opposite way. But eventually, you will answer Him. And even back when I wasn’t serving God, I still think His hand was upon me. I know it was. And now I’m doubly sure.

Rocky spoke in a similar vein about Judgment Day.
I’ve got to stand before God one day and give answer to Him for how I spent these last days of my life. Do I want to walk up and down the beach and relax, or do I want to try to make a difference? That’s probably my biggest motivation is that Day of Judgment when I’ve got to answer for what I do here.

Margie summed up the reverential awe with which she viewed her commitment to persist in the educational ministry to which she has been called, despite being tempted by a too-good-to-be-true job offer.

One thing I am sure, when God tells me something, I kinda just say, I’m scared to not listen. It’s kinda like I’m scared, so I felt like, even though it may have been a blessing to outsiders, I know what God told me. And who’s to say what would have happened if I took that [other job]. You know, everything that’s good is not always God.

Where faith and persistence intersect, the word persistence seems inadequate. As LaToya expressed,

I think it gives you that extra oomph to realize that, “Yes, I taught you how to read, but I also had a hand in teaching you how to live. And not just live a life that’s existence, but live a life that’s going to impact lives for eternity.” You are making Kingdom difference across the board with that.

Goals, motivation, and persistence – especially persistence founded in faith - combined to form the fuel source that propelled this study’s participants in being faithful to and effective in their calling, benefiting others with their giftings, and staying where they believed they had been sent over a period of years. For well over two decades to nearly four decades of service, six of the fourteen found this fuel more than sufficient.
Research Question Results

One overarching research question and three sub-questions were designed to fulfill the purpose of this study. The central question was, *What are the lived experiences of teachers who persist in urban K-12 education?* The answers to this question and the three sub-questions as revealed through data analysis are discussed next, beginning with the central question.

Central Research Question

The participants of this study described their experiences as teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education in words illustrating contrasts. “Highs and lows,” “happy and frustrating,” “a roller coaster ride of ups and downs,” “extremely positive yet challenging,” “the hardest job ever tackled while simultaneously rewarding” – these words paint a picture of an experience replete with extremes that can switch from moment to moment.

The experience of teaching in this setting was also depicted as unsettling. Many of the participants did not come from the same cultural background as the students they taught, creating an unbalanced feeling of being somehow out of synchrony. Although this cultural unease was overcome within teacher-student relationships by the genuine love each participant felt for the children, it remained to some extent for most, resurfacing in descriptions of parent interactions and in sudden moments of recognition of the boundary between two worlds. One of the participants who was a coach as well as a teacher recalled the realization that practice for the girls’ basketball team could never be scheduled to dismiss after dark because it became unsafe for the girls on the team to get home. This came as surprise; her brothers coached in rural schools where this kind of consideration had never been necessary.

Grappling with the challenges that came with teaching students who live with poverty, the potential of abuse, and the likelihood of neighborhood violence was another facet of the
participants’ experience. Those participants who had lost students to violence mourned deeply and endeavored to find ways to keep tragedy from striking again. They tried to protect their hearts by not becoming so “emotionally involved.” However, participants experienced an inability to remain detached. As one participant noted, her love for the children kept her heart open “to accepting anything about them . . . love just kind of conquers all.”

Teaching in urban K-12 Christian education provided an experience of freedom for participants in that they were fully able to express themselves as people of faith in God. In fact, the central facet of their position as teachers in this setting was to wholly integrate a biblical worldview with academic content in what could be understood as educational ministry. Participants relished this integration, particularly those who had previously taught in a secular setting and had struggled with keeping that essential part of themselves tightly segregated from expression in the classroom. Being given full voice to communicate the spiritual and the pedagogical enabled one participant to say,

I don’t have to compartmentalize my life. I am able to be a teacher and a Godly woman all at the same time, like I don’t have to leave that at the door. In the urban setting, I have found that this is really where my heart is.

The hearts of these teachers serving in the urban Christian schoolhouse were hearts of generosity and giving. Exhaustion was always lurking as the constant demands overwhelmed available resources. Yet participants described how in the very act of pouring out their resources and reserves, they received replenishment. Their explanation of how this could possibly be was through their relationship with and response to God. Maria shared, “He continuously works in my life and improves my heart and then that can flow onto them.”
Relationship was a vital part of the participants’ experience. For almost all participants, relationships with peers were acknowledged to be largely positive, supportive, and gratifying. Relationships with parents, for the most part, were not comfortable ones. Two of the participants acknowledged a lack of ease or lack of desire to engage in relationships with adults, feeling far more comfortable and effective in the classroom with their children. Several sensed that parents expected the teachers to take on the parents’ responsibilities, or felt themselves to be greatly misunderstood and unappreciated by parents. Amanda said, “Of course what you want to say [to the parent] is, ‘Do you have any idea how much of my life I pour into your child?’” Only one participant actively sought out and enjoyed engaging in relationships with parents. Overall, parent-teacher relationships were not viewed with wholehearted enthusiasm – memories of being verbally attacked by parents and turned into “chop suey,” as Gmom described, were too vivid.

Relationships with administrators were described in terms that greatly varied. Descriptions of administrator-teacher relationships ranged over the widest gamut from participant appreciation for administrator support, to exasperation with administrator policies perceived to hamper quality instruction, to out-and-out distress at feeling undermined in their roles as teachers by administrators who seemed to lack a sense of caring for teachers’ concerns. One participant noted,

This year it’s been challenging to convey to administration how serious some of our problems have been. I mean, we’ve been handling them, but maybe not well, and we need your help. And so there were times . . . we felt like we weren’t getting the help we needed.

Despite the impact relationships with peers, parents, and administrators had on the participants, whether positive, negative, or somewhere in between, those relationships took on a
peripheral role in the descriptions of the experience of being a teacher in an urban K-12 Christian school. The most significant aspect of the experience for the participants in this study was the relationships between God, themselves, and their students. The relationships forged within this God-Teacher-Student triad resided in a place of fulfillment, satisfaction, and joy that superseded and eclipsed not only the other relationships, but also every other challenge participants described. When asked to share the essence of their experience as educators in an urban K-12 Christian school, no participant mentioned peers, parents, or administrators. Rather, participants described the God-Teacher-Student relationship, often with tears in their eyes. Their calling, gifting, and mission from God for these children were paramount, as can be seen in the following excerpts given in answer to the question, *If you were given a blank poster, how would you depict the essence of being a teacher in an urban K-12 Christian school?*

All I’m seeing are just my kids’ smiles. . . I love the joy. That community that develops in watching them all grow together and grow as little people. . . . It just feels like redemptive work is happening. You know, like things are being made a little more right than before. (Amanda)

How do you put in a picture . . . the satisfaction of your job? I mean, like I say, where I am in the center of God’s will. I feel it every day. . . . the essence of being a teacher here, it’s being in God’s will, being satisfied. (Bugs)

Gratitude, responsibility . . . fulfilling, and I’d probably throw like a bunch of smiles on it . . . a ton of colors, maybe like a cross that didn’t have color, it was white, and then with colors coming out from it, that would be pretty cool. And maybe a landscape of [my city], like the cityscape at the bottom. (Carol)
A big heart with a person on their knees praying in the middle of a heart. . . . I would also have children playing and smiling along the outside edges . . . . filled with joy. (Chris)

Marsue: For me it would be a sea of faces with one or two people at the helm guiding and leading.

Investigator: The faces of?

Marsue: Children - with wide eyes and open hearts.

Investigator: And the one or two? The ones that are guiding and leading? Who are those?

Marsue: Me. And the one won’t be seen, but it would be Christ.

I’d put a kid in quicksand on one side, and a successful, strong, tall businessman on the other side. And we’d be in the middle, pulling him up, pushing him out. (Rocky)

What came to mind is that I had all the kids sitting in a semi-circle. . . . I saw me sitting here, kids around me, and then behind me, I saw the Lord standing with His arms enveloped like this, around us. . . . That would be the essence of my teaching. (Gmom)

I would probably draw an empty container and a vessel that’s filled with something. And I probably wouldn’t put any words on it, just to see if whoever would be looking at it could feel my heart, though not the artwork part, I’m not artistic, but if they could feel my heart for what God has called me to do. So that empty vessel and that full vessel representing my children and me, but also representing me as the empty vessel and God as the full vessel, pouring that into me. That’s what I would want somebody to see.

(LaToya)
Research Sub-question One

The central research question was supported by three sub-questions designed to shed further insight into the lived experiences of teachers in the urban K-12 Christian school setting. The first research sub-question was, *What is the source of motivation for teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?* As detailed in the themes elucidation above, motivation was one of the most dominant themes to emerge from data analysis. The descriptions of motivation were linked with descriptions of participants’ goals and their persistence. When one of these three was mentioned, it was almost always in conjunction with either one or both of the others. The participants evidently did not separate these in the way they lived them out experientially.

The analysis of the GCOS indicated that each of the 14 participants was oriented toward an autonomous motivation, with all having relatively high scores in autonomy. Scores for all participants were relatively lower in areas indicative of a controlling or impersonal motivation. The results of the GCOS data analysis were triangulated with qualitative data obtained from the interviews and focus groups. Deci and Ryan’s (2008) Self-Determination Theory includes examples of autonomous or intrinsic motivation such as a desire for growth, interest, enjoyment, or to maintain congruence with one’s values. Each of the Deci and Ryan (2008) examples of autonomous or intrinsic motivation are clearly seen in representative participant descriptions of themselves as teachers.

Desire for growth:

So a lot of my role is just remaining that learner, remaining open to criticism, remaining open to other people’s ideas. A lot of how I’ve grown is from watching my fellow teachers, ones who are much better at time management than I am, ones who are
much better at organization than I am, and just trying to pick and gather what they do and modify it to my room. (Leslie)

Interest:

You know, I’m excited about teaching! I, I’m like hype. I teach, okay, I teach Sunday school, I teach a group of teen-agers at our church, and I teach at a retirement home, so it’s like teaching is in my genes. . . (Gmom)

Enjoyment:

From Day 1 when I walked into the classroom, I could be nervous, but once I started with the kids . . . [nervousness] goes away and you do your art, you teach, you engage, you enjoy them, and you act with confidence. (Amanda)

Congruence with one’s values:

I think you’ve seen from my heart what I think is important, and especially in a Christian school it should be at the top of everyone’s list, and that is their relationship with Christ. (Marsue)

Although three of the participants mentioned the hardship of low salaries for teachers in Christian education, it was brought up in the context of why some do not persist in this setting. Teachers acknowledged with regret that some of their former colleagues had left Christian education for the public sector because salaries in the Christian schools could not support a family. There was no judgment in these observations – simply statements of understanding. Participants had to grapple with life on a Christian schoolteacher’s salary and make it work, but they clearly were not teaching for the reward of monetary compensation. Several felt blessed to be able to afford to live on their current salary. As Marsue stated, “I’m blessed now, I can be in the Christian school because I have a pension, too. At a young age, I couldn’t have afforded to.”
It was evident that participants were not teachers in the urban Christian setting for the financial rewards. Neither were the participants in this study looking for accolades, prestige, or public recognition. One participant somewhat wistfully shared that she enjoyed hearing a “Good job!” from her principal from time to time. Another participant described her dream of becoming a “decorated teacher” because

I think it goes back to being a role model for my students. . . . I’m determined to set an example. I want my students to know they can be where I am. It’s never you’re not good enough. . . . There are obstacles, but there are no boundaries. (Blue)

The source of motivation for the teachers in this setting was unambiguously intrinsic or autonomous according to the definitions and examples espoused in the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985a, 1985b, 2000, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Participant descriptions of experiences and motivations revealed an inner force that exhibited itself in an outward demonstration of intrinsically framed goals and both short- and long-term persistence in achieving those goals. Again, this is what would be predicted in accordance with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; 2000; 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Goals that are framed extrinsically (e.g., goals based on fame, fortune, gaining external approval) are not associated with long-term persistence toward attaining those goals; it is intrinsically framed goals that are associated with long-term persistence in goal attainment (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006).

Not only was the source of teacher motivation intrinsically generated, but also participants emphasized the importance of their calling, leading, directing, or pulling – as they variously described it - from God to educational ministry. While this emphasis underscored the role of motivations based on congruence with one’s values, participant descriptions gave this
aspect a weightiness that other motivational aspects (e.g., growth, interest, enjoyment) did not appear to have. For example, no participant mentioned the possibility of leaving their field if and when she or he no longer was growing, no longer was interested, or was no longer experiencing enjoyment. However, several participants described a reverential awe of the God who called, gifted, and sent them that precluded their option to walk away before He granted them that right. Margie referred to this reverential awe as she described, “The one thing I’m sure, when God tells me something, I kinda just say, I’m scared not to listen.” As Marsue referenced reverential awe, she expressed, “You know when God calls you to do something, you can be like Jonah and run the opposite way. But eventually, you will answer Him.” Smiley also described reliance on God’s direction, saying, “I know God will tell me when I’m done, just like He did in the city. . . . And I’ll know that.”

Research Sub-question Two

The second research sub-question asked, *What is the role of intrinsic goals for teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?* As has been mentioned several times previously, goals, motivation, and persistence were tightly interwoven within the data. As each intertwined with the others, they became something more than the sum of their parts in terms of synthesizing a powerful synergetic force for participants to continue to thrive in urban K-12 Christian education.

Self-Determination Theory describes the goals of human beings with autonomous orientations as goals toward “affiliation, generativity, and personal development” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 183) as opposed to extrinsically oriented goals such as “wealth, fame, and attractiveness” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 183). Participants in this study expressed goals
pertaining to affiliation, generativity, and personal development, as seen in representative excerpts following.

Affiliation:

I think there’s a big sense of unity and cause because we want all of these kids to understand the Gospel and leave the school equipped to be leaders in their community and slowly make changes, like we’re all trying to do. (Amanda)

Generativity:

So you don’t just teach science, or you don’t teach reading or math. You are in those kids’ lives for eternity, you hope, as far as we die off the scene one day, but the impact that we made continues to live on, not just in the child that we taught, but in the generations to come from that because we taught that child. (LaToya)

Personal Development:

I want to do the best that I can because I know that that’s going to benefit my students, or that’s going to benefit my co-workers, or benefit the parents or administration. And the perk of that is, that benefits me as well, because I become a better teacher. Or a better person. (Leslie)

The descriptions of participant experiences as educators in urban K-12 Christian schools did not have a large number of passages relating to affiliative, generative, or personal development goals. However, teachers in this study did illustrate autonomy in that their goals harmoniously segued with autonomy in their motivation and long-term persistence toward goal achievement.

**Research Sub-question Three**
The third and final research sub-question asked, *What contextual or environmental supports do teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education perceive to be of value?* By nature of their positions as teachers, the participants in this study were surrounded by a people-dense environment. Typically, one teacher may have had 25 students, 50 parents or guardians, 30 colleagues, and 10 administrative staff members involved in the teaching environment on a daily basis. One of the participants pointed out the challenge of her people-dense environment in the classroom, saying, “How do you do this every day? It’s always a different roller coaster every day. Because they’re all 27 different families, 27 different personalities. Who knows what you’re going to find today?”

Within this “roller coaster” environment, teachers described a number of supports in which they found value. Participants illustrated supports both external to and internal to their teaching environment. External supports included encouragement from family members (spousal support and support from participants’ mothers were particularly mentioned), friends outside the teaching profession, friends who taught in the public sector, pastors, and mentors. Primarily, this external group provided encouragement and acted as a sounding board for participants.

Supports internal to the school community considered by participants to be valuable included assistance from colleagues, administrators, and pastoral staff associated with the school. Of these three groups, colleagues were mentioned most often. Blue shared, “You can’t be a teacher by yourself. So . . . we bounce ideas off of each other. We share, we talk, if I’m stuck on something, I’ll go to another teacher.” Marsue described the group of teachers she worked with as “The Sisterhood.” This group was a major source of support for her and of great
assistance in reaching her goals. Four of the participants strongly felt God’s support in both motivation and goal attainment arenas.

Autonomy-supporting environments (Deci & Ryan, 2000) were an aspect of Self-Determination Theory pertinent to this third research sub-question. The work of Fernet et al. (2012) indicated the importance of the role of the principal in creating an “autonomy-conducive environment” (p. 516). Three participants expressed feeling unsupported by their principal; four remained somewhat neutral in their descriptions of perceived principal support. Seven of the participants directly mentioned the support of their principals as important and appreciated.

Positive principal supports noted by participants included an open door policy, considerate and timely communications, provision of resources, pertinent training, consistency, confidentiality, and the quality of “being present.” Chris especially appreciated the support of having her principal make the effort to be present. “He comes to the games, the kids hear him cheering. . . . He’s very present at everything that we’re involved in.”

Those participants who felt particularly supported described personal caring – the principal considered them as people over and above their roles as teachers. “He’s concerned about us as people, not just your teaching,” was the way one participant described her principal. In two of the focus groups, it seemed to be very important to the participants that their principal allowed the teachers to see his or her heart. So important was this understanding, participants were willing to put up with a few principal idiosyncrasies, as the following focus group excerpt demonstrated.

Participant S: He has a passion for the school and the community, we understand, um, we understand his heart. So even though he drives us crazy sometimes, with just his little idiosyncrasies -
Participant T: Quirkiness, yes!

Participant S: Quirkiness, right, we understand who he is and what his heart is, so you can put up with a lot from somebody when you know how much they love you, you can put up with stuff.

Participant T: Yes, I completely agree. Completely, completely.

The central research question and the three sub-questions were answered through the emergence of themes and the application of those themes and their components directly to the questions.

**Summary - Composite Textural and Structural Descriptions and Essence of the Experience**

This chapter provided brief profiles of the study’s participants as well as the findings from the analysis of data. Themes emerging from data analysis were presented and the research questions were answered. Chapter 4 concludes with a final summary of the data analysis findings in the form of composite textural, structural, and essence depictions of the experience of being a teacher in an urban K-12 Christian school.

As outlined in Chapter 3, Moustakas’ (1994) methodology for data analysis in transcendental phenomenology employs individual textural, structural, and essence descriptions of the experience from each participant. Once individual descriptions have been recorded based on the data, a composite of each is constructed. Using these guidelines, the following composites have been constructed from the data for this study.

The composite textural description expresses *what* the participants in this study experienced. The teachers who persisted in urban K-12 Christian education experienced nearly overwhelming demands on their expertise, energy, and commitment. Yet despite the daily outpouring and continual depletion of their personal and professional reserves in completing
their duties, the participants described an inpouring of love, creativity, fulfillment, and satisfaction that more than replenished the outpouring. Challenges abounded in the urban Christian school setting, perhaps making alternate settings enticingly appealing. Nevertheless, when asked why she didn’t just walk away from the challenges, one participant said, “I’ve learned over the past couple of years that this is really where I’m meant to be. . . . I can’t imagine doing anything else.” Being called, gifted, and sent by God into educational ministry and the fulfillment that comes from effectively practicing one’s calling aptly illustrates the what of these participants’ experiences.

The composite structural description expresses how, or in what context/dynamic participants experienced persisting in an urban K-12 Christian setting. In this study, the context as expressed by the participants was the dynamic of relationship. At the heart of this dynamic of relationship was the triad of God-Teacher-Student (see Figure 1), with God as the Author of their faith and calling, themselves as those gifted to educate, and their students as those to whom they are sent.
Figure 1. The dynamic of core relationships. This figure illustrates the essential relationships providing the central context or dynamic within which teachers experienced the phenomenon of urban K-12 Christian education.

These core relationships were vital to participant experience; teachers expressed this idea clearly and with passion. An outer circle of relationships forming the dynamic of the experience included Administrators-Parents-Colleagues. Although these outer circle relationships impacted
the experience of persisting in urban K-12 Christian education, participants described these in peripheral terms, as illustrated by Figure 2.

*Figure 2.* The relative significance of core relationships and peripheral relationships. This figure depicts the dynamic or context in which teachers experience the phenomenon of urban K-12 Christian education. Relationships inside the core are essential to the experience. Those outside the core are part of the experience, but peripheral.
Where peripheral relationships were not positive, participants found ways to deal with them, as in descriptions of attempting to avoid challenging interactions in parent relationships or bearing with administrators who did not provide support. Participants were more likely to engage in the more positive and encouraging peer relationships. Taking central stage, however, was the core relationship triad of God-Teacher-Student.

The composite essence of the participants’ experience in this study indicated that the question of why teachers persist in this setting was an inadequate question. Yes, persistence was an integral part of the experience, and teachers in this study certainly did exhibit upbringings that cultivated persistence, personality traits that tended toward persistence, life events that honed persistence, and intentional choices toward persistence. They did, indeed, persist. However, the role of faith in persistence seemed to transform persistence into a quality that was something more. Obedience to the God who called them went beyond persistence, causing participants to seek out what they knew would be difficult situations. Faithfulness to their calling went beyond persistence, motivating participants to continue through sorrow, frustration, and even what appeared to be their own inadequacies. Even a major professional setback was understood by one participant as an opportunity from God to improve. He noted, “As I see it, coming from the hand of God, I think it’s for my instruction, so that makes it a little easier to swallow.” Above all, the deep inner knowing that the educational mission was not temporal but eternal was the definitive essence of the experience of teachers who persisted in urban K-12 education. LaToya expressed this ultimate essence as a teacher speaking to her students, “Yes, I taught you how to read, but I also had a hand in teaching you how to live. And not just live a life that’s existence, but live a life that’s going to impact lives for eternity.”
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research findings and provide conclusions and recommendations stemming from those findings. The research study’s aim was to describe the lived experiences of teachers who persisted in urban K-12 Christian education at five ACSI schools. Persistent teachers in urban Christian education were defined as those teachers serving in the urban Christian school setting for approximately three or more years. Urban Christian schools were defined as those serving urban areas with (a) populations of more than 250,000, (b) enrollment of more than 50% of families eligible for free or reduced meals, and (c) membership in the Association of Christian Schools International. Beginning with a summary of the findings, this chapter will then discuss the findings and their implications. Study limitations and recommendations for future research follow. The chapter summary closes Chapter 5.

Summary of Findings

Transcendental phenomenological qualitative methodology was used for this study because the intention was to gain insight into the experiences of those sharing the phenomenon through their rich, deep descriptions. The use of Moustakas’ (1994) methodology for data analysis resulted in findings that were presented in the previous chapter in three iterations – as themes; as answers to the research questions; and as composite textural, structural, and essence descriptions. These will be briefly restated here.

Themes

The five major themes that emerged from the data analysis of the GSOS, interviews, and focus groups included (a) faith; (b) hearts wide open, eyes wide open; (c) unsolvable problems,
problem solvers; (d) receiving and giving; and (e) fuel source. Each theme captured an essential component of the described experiences of the participants.

First to emerge was the theme of faith. Participants considered themselves as people of faith in God, an aspect of themselves that could not be separated out. As one participant emphasized, “I just wouldn’t be the same person if I didn’t have my beliefs.” Not coincidentally, participants shared a sense that they had been called, equipped, and sent by God to participate in training up – both educationally and Christianly - the next generation. The theme of faith was interwoven through all of the themes, a continual part of teachers’ experiences.

The second theme was the theme of hearts wide open, eyes wide open. The simplest and most passionately shared theme was the love each teacher had for the children. “I love these kids” was a sentiment heard again and again, one undiminished by the accompanying theme of open eyes. Participants described a messy world in which they worked – one in which it was not possible to avoid getting one’s hands and feet dirty. Wrestling with the problems inherent in the low SES urban setting impacted the participants every day. Nevertheless, to quote one participant, “Love really does conquer all” for these teachers.

The third theme, unsolvable problems, problem solvers, could be seen as venturing still further into the environment of the urban setting, where children’s exposures to poverty, violence, abuse, drugs, and alcohol were largely unsolvable. Although teachers longed to shelter their children from the evils in their communities, this was not a problem they could solve. Nor could teachers solve the problems within the schoolhouse attributable to policies they had no voice in creating. Instead, participants turned their attention to what could be solved. Their commitment to building genuine, caring relationships with students; engaging them in the
adventures of learning; and endeavoring to trust God with everything else enabled them to be effective in their calling.

The fourth theme was receiving and giving. Participants exhibited great capacity to receive from those who supported them both inside and outside of the schoolhouse. Far greater was their capacity to give. Participants truly enjoyed giving whatever they could to their learning community, be it material possessions, expertise, or time. They particularly expressed wanting to make the path of new teachers entering the field as smooth as possible. While acknowledging that “nothing prepares you for your first year as a teacher,” there was a dedication to easing the way of the newcomers that developed as part of this fourth theme.

The fifth and final theme emerged as the fuel source for persevering in urban K-12 Christian education. Participants readily blended the concepts of motivation, goals, and persistence, presenting a package of their empowerment as a potent mixture of the three. Motivations such as giving back, making a difference, seeing fruit, and speaking truth were incorporated into goals of developing lifelong learners who love and live for God. Persistence, the final ingredient in participants’ fuel, was a personality characteristic, an intentional choice, an outgrowth of life experiences, bred into some participants through their upbringing, and – most importantly – a gift received through an ever-increasing understanding of what it means to be a person of faith in God. The combination of motivation, goals, and persistence was the fuel necessary to effectively walk out their calling over years, over decades.

**Research Questions**

In addition to the thematic findings, each research question was specifically answered as a result of the data analysis. The central research question asked, *What are the lived experiences of teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?* Teachers in this setting described
their experiences in words of great contrast, such as “highs and lows,” “extremely positive, yet challenging,” or “happy and frustrating.” Their experiences encompassed the depletion of resources as well as resource replenishment, the joy of children learning to love learning and the sorrow of losing children to violent acts. Participants struggled at times with difficult parent relationships or administrative policies perceived to be unsupportive. One significant answer to the central research question could be depicted with the word, freedom. Participants thrived in the freedom to express themselves as people of faith in God within a school setting that prized the integration of God’s Word and a Christian worldview into every dimension of learning. Finally, the relationship triad of God-Teacher-Student was at the core of the lived experiences of participants in this study.

The first sub-question asked, *What is the source of motivation for teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?* The source of motivation for the participants in this study was clearly autonomous or intrinsic, in concert with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985a, 1985b, 2000, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Participants expressed a desire for growth, an interest and enjoyment in what they did, and a strong congruence with their own values (Deci & Ryan, 2008) as they served in the urban K-12 Christian education setting. Of these, participants spoke most passionately about the fact that what they did and where they did it matched with their own value system, deeply held beliefs, faith, and calling. Interview and focus group descriptions were upheld by triangulation with the GCOS data analysis. Each participant’s trio of scores on the GCOS was indicative of an autonomous orientation, the orientation that aligns closely with intrinsic motivation.

The second research sub-question asked, *What is the role of intrinsic goals for teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education?* As Self-Determination Theory would predict,
participants with autonomous orientations framed their goals intrinsically. In other words, extrinsic goals such as fame, fortune, personal attractiveness, or avoidance of shame were not present; rather, goals pertained to “affiliation, generativity, and personal development” (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 183). Expressed goals of all of this study’s participants were intrinsically framed and accompanied by strong evidences of autonomous motivation. As such, these goals played a dynamic role in participant short- and long-term persistence.

The third and final research sub-question was, What contextual or environmental supports do teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education perceive to be of value? Participants in this study found value in supports both internal to and external to the schoolhouse. They generally undertook the building of their own support systems from circles of friends and family members, and/or linked into pre-existing support systems built of colleagues. Perceptions of administrators and administrative policies were described across a spectrum ranging from supportive to undermining. Some elements of supports in participant descriptions were indicative of an autonomy-conducive (Deci & Ryan, 2000) school environment; for example, the ready availability and evident caring of some individual administrators for the participants. However, for a number of participants, contextual or environmental supports were perceived to be provided by peers and family members without synergistic supports from administration.

**Composite Textural, Structural, and Essence Descriptions**

The final depiction of the data analysis findings was through the composite textural, structural, and essence descriptions of the participant’s experiences as described in this study. The composite textural description, or what was experienced by the participants, can be summarized as a walking out of their faith in God. Participants believed themselves to be called,
gifted, and sent into educational ministry – facing the challenges, loving and effectively teaching the children, and finding great fulfillment and satisfaction in so doing.

The composite structural description, or the how or in what context/dynamic did the participants experience teaching in this setting, can be summarized within the dynamic of relationships. Although participants operated in a people-dense environment, relationships within that environment were not perceived as equally vital aspects of their experience. Administrator-Parent-Peer relationships played a peripheral role; the core relationships of paramount importance were God-Teacher-Student.

Finally, the essence of the experience for participants who persisted in urban K-12 Christian education can be summarized as full of value exceeding the temporal. Ultimately, the participants in this study had a deep and abiding faith in God. They saw themselves and their experiences as a small part of what God intends to blossom in their children’s lives for eternity.

Discussion

The purpose of this section is to discuss the study findings in relation to the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The literature review informing this study included three major sections. First, it explored the empirical literature on the teacher attrition problem as related to teacher characteristics and as related to school environments. Second, it investigated empirical studies in which factors alleviating teacher turnover were examined. Third, the literature review considered research based on the tenets of Self-Determination Theory, especially with regard to educational applications and the distinctions between studies that had used the SDT frame of reference and studies that had not used the SDT frame of reference. The findings from the present study will be discussed in light of these three major literature arenas.
Each will conclude with brief statements of corroboration with the literature, divergence from the literature, and novel contributions to the field.

**Teacher Attrition**

Participants in this study had served in urban Christian education for periods ranging from completion of the third year of service to decades of service in this setting. As such, they defied rather than contributed to the teacher attrition statistics seen in the literature (Ingersoll, 2001; Keigher, 2010). Several shared their thoughts on why former colleagues had taken positions in public education (movers) or left the profession altogether (leavers). Most often mentioned was the observation that departing colleagues – especially the younger ones - had found the low salaries and few (or nonexistent) benefits offered in urban Christian education precluded their ability to provide for a family. This was consistent with findings in the Ingersoll (2001) and Keigher (2010) studies.

**Attrition factors pertaining to individual teacher characteristics.** As noted in Chapter 2, there is certainly overlap in teacher attrition factors between teacher characteristics and factors pertaining to the work environment. One of the attrition factors attributed in the literature to individual teacher characteristics is personal life situations. Three participants noted that life changes among their coworkers were not uncommon, especially for younger teachers. Colleagues had left to get married, have children, or relocate due to a spouse’s job change. Studies documenting these factors as personal reasons for departure from teaching coincided with participant observations as part of the broader attrition picture (Ingersoll, 2001; Keigher, 2010; Odland & Ruzicka, 2009; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005).

Also considered in the literature as an attrition factor pertaining to individual teacher characteristics is burnout. Studies by McCormick and Barnett (2011) and Purvanova and Muros
(2010) indicated men and women were both susceptible to burnout; however, men more often experienced this as depersonalization and low levels of personal accomplishment, while women were more likely to experience burnout as exhaustion. In concert with the literature, one of the female participants in this study spoke in depth about exhaustion and the impact of burnout in a previous position; the male participant described an arduous experience that left him with a sense of diminished personal accomplishment. Burnout in the form of exhaustion or the feeling of being “overwhelmed” was also mentioned by a number of female participants as a looming side effect of a seemingly insurmountable and ever-present burden of daily tasks, a factor mentioned in the 2011 study by Skaalvik and Skaalvik as a work environment factor rather than an individual teacher characteristic.

**Corroboration of the literature.** Participants recognized and discussed teacher characteristics factors addressed in the literature as relating to their experiences in the urban K-12 Christian school setting. Those factors included life changes, stress, burnout, and exhaustion.

**Divergence from the literature.** None of the teacher characteristics noted by the participants had led them to permanently leave the field, despite the fact that several described life changes, exhaustion and/or burnout as having impacted them.

**Contribution from this study’s findings.** Individual teacher characteristics linked to attrition in the literature were not considered as sufficient impetus to depart from what teachers considered to be their calling to the educational mission field.

**Attrition factors pertaining to the work environment.** A plethora of studies linking teacher attrition to work environment factors was discussed in the literature review. The current study’s five research sites included schools in categories that had been associated with environmental attrition factors in the literature, including schools serving urban, low
socioeconomic, minority, and/or cross-cultural populations (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Garza et al., 2014; Smith & Smith, 2009); schools requiring a high level of differentiated instruction (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009) or work with special needs students (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009); schools in which administrators were perceived to provide inadequate, poor, or improper supervision (Yariv, 2011); schools in which teachers considered parents to be uncommunicative (Smith & Smith, 2009); schools that did not support teacher autonomy (Wilkesmann & Schmid, 2014) or resilience (Doney, 2013); and schools in which time pressures contributed to emotional exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Participants’ descriptions centered on three of these as being particularly troublesome.

The most often discussed challenge to participants within the workplace was the perception of administrators as less than optimally supportive (Ingersoll, 2001; Yariv, 2011), a hindrance described by half of the study’s participants. One teacher noted, “If [administrators] would just do their job, if everybody would do their job, it would be fine.” The second most mentioned workplace difficulty was with parents. However, unlike the uncommunicative parents in the Smith and Smith study (2009), some participants had experienced a barrage of angry words and accusations from parents. One teacher mentioned how much it would have meant to be backed up by an administrator in such situations. As another participant explained,

I had a parent call me one night and she just . . . raved . . . “You’re doing this, and I don’t understand it” . . . everything negative she could have said, she said in that conversation. I went home that night and I bawled . . . my mom was just like, “Well, what’s wrong?” And I told her, I said, “I’m going in tomorrow, and I’m quitting. I’m done. I can’t do this anymore.”
The third most mentioned difficulty in the workplace was exhaustion, a contribution factor to attrition in the Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) study. One participant’s catalog of duties was draining simply to listen to. She expressed,

> There’s a lot of expectation, and sometimes you feel like, “I can’t do it all.” That’s probably my biggest thing, is that they want you in ministry, they want you serving in a church, but then on Wednesday we have teachers’ meeting til 5:30 – and then you want us to go the church on Wednesday night? . . . . Then you have to do supervision in the morning and sometimes you have to do lunch supervision, and then you have to go do observations of other teachers and write that up and submit it, and then you have to do this on your lesson plans . . . Three out of five days I do tutoring right after school until 4, and then at 4 I start practice. I have practice just about every day for volleyball and basketball. . . . [and] we do have this thing called Thursday club . . . where the kids will do something extra.

As in the case of the personal characteristic challenges, these workplace environment challenges did not cause the teachers in this study to leave their positions, even though the literature reported these as major factors in teacher attrition. This was a point of departure from the literature.

One of the most significant workplace factors contributing to teacher attrition given much attention in the literature is student behavior challenges compounded with discipline problems (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2009; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). The literature presents this as a greater issue in urban, low SES public schools as compared with private schools (Ingersoll, 2001). Although each of the participants in this study worked in urban, low SES schools, behavior and discipline were not seen as major challenges for
13 out of 14 participants. As described in Chapter 4, almost all of the teachers in this study had largely found working solutions to behavior and discipline upheavals, primarily through relationship building. The establishment of firm boundaries and work/play balancing skills contributed to success in this area, as did the expression of teacher creativity used in engaging students in learning. This finding is significant, and will be summarized in the contributions section below.

**Corroboration of the literature.** Participants recognized and discussed factors pertaining to their work environment as noted in the literature, specifically stressing issues with administration, parent challenges, and the assignment of far more duties than could be carried out.

**Divergence from the literature.** One of the major attrition factors present in the literature related to behavioral issues and discipline problems. For all but one participant in this study, the presence of behavior and discipline challenges was considered a minor footnote to their experiences. This constituted a large departure from the literature.

**Contribution from this study’s findings.** The success of this study’s participants in creating an atmosphere in which behavioral and discipline challenges did not hijack learning and thwart teacher self-efficacy can be seen as a major contribution. Teachers attributed their success in this area to the high premium they placed on building individual relationships with each child while maintaining well-defined boundaries and consistently applied policies throughout the classroom. Several teachers considered their creativity and ability to “be interesting as often as possible” as keys to engaging children in learning, thus minimizing the opportunities for children to become bored and act inappropriately. Veteran teachers especially emphasized the importance of their expertise in “saying what I mean, and meaning what I say,”
noting children of relatively younger parents had not previously experienced this novel idea when interacting with the authority figures in their lives.

**Factors Alleviating Teacher Turnover**

The literature noted a number studies in which specific positive supports have been associated with alleviation of attrition (Amparo, 2013; Brown & Wynn, 2009; Doney, 2013; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Huisman et al., 2010; Lambson, 2010; Luneta, 2012; Smith & Smith, 2009; Tosolt, 2009). Beneficial areas - especially in the retention of new teachers - mentioned in the literature included teacher training, principal involvement, and skill development in resilience. Teacher training and the role of the principal were discussed by participants in this study. Resilience skill development was not directly noted as an area of significance; however, participants acknowledged the presence of supportive relationships at home and in the workplace that were helpful to motivation and goal attainment. These support networks appeared to be analogous to those recommended by Doney (2013) as one aspect of building resilience.

Facets of teacher training noted as helpful in a number of studies included pre-service training programs incorporating strong practical components, professional development aimed toward new teacher needs, and time with a mentor of the mentee’s choice (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Lambson, 2010; Luneta, 2010; Smith & Smith, 2009). In each of this study’s focus groups, participants shared their positive and negative experiences with their own pre-service programs. They emphatically elaborated on the importance of practical classroom training beginning early in the pre-service program and continuing throughout in a variety of rural, suburban, and urban settings. Five teachers discussed having done student teaching, observations, and/or practicums in urban settings and considered this to be outstanding
preparation for their positions. One participant actually had the benefit of not only receiving early practical classroom training in her freshman year of college, but also the bonus of taking that training in an urban setting. She described feeling totally prepared for her first job in an urban Christian K-12 school. She recalled her administrator saying, “You never looked like it was your first year when you came . . . you were just in it. You didn’t have the deer in the headlights look, you just, ‘Give me whatever and I’ll do it.’”

Participants were also in harmony with the literature as they underscored the role of new teacher professional development and time with a mentor. Four participants commented on the importance of orientation basics in helping a new teacher acclimate – items such as a floor plan, the code to get in the front door, and location of necessary supplies had been frustratingly overlooked at the start of their own induction periods. Mentoring was universally supported by all participants, with recommendations for appointed mentoring times complemented by flexible impromptu visits with mentors. More will be said about mentoring in the upcoming implications section.

The role of the principal in new teacher retention was determined to be a pivotal one in Brown and Wynn’s (2009) study. Again, participants aligned with the literature on the worth of the principal’s interaction with teachers. Three of the teachers newest to the profession in this study were among those most appreciative of principals who made themselves available, provided needed resources, and offered constructive feedback; veteran teachers also noted the significance of the principal’s role in their work.

**Corroboration of the literature.** Participants recognized and discussed factors appearing in the literature pertaining to the alleviation of attrition as part of their own experiences in the
urban K-12 urban Christian setting. In particular, teachers in this study mentioned the roles of teacher training, the principal, and support systems as offering benefits.

**Divergence from the literature.** Retention factors mentioned by the participants were discussed as beneficial, yet never described as major reasons for remaining in their positions. In fact, several participants had experienced less than optimal training and largely absentee principals, while three participants had difficulty coming up with members of their personal support network when asked to do so. These literature retention factors more aptly fit into the category of “nice items to have” rather than the category of “compelling reasons to stay.”

**Contribution from this study’s findings.** Findings indicated one of the most substantial aspects of teacher retention for participants in this study was the strength of the God-Teacher-Student relationship. This relationship triad was something to which participants believed they had been called. They could not consider walking away without clear indication that God was calling them to a new mission field, regardless of what other factors may or may not be present.

**Teacher Attrition and Self-Determination Theory**

As reviewed in Chapter 2, the advent of research based on SDT into the study of teacher motivation offered an alternative lens through which to study attrition and retention. Non-SDT based research may predominately focus on teacher attrition as a complex compilation of primarily separate factors (Schaefer et al., 2012). A study based on this factor-by-factor approach may, for example, determine teacher attrition is related to burnout due to poor classroom management skills, resulting in recommendations for classroom management skill training (McCormick & Barnett, 2010). Alternatively, SDT based attrition research may take a holistic view in which thwarting a teacher’s needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is associated with turnover. A study based on this more holistic approach may, for example,
explore the impact of teacher training in building autonomy-supportive environments on reciprocal student-teacher motivation changes (Cheon et al., 2014; Jang et al., 2012).

Based on the GCOS results, interview data, and focus group data, every participant in this study demonstrated an orientation more strongly autonomous than controlling or impersonal. An autonomous orientation is consistent with a high level of satisfaction in the universal needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Further, teachers expressed their motivation and goals as intrinsically framed. As has been previously mentioned, a controlling orientation may result in short-term persistence, as a person may be extrinsically “carrot-and-stick” motivated to gain recognition or avoid unpleasant consequences. Long-term persistence, however, is only associated in Self-Determination Theory with an autonomous orientation in which motivation and goals are intrinsic (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Given the intensity and number of challenges described by teachers in this study, participants’ long term persistence was thoroughly tested, lending support for SDT.

**Corroboration of the SDT literature.** Teachers’ holistic views of themselves as educational missionaries were in alignment with SDT’s constructs of human motivation and the autonomous orientation’s association with short- and long-term persistence.

**Divergence from the non-SDT literature.** The fact that participants recognized and discussed individual factors pertaining to their experiences, yet did not consider those factors as overriding reasons to stay or leave is indicative of the partial picture presented by the factor-by-factor non-SDT approach often utilized in attrition/retention studies.

**Contributions to SDT from this study’s findings.** The concept of the fuel source blend of motivation, goals, and persistence that emerged as one of the current study’s themes can be seen as an extension of SDT’s autonomous orientation. Additionally, the exceptionally strong
role of faith and calling in participant persistence brings an added dimension as a contribution to and extension of value congruence in Self-Determination Theory. Teachers placed tremendous worth on the alignment between (a) their personal faith and calling to educational ministry, (b) their school’s commission to educate children both academically and Christianly, and (c) Jesus’ commission to make disciples, “teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20a).

**Implications**

The findings of this study have relevance to the empirical and theoretical literature, as well as practical applicability. The purpose of this section is to discuss the empirical and theoretical implications of the study findings, as well as provide practical applications for those overseeing pre-service teacher preparation, those working with in-service induction and professional development programs, and those who administrate in urban K-12 Christian schools.

**Empirical Implications**

Participants in this study shared experiences that were largely congruent with the empirical literature on factors contributing to teacher attrition, as noted in the discussion section above. Teachers had observed, lived with, and commented on the major issues, including low salaries with limited benefits, life changes, burnout, administrative hindrances, parental confrontations, children’s poverty, neighborhood violence, discipline, and ever-present exhaustion. Participants were well aware of these challenges to retention. Nevertheless, none of the participants had succumbed to these very real deterrents to longevity. Why did they not simply walk away and find a less demanding and more lucrative career? *Why persist?*
When this question was directly put to participants, there was often a pregnant pause – an almost palpable moment lasting the space of a heartbeat or two. During this moment, I would have the impression that - on some level - this question came as a surprise. It was as if, on the one hand, the teacher could readily revisit a situation in which he or she had been on the **verge** of walking away - but on the other hand, *actually* walking away had never **really** been an option. Following this instant in time, answers to *Why persist?* came tumbling out – “the call God has on my life,” “after all these years, I’m still helping and changing lives,” “God is always sending me signs, like, ‘I told you this is where I want you to be, and I’m going to give you what you need to get through it,’” “seeing the fruit in a child’s life,” “I am here for the kids.”

The many-hued descriptors given in answer to this question contained common threads of faith, calling, mission, love, taking a long view, and a flat refusal to fail to persist. Even when participants felt they had missed the mark in some way, in the long view, redemption was always possible. Among the most vivid experiences of long view and redemption was a participant’s story about a student who had been expelled.

I had one kid, I remember he actually got expelled like a month before he graduated. . . .

Years later, we had a reunion, right? A bunch of the kids, we got together at the park and he comes running up to me and gives me a big hug. He’s like, “Miss[Chris], [this school] changed my life!” I was like, “What are you talking about? We kicked you out.” And he said, “At the time I didn’t get it, but later God continued to work on me and I understood.” He said, “It took awhile for God to reach me, but I remembered the things that you guys taught me and later on it made a difference in the decisions that I made.”

And so that’s what we are going for.
Another participant described a redemptive change in a student in whom “forgiveness . . . replaced the anger that had been there. When you see something that powerful, it can’t – how can you get tired of that?” The implication of this study’s findings in the area of teacher attrition can be straightforwardly stated: Resoundingly, teachers in this study considered the formidable challenges to persistence as insufficient reason to depart when weighed against the truly fulfilling moments of joy.

Similarly, participants in this study shared experiences that were largely congruent with the empirical literature on factors contributing to teacher retention, as noted in the discussion section above. As was also the case with attrition factors, they observed and commented on the major issues, including teacher training, the role of the principal, and supports to their motivation and goal achievement provided by family, friends, and colleagues. Teachers had much to share about their own experiences with pre-service training, induction, mentoring, administrative supports, and administrative hindrances. Their specific recommendations will be presented in the practical applications section below.

The empirical implications of this study’s findings as they relate to teacher retention are two-fold. First, participants described as beneficial many of the same factors referred to in the literature. Teachers were appreciative of the positive impact quality training, encouraging principals, and supportive colleagues had made in their continued development as effective educators. Additionally, they expressed a zest for helping others with the knowledge they had gleaned through their own experiences, both the positive and the less-than-positive.

There is a second empirical implication of this study’s findings as they relate to teacher retention factors noted in the literature. Teachers in this study described these factors in a way that reflected their outer circle position in impacting the participants’ personal commitment to
continue in urban K-12 Christian education. The position of primary impact on longevity was participant commitment to the triad of relationship – the God-Teacher-Student relationship at the heart of the *what, how, and why* of what the participants believed and did every day. This was often explained in active descriptions such as “sowing seeds” of love for God and faith in Him into the children, “pouring” into the children what God poured into them, leading the children as God was leading them, or telling Truth as Truth had been told to them. Faith in God who called them, educating with the gifts God had given them, and ministering to the students to whom God sent them created a circle of reciprocal relationship that, in significant ways, could be seen as a hedge. This hedge served as a barrier for keeping the hounds of attrition at bay as well as a border for keeping precious developing fruit ripening securely within.

These empirical implications should guide administrators toward appreciation for and appropriate application of the teacher view. For example, teachers who have demonstrated effectiveness and persistence in the urban K-12 Christian schoolhouse can be rightly considered by administrators as valuable resources in the creation and implementation of efficacious mentoring and induction programs. These teachers are apt to be willing to provide practical insights, and they also serve as exemplary role models. However, administrators with an understanding of the God-Teacher-Student relationship will continually exercise care to avoid overextending veteran teachers through outer circle assignments. The God-Teacher-Student relationship requires time and focus and must be supported as *primary* in importance.

**Theoretical Implications**

Participants in the study provided data through the GCOS, interviews, and focus groups. Analysis of this data produced findings in accord with the constructs of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985a, 1985b, 2000, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The long-term
persistence demonstrated by the participants was consistent with their relatively high autonomous orientation, intrinsic motivation, and intrinsic goal framing. They expressed intrinsic motivation through their descriptions of desire for growth as teachers and as people of faith, through their evident interest in and enjoyment of teaching children in the urban K-12 Christian school setting, and through the recognition of the high degree of congruence present between what they valued most and what they did daily as educational ministers.

The illustration that came to mind when participants talked about attrition factors was that of a balance scale. On one side of the scale, attrition factors were piled high. On the other side of the scale, the delicate, positive “seed sowing” moments experienced by participants were placed. When compared, the weightiness of seed sowing far exceeded attrition factors in significance. Weightiness, in this sense, was demonstrated by the passionate emphases given to a concept in participant descriptions of their lived experiences.

The balance scale also illustrates the descriptions participants gave of retention factors. On one side of the scale were the retention factors as noted in the literature. On the other side of the scale, the cultivation of the God-Teacher-Student relationship experienced by teachers was placed. When compared, the weightiness of the triad relationship far exceeded other retention factors in significance to the teachers in this study.

The balance scale imagery could be used a final time to illustrate the weightiness of intrinsic motivation factors in impacting long-term persistence. On one side of the balance scale three aspects of intrinsic motivation, including desire for growth, interest, and enjoyment (Deci & Ryan, 2008) were placed. On the other side of the scale, the fourth aspect of intrinsic motivation, congruence with one’s values (Deci & Ryan, 2008), was placed. The weightiness of congruence with one’s values was of far more significance.
In this study, persistence was demonstrated by all of the participants; further, teacher descriptions of their autonomy, motivations, and goals were in harmony with the Self-Determination Theory view of persistence. Nevertheless, the implication of this study’s findings is that the role of faith and calling bring added dimensions to persistence. These enhancements as experienced by teachers were described as “obedience,” “answering to God,” “when He tells me something, I’m scared not to listen,” “I’ve got to stand before God.” Persistence may be an appropriate word when considering longevity in temporal assignments. Persistence is not a big enough word to encompass the qualities of faithfulness, steadfastness, obedience, devotion, tenacity, diligence, endurance, drive, and conviction of purpose necessary to carry out a mission that extends beyond the temporal. To be clear, these qualities were not mentioned by participants as something to boast about, because they were not seen as emanating from themselves. This was summed up by a participant who shared, “I can’t take any credit for what I do, and I won’t take any credit. The only credit I can take is believing in Him and knowing He’ll get me through anything.”

For those administrating in this setting, these theoretical implications provide direction in balancing teacher/administrator priorities. Intrinsic motivators for teachers such as seed sowing, cultivation of the God-Teacher-Student relationship, and value congruence should be held in regard and spotlighted often by administrators. While teachers recognize the importance of administrative concerns such as improving school image, doubling enrollment, or raising finances for a building fund, these are not likely to serve as intrinsic motivators for teacher long-term persistence. Administrators focused on utilizing such concerns for faculty motivation may find their desired outcomes elusive.
To reiterate the empirical and theoretical implications, the findings of this study indicated general agreement with pertinent factors presented in the literature. However, the findings did not align in terms of the degree to which factors in the literature were deemed significant to attrition, retention, and persistence for these participants. The fact that these participants had not left their positions despite experiencing multiple stressors (e.g., low salaries, exhaustion, administrative hindrances) was an obvious indicator that attrition factors had not overridden the teachers’ motivation and commitment to remain. Over and above the retention factors prevalent in the literature (e.g., teacher training, supportive principal) was the great emphasis participants placed on their God-Teacher-Student relationship and the walking out of faith through educational ministry. Additionally, participants expressed a far greater emphasis on the importance of value congruence than on the other aspects of intrinsic motivation (e.g., growth, interest, enjoyment) espoused by SDT. Value congruence was paramount in their expressions of “freedom,” “I don’t have to compartmentalize my life,” and the desire to sow “into the lives of children, not only the importance of the educational side of it, but also the fact that I have the opportunity to sow the Word of God into their lives.” They experienced a calling from God to which they responded in faith, a gifting to be effective educators, and a sending to the mission field of their students - in degree of importance and weight of significance, this experience superseded other factors prevalent in the literature.

**Practical Applications**

One of the themes that emerged through data analysis was the theme of participants as receivers and givers, with the accent on their enjoyment in giving to others. Teachers were enthusiastic in offering the benefit of wisdom gleaned through their years of service. This shared
wisdom has been categorized as (a) advice to those leading teacher pre-service training, (b) advice to those leading mentor-mentee and induction programs, and (c) advice to administrators of urban K-12 Christian schools.

**Advice to those leading teacher pre-service programs.** Participants shared a multiplicity of areas they considered to be of value in pre-service teacher preparation, yet in many cases had been lacking in their own pre-service programs. Among topics participants recommended for consideration by those leading teacher pre-service programs were the following:

- Require professors of K-12 pre-service teachers to remain active in their own K-12 classrooms or on the cutting edge of research in their area of expertise.
- Provide practical information and experience in working with children from cultures other than one’s own.
- Offer opportunities to get to know children in settings outside the classroom, such as on the athletic fields, in summer camps, in church youth groups.
- Prepare pre-service teachers to establish effective parent-teacher communications.
- Place each pre-service teacher in rural, suburban, and urban settings for observations, practicums, and student teaching.
- Give pre-service teachers opportunities to observe teachers with different teaching styles.
- Assist pre-service teachers in creating practical organizational tools to handle the barrage of academic paperwork.
- Facilitate discussions in which pre-service teachers can debrief classroom observations with their peers.
• Emphasize to pre-service teachers that even the best preparation for their first year of teaching does not fully cover every situation – they will still face the unexpected.

Overwhelmingly, the most frequently and resoundingly recommended advice to those leading pre-service programs was to get pre-service teachers into actual classrooms early in their training. The hands-on experiences were considered by participants to be the most important aspect of training a future teacher. When those in college education programs must wait until junior or senior year before obtaining valuable classroom experience, the impact of what is actually involved in the everyday work of their chosen profession may arrive too late for a potential change of majors.

Advice to those leading mentoring and/or induction programs. Mentoring was considered by all participants to be an excellent support for new teachers. Teachers expressed the value of a mentor to a new teacher in several major areas, including the mentor’s opportunity to (a) provide an open door and a listening ear for a new teacher, (b) offer insights into the particular age group of students assigned to the new teacher, and (c) recommend and model ways for the new teacher to build appropriate, caring relationships with the children. All but one of this study’s participants described exceptional relationships with their students, relationships that - when coupled with proper boundaries and well-chosen, consistently applied procedures - enabled them to have few behavioral or discipline problems. One participant described the relational classroom as a place where

you walk in and there is so much going on, and yet you know they’re all on task and doing what they’re supposed to be doing. . . . I think those teachers have taken the time to create a community in the classroom. They view themselves as a team.
Participant advice to those planning, leading, or serving as a mentor in a mentoring/induction program incorporated some of the following ideas:

- Mentoring takes time. Administrators should provide scheduled time within the school day during which mentors and mentees can work together.
- It is of great importance for the mentor to assist the new teacher in recognizing that there is a process of becoming the teacher one wishes to be; the first year is just one step in that process.
- Mentors should facilitate new teachers in their ability to aptly reflect on what is working, what is not working, and ways to improve.
- Mentor-mentee meeting times should be of two types, scheduled and impromptu, with a weekly scheduled meeting augmented by flexible open door time. A third type of meeting in which new teachers meet with other new teachers was also recommended.
- Mentors should provide the practical – floor plans, door codes, protocols unique to the culture of the school – for newcomers to the school community.
- A three year induction program allows for a progressive focus for the mentor and mentee, beginning the first year with emphasis on new teacher organization, procedures, and planning; continuing into the second year with the development of one or two strategies to improve instruction; and completing the induction program in the third year by selecting one or two additional strategies that stretch the mentee just beyond the comfort zone.

Participants in this study had an abundance of recommendations for mentoring programs and mentors. Only one key recommendation was directed toward the mentee by veteran
teachers: Be teachable and remain teachable. As one teacher with more than 30 years of experience commented, “I hate to say it, but many of the young ones come in and think they know it all.” Other veteran teachers agreed.

**Advice to administrators in urban K-12 Christian education.** Participants had much advice to offer administrators. As discussed previously, notable supports offered by administrators were appreciated and considered to be helpful by participants. Alternately, administrators and administrative policies provoked some vociferous expressions of exasperation. Following are areas in which administrators provided support as experienced by this study’s participants:

- Providing needed resources
- Making pertinent recommendations based on teacher observations
- Offering quality professional development training
- Protecting and “backing up” teachers who feel threatened by parents
- Seeing potential problems and pre-empting them before they become full-fledged
- Being a servant-leader
- Revealing a heart for the children
- Knowing the children by name; greeting them by name every day
- Encouraging the children
- Being present at school events
- Refusing to micromanage
- Asking “How can I pray for you?”
- Caring about the teacher as a person
- Stretching teachers to grow
• Communicating in a clear and timely manner
• Carrying through with what is begun

Of the many valuable supports administrators offered to participants in this study, one was by far the one most often mentioned, the most gratefully received, and the most appreciated at the two schools in which it was utilized. This number one support was the administrators’ open door policy. Participants saw a true open door policy as representative of sincere caring about the teacher and his or her concerns. Teachers acknowledged the great time pressures their administrators functioned under and treasured the administrators’ willingness to prioritize the teacher over those pressures. One participant described it as a feeling of being welcome, stating,

It’s more than just the open door policy – [it’s] the fact that I know I can walk in to either of their offices, welcome anytime. And if they have someone in there and they see me, they will either motion me in, or be like “just a minute” kind of thing. They make it very clear that they’re ready to talk to me. I never feel like a burden.

At the research study sites in which the open door policy was used, teachers felt highly valued. As such, this is one recommendation that should be given thorough consideration by administrators who do not yet have a thriving open door policy.

Because participants knew that I was an administrator of an urban K-12 Christian school, there was an initial careful consideration and gracious measuring of words when I asked teachers to share ways in which administrators might put hindrances in their paths. Teachers, especially veterans of two plus or three plus decades, had reasonably accurate understandings of the fact that administrators have their own set of challenges and a point of perspective that differs from their own. For example, when responding to a fellow participant’s comment about how administrators listen but don’t always take action to address concerns, one participant said, “I
think if they could, they would. It’s not always as easy as it looks to us for them to do something. There’s other things that may be affected if they change one thing.” However, once participants seemed assured that I sincerely wanted to learn how I could better support them in their calling, the measuring of words transformed into an outpouring. Participants became anxious to give advice to an administrator who, however well intentioned, sometimes hindered rather than helped her teachers. The following examples can be seen as paraphrased pleas from teachers to administrators, a completion of the hypothetical phrase, *If you truly wish to support and encourage us, please . . .*

- Do not address the entire staff about a problem you have with one employee. It puts us on the defensive.
- Do not put one of us on a pedestal in front of all. We try not to show favoritism with our students; we would appreciate the same from you. Plus, it’s painful for the one on the pedestal when she or he falls off.
- Do not ask one teacher to give you information about another teacher. Go to the teacher you wish to know about and ask directly.
- Do not leave unmentioned the situations we face that produce stress, even if you do not have solutions.
- Do not undermine us when we ask you to help with a student discipline issue by making it seem to the student as though the teacher is taking the issue too seriously. If we send you a student discipline issue, it is because it is very serious. The student should not come back to our classroom having enjoyed chatting with you.
- Do not schedule team teachers to never share a planning period.
- Do not put over 25 children in a classroom with no assistant.
• Do not go years without ever taking the time to observe my classroom and give me feedback.

• Do not preach godliness while allowing gossip.

• Do not publish rules that are continually overlooked by some and strictly enforced by others. Only establish rules you are committed to consistently reinforcing school-wide.

While each of the above Please do nots were given as a result of unhelpful experiences with administrators, none of them produced the firestorm of expression reserved for the Big Three. The following three areas unleashed an onslaught of discussion. As an administrator listening to these commentaries, I was astonished and admonished by the depth of distress teachers experienced when confronted by these situations.

The first of the major areas teachers advised administrators to address was communication. At two of the sites participating in this study, teachers struggled with a continual need to readjust their carefully designed plans because of poor communication apparently stemming from disorganization and unclear job descriptions. For example, at one site, teaching time was regularly disrupted with as little as 30 minutes warning as often as two to three times each week. Participants had been asked by administration to stop instructional time to create lists or fill out forms for the main office, have students write thank you notes to volunteers, call a parent to find out where a student’s lunch was, or otherwise “just do this one little thing – it will only take a few minutes.” Part of the difficulty appeared to be due to a lack of timely communication stemming from failure to organize and plan ahead on the part of administrators. The other factor appeared to be due to administrative assistants who passed along
their own job responsibilities to teachers. As one participant noted, “It’s easier just to tell you to do it.”

The second of the three major areas participants in this study recommended administrators address was student placement. Teachers at four sites found it extraordinarily difficult to have students placed in their classrooms who were two to three years below grade level in one or more academic or other developmental area. Because the participants in this study viewed themselves as conscientious, loving, and respectful of their administrator’s authority, they labored diligently to bring below-grade-level students up to grade by the end of the school year. Nevertheless, this took a tremendous toll on the teachers and on the at-grade-level students in the classroom. As a result, teachers questioned the student admissions testing and placement process, voiced doubts about whether testing was done at all, and wondered if administration might be more concerned with enrollment numbers and pleasing parents than with high quality education and the input of the teachers.

In only one site’s focus group were teachers generally pleased with their role in the admissions process. At their school, potential students shadowed for one or two days with their peer age group. Teachers had a chance to observe the potential student’s interaction with current students, see exemplars of the potential student’s work, and note the overall comfort level of the potential student in the actual classroom setting typical of the school. Their written reports were used by the administration in making placement decisions. Whether or not administrators in other schools choose to adopt this type of format, participants in this study strongly advised administrators to examine admissions testing and placement procedures because of their pervasive and dramatic impact at the classroom level.
The final area of major concern was the most discussed of any topic related to administration in the focus groups at all five sites. In a sense, it touched on all of the discussion points, as it related to the entire spectrum of teaching in an urban K-12 Christian school. This vital area concerned the administrative decision-making process. Participants in this study were very well aware there were issues administrators dealt with outside the purview of the teacher. However, a number of participants stated strongly that when it came to the classroom, teachers were the ones with the most information. As one teacher expressed, “There are decisions that are made for us that I think [administrators] should get the input of us as educators because they don’t know how our children work, and they don’t know how our schedule works. . .” Another participant commented, “How do you make a plan for something and you don’t know what’s going on? So the one thing that I need for an administrator to do to help me out is ask me first.”

This third area of major concern should be taken under strong advisement by administrators. It would go a long way toward building effective administrator-teacher partnerships, and could be seen as a pathway toward alleviating multiple teacher difficulties revolving around administrative issues, including the aforementioned major challenges with communication and student placement. As discussed in the composite structural description of the experiences of teachers who persist in urban K-12 Christian education, these participants viewed their experiences in the context or dynamic of relationships. They considered their relationships with administrators, parents, and peers to be peripheral to their core relationships with God and their students. However, peer relationships were universally considered to be positive and supportive; administrator relationships were not. While relationships between teachers and administrators will not find their way into the core God-Teacher-Student triad, it is
certainly worth pursuing opportunities to open genuine conversations about building effective and mutually supportive administrator-teacher partnerships.

**Limitations**

This study’s findings are limited in transferability due to sampling from only five urban ACSI schools in the northeastern, mideastern, midwestern, and southeastern regions of the United States. Schools in other regions of the country may have provided distinctly different environments in which teacher experiences would not correspond to those offered in this study. A significant limitation was presented in that only one male participant took part in the research. Any differences or similarities noted between the one male participant and the thirteen female participants could not be considered on the basis of gender.

Additional limitations included the procedures leading up to participant selection, the veracity of the collected data, and the personalities or nature of the participants. Heads of school at the five research sites were asked to (a) identify teachers fitting the desired criteria, (b) send to each the information on the study, and (c) ask teachers to go to the study survey should they wish to consider participating in this research. It is possible that heads of schools may have omitted some potential participants due to oversight or for other reasons. In the case of the veracity of collected data, it was assumed that participants gave accurate information when answering the survey, GCOS, interview questions, and focus group questions. The final limitation related to the personalities of the participants. The nature of these teachers, as seen repeatedly in the data, was a giving nature. If they could be of service, they would do so – hence, their willingness to participate in the research study. Therefore, whether the findings would have been the same with teachers of a less giving nature is unknown.
Recommendations for Future Research

Because there has been a dearth of research into teachers of urban K-12 Christian education, great opportunity and need for future research exists. The first avenue for future research should explore the experiences of teachers who did not persist in urban K-12 Christian education. Teachers who progressed through pre-service programs preparing them to go into education, became certified or licensed, went on to their first year or two of teaching in this setting, and then left the field may provide deeper insight into the role of faith and calling that was the distinguishing mark of the teachers in this study.

A second avenue for future research should investigate the highly promising potential of an autonomy-supportive environment on teacher retention among this highest-risk-for-attrition group of educators. Studies in which administrators provided autonomy support to teachers, who in turn provided autonomy support for students, have indicated an associated boost to intrinsic motivation, intrinsic goal framing, and both short- and long-term persistence within the learning community (Cheon et al., 2014; Cheon & Reeve, 2015; Jang et al., 2012; Lyness et al., 2013; Ten Cate, 2013). Investigating the effect of autonomy-supportive environments in urban K-12 Christian schools may yield rich results and, additionally, provide evidence concerning the pivotal position of value congruence seen in this study.

A third recommendation is for future research incorporating a study design that focuses on a cohort of teachers before they begin their first year teaching in an urban K-12 Christian setting and follows them longitudinally over the course of approximately 15 years. Although participants in this study ranged in age from their mid-twenties through late sixties, each provided data only for a window encompassing several hours. A longitudinal study could note development or lack thereof of the God-Teacher-Student relationship that was a vital impetus for
persistence in this study’s findings, as well as participant understanding of educational ministry. Much discernment could be mined from walking with teachers who persist, as well as those who may not persist, over a significant portion of time.

In addition to researching persistence through these three avenues, three further recommendations should be considered as having the potential to expand knowledge in this area. These include (a) an examination of gender differences in motivations for persistence, (b) an approach to the question of persistence utilizing case study methodology, and (c) an investigation of administrator experiences as they relate to persistence. Because only one male participant took part in this study, collected data was insufficient for determining potential differences in motivation between males and females. An in-depth study of gender differences in motivations for persistence could offer a vital contribution. Case study methodology, with a focus on the persistence question within a bounded system (e.g., a single school), has potential to contribute through an exploration of interrelationships from multiple stakeholder groups’ perspectives. Finally, because administrators significantly impact the environment in which persistence is a prized commodity, future research with these men and women would cast brighter illumination on the question of persistence.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of teachers who persisted in urban K-12 Christian education at five ACSI schools in the United States. A transcendental phenomenological qualitative methodology was used in order to allow the voices of the teachers to be paramount. Through their sharing, the participants in this study granted an opportunity for others to gain deeper understanding and insight into this experience. Of significant findings that
emerged, two stand out as fundamentally important, especially for administrators serving this
group of teachers.

The first significant finding was the centrality of faith in the life of the participants. Woven throughout every theme and integral to every level of understanding one might glean, faith in God could not be missed as essential to each person’s identity and purpose. Faith was evidenced by responding to the call to teach, by stewarding the gifts given to teach, and by going to - and staying at - the place where one was sent to teach. In the face of daunting challenges, teachers received impartations of fulfillment and joy through the carrying out of educational ministry.

For the administrator of an urban Christian school, it would be wise to take sufficient time to explore the ideas of faith, calling, gifting, and sending with prospective new faculty members as well as current faculty. Teachers in this study had particular gifting parameters corresponding to their particular calling, and did not perceive those as broadly interchangeable. For example, teachers gifted for elementary children shuddered at the thought of working with high schoolers, while teachers sent to middle schoolers were unhinged by the sound of crying kindergartners. Administrators would do well to listen carefully for the group, age, and content over which faculty members become genuinely enthused, one mark of specific calling seen in this study’s participants.

The second significant finding was the essential importance of value congruence in an autonomy-supporting environment. Value congruence was more substantive, as measured by the great emphases placed upon it, than any other aspect of intrinsic motivation in contributing to the long-term persistence exhibited by each of the participants. Teachers in urban K-12 Christian education experienced a full expression of themselves as people of faith, doing what they were
gifted to do, in the place to which they had been called, with the children to whom they had been sent, for a purpose that extended into eternity. This confluence created the sense of freedom in “rightness” of relationship between God, teacher, and student.

For an administrator, the image of a teacher poised to persist no matter what can be a dangerous revelation. At the most fundamental level, teachers with the qualities of persistence, faithfulness, steadfastness, obedience, devotion, tenacity, diligence, endurance, drive, and conviction of purpose are able to withstand a lot of neglect, inconsideration, overwork, and lack of appreciation from administrators before they reach the breaking point. So much so, administrators may fail in due diligence to steward these precious teachers’ resources and protect them as people for whom the administrator cares.

Administrators should certainly consider the advice and recommendations participants shared with those in authority over them. Each bullet point and paragraph can serve as a mirror of administrator effectiveness in facilitating the teachers’ calling. However, simply checking them off as individual bullet points on a To Do list would put the administrator in the same inadequate position as the researcher utilizing the factor-by-factor approach to find out which particular attrition or retention factor should be addressed next. Rather, what is needed is the holistic approach in which the teacher’s value congruence is undergirded by the administrator’s cultivation of an autonomy-supportive environment. This is the environment distinguished by choice, positive language, promotion of experimentation, problem solving, creativity, and explanation of the significance of assigned tasks (Deci et al., 1981; Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987). As administrators cultivate this environment for teachers, teachers cultivate this environment for their students (Cheon & Reeve, 2015; Lyness et
As students learn within autonomy-supporting environments formed by their teachers, the teachers receive benefits in turn from giving such support (Cheon et al., 2014).

**Final Reflections**

The stories participants shared portrayed their experiences as ones of joy and sorrow, happiness and frustration, reward and challenge. Although they had spent years working with some of America’s neediest children in settings associated with the highest risk for teacher attrition, they did not consider themselves at liberty to leave, while at the same time, they considered themselves to be fully free to do and be what God had called them to do and be. Their motivation, goals, and persistence provided fuel to continue through challenges, while the privilege of sowing seeds into the hearts of the children and seeing them begin to grow was more than enough to replenish the resources they poured out daily. These participants *more than persisted* because of their understanding of themselves as people of faith who had been called by God to an educational ministry. Most significantly, they had relationship with the God Who called them. He is the God of the ultimate long view, the God who will reveal the full import of what their faithfulness and obedience to Him has borne after their lifetime on this planet.

About 2,000 years ago, the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians. A passage of his letter speaks of his ministry for their benefit, and the reason for his persistence. Several verses from the passage follow, echoing these precious teachers’ hearts for God and for their children:

> Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. . . . But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed . . . . For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the
many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (II Corinthians 4:1, 7-9, 15-18)
REFERENCES


*Christian Educational Journal, 10*(2), 339-359.


*Journal for Effective Schools, 11*(1), 1-34.


Kusurkar, R., & Ten Cate, O. (2013). AM last page: Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire: Self-determination theory and motivation in medical students. *Academic Medicine, 88*(6), 904.


Washington, C. J. (2010). *A multi-case study of demographic, culture, and climate characteristics of urban Christian schools that have narrowed the achievement gap in mathematics in grades 4 and 8* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (UMI 3484750)


APPENDIX A: ACSI STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Association of Christian Schools International (2012c) Statement of Faith contains the following seven tenets:

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative, inerrant Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21).

2. We believe there is one God, eternally existent in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1, Matthew 28:19, John 10:30).

3. We believe in the deity of Christ (John 10:33), His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:35), His sinless life (Hebrews 4:15, 7:26), His miracles (John 2:11), His vicarious and atoning death (1 Corinthians 15:3, Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 2:9), His Resurrection (John 11:25, 1 Corinthians 15:4), His Ascension to the right hand of God (Mark 16:19), His personal return in power and glory (Acts 1:11, Revelation 19:11).

4. We believe in the absolute necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit for salvation because of the exceeding sinfulness of human nature, and that men are justified on the single ground of faith in the shed blood of Christ, and that only by God’s grace and through faith alone are we saved (John 3:16–19, 5:24; Romans 3:23, 5:8–9; Ephesians 2:8–10; Titus 3:5).

5. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; that they are saved unto the resurrection of life, and that they are lost unto the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:28–29).

6. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 2:12–13, Galatians 3:26–28).
7. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life (Romans 8:13–14; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19–20; Ephesians 4:30, 5:18).

Reproduced with permission of ACSI
APPENDIX B: SITE SELECTION

In accord with the delimitations set for this study, research sites were selected based on heads of schools’ affirmative answers to each of the questions below:

- Is your school private (non-profit)?
- Is yours an urban school (within population centers of 250,000 people or more)?
- Do 50% or more of your children qualify for free or reduced meals?
- Do you offer education in at least a portion of the K-12 range?
- Does your school provide an education based on and utilizing a biblical worldview?
- Is your school accredited through ACSI? An ACSI member school?
- Approximately how many of your teachers hold state licensure and/or ACSI certification at the level of standard or above?
- Of those teachers holding licensure and/or certification as stated above, approximately how many have worked in urban K-12 Christian education for three or more years?
- May I use your school site for several individual interviews and one focus group should the participants from your school confirm that this is an agreeable location for them?
APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 1, 2015

Marie C. Teodori

Dear Marie,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
APPENDIX D: ACSI SECONDARY TEACHER REQUIREMENTS

Requires 20 semester hours in a subject area for an endorsement or 36 semester hours in a subject area for a major.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERIM</th>
<th>TEMPORARY</th>
<th>STANDARD</th>
<th>PROFESSIONAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Valid 2 years (not renewable) | Valid 2 years (renewable) | Valid 5 years (renewable) | Valid 5 years (can be renewed as Lifetime**)

**Degree Requirement:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERIM</th>
<th>TEMPORARY</th>
<th>STANDARD</th>
<th>PROFESSIONAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors from an ACSI Recognized College</td>
<td>Bachelors from a regionally accredited* college</td>
<td>Bachelors from a regionally accredited* college</td>
<td>Masters from a regionally accredited* college</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*accrediting agency must be approved by the US DOE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Studies Requirement:</th>
<th>Educational Studies Requirement: (Initial certificate only)</th>
<th>Educational Studies Requirement:</th>
<th>Educational Studies Requirement:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18 semester hours in educational studies including 1 secondary methods course (a teaching reading course will also be required if certified in the areas of language arts or social science) and student teaching at the secondary level</td>
<td>18 semester hours in educational studies including 1 secondary methods course (a teaching reading course will also be required if certified in the areas of language arts or social science) and student teaching at the secondary level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Biblical Studies Requirement:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERIM</th>
<th>TEMPORARY</th>
<th>STANDARD</th>
<th>PROFESSIONAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 semester hour or 16 CEUs</td>
<td>10 semester hour or 30 CEUs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACSI biblical philosophy of Christian school Education</th>
<th>ACSI biblical philosophy of Christian school Education: (Initial certificate only)</th>
<th>ACSI biblical philosophy of Christian school Education:</th>
<th>ACSI biblical philosophy of Christian school Education:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**To Renew:**

No renewal is possible. The applicant must do all work listed on his/her individual Credit Evaluation Form (sent with ACSI certificate)

May need one or more of the following (check your individual Credit Evaluation Form):

- 3 semester hours in educational studies
- 1 semester or 3 CEUs in biblical studies
- ACSI biblical philosophy of Christian school education requirement

Will need to complete the following:

- 2 semester hours or 5 CEUs in Biblical studies
- 2 semester hours or 5 CEUs in educational studies

Will need to complete the following:

- 2 semester hours or 5 CEUs in Biblical studies
- 2 semester hours or 5 CEUs in educational studies

**This certificate can become Lifetime at the first renewal by submitting a letter from your administrator stating you have worked in a Christian school setting for at least 5 years along with your renewal requirements.**
If you would like to apply for initial certification with ACSI, you need to:

1. Submit an application (available through the ACSI website or by request from the Certification Department).
2. Submit a current state certificate in the requested area and/or transcripts showing college name, location, degree granted, and date degree was granted.
3. Submit the fee as listed on the application.

*The student teaching requirement can be waived via a letter from your supervisor stating you have worked for at least 2 years full-time in grades 7 - 12.

### Helpful Information

1. In order to receive credit for any work accomplished, the applicant must send a transcript or CEU certificate. ACSI cannot accept anything else in lieu of these forms of verification. CEUs must be issued by ACSI-approved CEU providers or by accredited or ACSI-approved colleges/universities. Applicants should verify the approval of CEU provider before participation.
2. If you have 30 semester hours or more in Bible, you may qualify for a lifetime Bible waiver upon ACSI’s evaluation of your transcripts.
3. The definition of a methods course is a course that helps you learn teaching skills in a subject or area of teaching. Course topics that would fit under this category are, for example, tests and measurements, curriculum and instruction, teaching science, teaching math, classroom discipline, and exceptional child in the regular classroom. If you have questions about a specific course, please ask the ACSI Certification Department.
4. Keep a photocopy of each item sent to ACSI, or send photocopies and keep originals.
5. For a list of accredited colleges/universities, refer to the book *Accredited Institutions of Postsecondary Education* (Washington, DC: American Council on Education), which may be available in your local library.
6. An ACSI Secondary certificate covers grades 7 through grade 12.
7. A copy of a diploma does not serve as proof of a degree, but a clear photocopy of a transcript is acceptable.
   Please be certain that the names and locations of the colleges/universities and the degree(s) and date(s) of degree(s) are printed on transcripts (all by the colleges/universities).

### General Renewal Requirements

All renewals/upgrades require an application and the fee as requested on the application (reduced fee if resubmitting within 6 months of the certificate issue date; direct any inquiries to the ACSI Certification Department). Instead of sending items piecemeal, please send only completed packets of renewal/upgrade materials.

1 quarter hour = 2/3 of a semester hour

1 semester hour = 3 CEUs (continuing education units) - Please note: CEUs cannot be converted into semester hours
1 CEU = 6–10 hours of contact time (does not include homework time)

ACSI Certification Office, PO Box 65130, Colorado Springs, CO 80962-5130 Toll Free: (888) 839-8101, Fax: (719) 867-0246, Email: certification@acsi.org
(Association of Christian Schools International, 2012b)

Reproduced with permission of ACSI
APPENDIX E: ACSI BIBLICAL STUDIES REQUIREMENTS

ACSI emphasizes the necessity for Christian school teachers and administrators to have a solid grasp on God’s Word in order that they may be equipped to integrate it into their lives and teaching.

1. Courses in Bible from accredited or ACSI recognized evangelical colleges or Bible institutes are accepted for meeting the biblical studies requirements for ACSI certification. Individuals should check the status of the institution prior to taking a course. Most courses with the institution’s Bible and theology course codes will be accepted for credit. Typically this is a BI, BIB, TH, or THE prefix. Missions, counseling, or Christian education classes do not meet this requirement.

- Each semester hour is equivalent to three Continuing Education Units should you wish to convert the credits to CEUs.
- External, distance-learning courses are accepted only from accredited and ACSI recognized institutions.

2. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) in biblical studies are accepted by ACSI for certification when taken from an ACSI approved provider. Each six hours of direct instruction in an organized, structured educational setting qualifies for one CEU. This does not include time for reading or assignments. Additional information about CEUs and the requirements for them are included in the ACSI brochures on certification and continuing education.

3. Bible course credits and/or CEUs are available at many of the ACSI regional teachers’ conventions. Information about specific offerings is available from the ACSI office in your region.

4. To meet the requirements for CEUs in biblical studies, a course must be clearly focused on the content of the Scriptures. Ancillary or anecdotal reference to Scripture verses or passages during a course does not qualify it as a Bible course. A representative list of acceptable courses follows:

- Old/New Testament Survey
- Doctrines of the Bible
- Personal Evangelism
- Hermeneutics
- Gospels
- What the Bible Teaches
- Biblical View of the Cults
- Wisdom Literature of the Scriptures
- Bible Book Studies
- Doctrines of the Bible
- Personal Evangelism
- Hermeneutics
- Gospels
- What the Bible Teaches
- Biblical View of the Cults
- Wisdom Literature of the Scriptures
- Apologetics
- Teachings of Christ
- Bible Heroes/Apostles
- Systematic Theology
- Biblical Theology
- Major/Minor Prophets
- Bible Themes

Many courses that deal with ministry related topics are of great value, but are not seen as direct preparation for teachers to practice biblical integration.

Teachers and administrators are encouraged to verify that ACSI will accept the credit/CEU prior to enrolling in the class.

ACSI Certification
PO Box 65130
Colorado Springs, CO 80962-5130

ceus@acsi.org
(719) 528-1201
Fax: (719) 867-0246

(Association of Christian Schools International, 2012b)

Reproduced with permission of ACSI
APPENDIX F: ACSI PHILOSOPHY REQUIREMENTS

Christian Philosophy of Education Checklist for Teachers/Administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>ACSI Certificate #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mailing Address</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Zip Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Address</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Zip Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Check the following when completed. All requirements must be fulfilled prior to submission:

1. _____ I have reviewed The Philosophy of Christian School Education DVD by Dr. Derek Keenan, produced by ACSI.

2. _____ I have read the books that are required. Please see reverse side for list of required books for both teachers and administrators.

3. _____ I have completed the written assignment.

Administrator/Board Chairman or Pastor, please sign verifying that the applicant has successfully completed the above requirements. Administrators who complete the philosophy requirements should have this form signed by the school board chairman or the pastor of their church or school.

Signature of Administrator/Board Chairman or Pastor

Date

Printed Name

Send this completed form with your application, fee, etc. Do not send separately. This checklist is not required for your first ACSI Interim or Temporary (Basic) certificate.

Unless otherwise noted, all materials necessary for completion of the philosophy requirement may be ordered from the ACSI Order Department at 800-367-0798. If you are ordering in Canada, please contact the Prairie Book Room at 300-456-0961 for the books published by ACSI.
Required Reading List


e. One of the books below may be used in place of one of the required books listed above.

**Additional Books:** (Please check the one additional book you chose from the list below)


**Writing Requirement**

Write approximately six typed pages on your personal understanding of the crucial elements of a Christian philosophy of education.

(Association of Christian Schools International, 2012b)

Reproduced with permission of ACSI
APPENDIX G: VIRGINIA TEACHER LICENSURE APPLICATION

APPLICATION FOR A VIRGINIA LICENSE

(Application for a teaching license, collegiate professional license, postgraduate professional license, pupil personnel services license, and division superintendent license.)

Thank you for your interest in licensure in Virginia. Please follow the instructions below, complete the application forms, attach required documentation, and return all completed information in a single packet to the address noted below. If you are employed in a Virginia educational agency, please submit your completed application packet directly to the appropriate individual in your school division or nonpublic school.

Please submit a complete packet. If an incomplete packet is submitted and a license cannot be issued, your application information will only be retained for one year. If a license has not been issued within a year, you will be required to resubmit a complete packet, including the fee.

CRITERIA FOR SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION FOR AN INITIAL VIRGINIA LICENSE


You may submit an application for an initial Virginia license if you meet the criteria in at least one of the following:

• Have completed a state-approved teacher preparation program, to include student teaching. (If you have completed a Virginia approved program and are not employed by a Virginia school division or nonpublic school, you should request that your application be submitted by the college or university.)

• Have completed a graduate state-approved school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, or speech language pathology program or hold a current, valid license in another state with no deficiencies in one of these pupil personnel services areas.

• Hold a current, valid license from another state with no deficiencies with comparable endorsement(s) or teaching area(s).

• Are employed full-time as an educator under contract by a Virginia school division. (Please submit your application directly to the employing school division.)

• Have completed requirements for a teaching license and completed an approved program in administration and supervision or hold a current, valid out-of-state license in administration and supervision. An individual who holds an active Virginia Postgraduate Professional license and who is seeking to add an administration
and supervision endorsement does not need to submit an application for an initial license but rather should request an additional endorsement.

- Are seeking a division superintendent license. (Please review the specific procedures for submitting a division superintendent license application.)

TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL

The Code of Virginia requires that individuals meet the Technology Standards for Instructional Personnel approved by the Board of Education. Individuals who graduated from an approved teacher preparation program in Virginia since December 1998 have met the requirement as the Technology Standards were incorporated in the program. All other individuals will need to meet this requirement as outlined and verified by the employing Virginia educational agency.

PROCEDURES FOR APPLYING FOR AN INITIAL VIRGINIA LICENSE FOR TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND SUPERVISORS, AND PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES PERSONNEL

PLEASE NOTE: The initial Application for a Virginia License packet is not applicable if you ever have been issued a Virginia teaching license. However, if an individual is seeking reinstatement of a license that has been suspended or revoked, the individual should review the Licensure Regulations for School Personnel and contact the Division of Teacher Education and Licensure.

Refer to the “Procedures for Adding an Endorsement” if you are seeking an additional endorsement on your Virginia license. This information may be accessed on the Department of Education’s Web site at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/licensure/adding_endorsements.pdf

Please follow the instructions below to apply for an initial license, complete the application forms, attach all required documentation, and return all completed information in a single packet to the Virginia Department of Education, Division of Teacher Education and Licensure.

Step 1: Application Form: Please respond to all questions. SIGN AND DATE BOTH PAGES OF THE APPLICATION. The applicant is responsible for notifying the Division of Teacher Education and Licensure in writing of mailing address changes. [The procedures for applying for a division superintendent license are listed in the next section.]

NOTICE: In accordance with § 63.2-1937 of the Code of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Education requires applicants for teacher licensure in Virginia to provide their social security numbers. Additionally, Virginia uses applicants’ social security numbers to check the clearinghouse maintained by the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) for licenses revocation, cancellation, suspension, denial, and reinstatement in other states. Virginia also reports information to the clearinghouse as needed. The Virginia Department of Education will not release your social security number except to the NASDTEC clearinghouse to report cases of license revocation, cancellation, suspension, denial, and reinstatement as noted above. Please note that if you do not provide your social security number, your application will not be processed and no Virginia teaching license will be issued.
NOTICE: The name and address of a person applying for or possessing a license may be disseminated pursuant to a request under Section 2.2-3802(5) of the Code of Virginia.

**Step 2: Nonrefundable Application Fee:** Attach a certified check, cashier’s check, money order, or personal check made payable to the Treasurer of Virginia. The in-state fee is $50, and the out-of-state fee is $75. Note: The fee is determined by the address on your application. A $35 processing fee is assessed for a check returned for any reason. Returned checks are subject to collection action.

**Step 3: College Verification Form:** Include a copy of this form with your completed application packet. Send this form to the certification/licensure officer of the college or university where you completed a state-approved teacher preparation program. The student teaching/practicum/internship verification (Part III) must be completed for each student teaching/practicum/internship experience. (If you have completed a state-approved program at the undergraduate and graduate levels, please have both institutions complete a form.) If you hold an active, full, and renewable license without deficiencies from another state and are seeking only endorsement(s) on that license comparable to endorsements in Virginia, this form is not required.

**Step 4: Report on Experience:** Include a copy of this form with your completed application packet. Request the completion of this form by the appropriate official(s) at a public school division or accredited nonpublic school if you have completed at least one year of full-time contractual teaching or other school professional experience in early childhood special education or pre-kindergarten through grade 12 at a public or accredited nonpublic school.

**Step 5: Professional Teacher’s Assessment Scores:** Please submit a copy of your scores for the licensure assessments required. Scores requested to be sent to the licensure office through the assessment company may not arrive in this office through the electronic transfer process; therefore, individuals need to submit copies of all scores to the licensure office. Please refer to the following Web site for testing information: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/licensure/prof_teach_assessment.pdf. Individuals who hold a valid out-of-state license (full credential without deficiencies) and who have completed a minimum of three years of full-time, successful teaching experience in a public or accredited nonpublic school (Kindergarten through grade 12) in a state other than Virginia may be exempted from the professional teacher’s assessment requirements.

**Step 6: Official Student Transcripts:** Include official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended in your application packet. Contact the registrar’s office of each college or university where you have earned a degree or completed coursework. Request official student transcripts to be sent to you, and submit the transcripts with your application packet. Official student transcripts (bearing the registrar’s signature and embossed seal) that have been issued to students are acceptable. Placement records sent from colleges, grade reports, and photocopies of transcripts will not be accepted or returned.

**Step 7: Out-of-state License(s):** Submit a photocopy of each of your current out-of-state license(s).

**Step 8: Certification of Child Abuse Recognition and Intervention Training:** Include a copy of this certificate with your completed application. Effective July 1, 2004, the Code of Virginia requires that individuals seeking initial licensure or license renewal must complete study in child abuse recognition and intervention in accordance with curriculum guidelines approved by the Board of Education. Individuals must complete the Child Abuse Recognition and Intervention Training requirement prior to becoming licensed. A training module, available at no cost, is accessible at: http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/mandated_reporters/cws5691/index.html. Be sure your computer is connected to a printer when completing this training so you can print the certificate of completion.

**Step 9: Emergency First Aid, CPR, and AED Training or Certification:** Include documentation verifying this requirement has been met with your application packet. The 2013 General Assembly amended the Code of
Virginia to require that every person seeking initial licensure or renewal of a license shall provide evidence of completion of certification or training in emergency first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and the use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs). The certification or training program shall be based on the current national evidence-based emergency cardiovascular care guidelines for cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of an automated external defibrillator, such as a program developed by the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross. The Board of Education provides a waiver for this requirement for any person with a disability whose disability prohibits such person from completing the certification or training. The Request for a Waiver Form is accessible at the following Web site:

The following must be included on official documentation submitted to the licensure office by an individual:

- Individual’s full name (matching the name on licensure forms and the individual’s license, if applicable).
- Title or description of training or certification completed that clearly indicates that all three components were included: 1) emergency first aid, 2) CPR, and 3) use of AEDs.
- Date the training or certification was completed.
- Signature and title of the individual providing the training or certification or a printed certificate from the organization or group that provided the training or certification. Legible copies of wallet-sized certification cards or other sized certifications, containing the above information.

For additional information on this requirement, please refer to the question and answer document accessible at the following Web site: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2013/156-13a.pdf.
APPENDIX H: INTRODUCTORY EMAIL

Dear Fellow Educator:

Greetings! My name is Marie Teodori, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University’s School of Education. I am sending this email to you as an invitation to consider taking part in a research study exploring the experiences of teachers in urban K-12 Christian education. Very little research to date has focused on this unique group of educators. You have the opportunity to expand understanding of those who are the heart of K-12 educational ministry in our country’s urban centers if you meet the following criteria:

- Hold ACSI certification at the level of standard or above and/or state teacher licensure
- Have worked in urban K-12 Christian education for approximately three or more years

Below I have provided a link that takes you to more information about the study so you may determine if you wish to participate.

Thank you for taking the time to consider becoming a part of this study.
APPENDIX I: INFORMED CONSENT - QUESTIONNAIRE

Participant Informed Consent Form for Questionnaire

Persistence in Teachers of Urban K-12 Christian Education
Marie C. Teodori
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be part of a research study that is exploring the experiences of teachers working in urban K-12 Christian education. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your employment as a teacher in this setting for a period of approximately three or more years. I ask that you would read this form and ask any questions you may have before deciding to participate. Marie Teodori, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University, School of Education, is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of teachers who have persisted in urban K-12 Christian education in order to gain a better understanding of these educators.

This informed consent outlines the facts, implications, and consequences of the research study. Upon reading, understanding, and signing this document, you are giving consent to participate in the questionnaire portion of the research study. I would ask you to do the following:

• Complete an online questionnaire (approximately 20-25 minutes)

The researcher will use findings from this questionnaire to select and invite participants to take part in the interview and focus group portion of the research study.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

As a result of participating in this study, awareness of uncomfortable and unpleasant thoughts associated with the past or the present may arise or increase. The study has minimal risks that are no more than you would encounter in everyday life.

The benefits to participation are as follows:
• Exploring the experience of teaching in an urban K-12 Christian school
• Participating in a qualitative research study
• Providing valuable service to future educators

Additionally, findings from this study may be published and potentially prove beneficial to teachers, administrators, and board members seeking to support urban education.

Compensation:
There is no compensation provided for participants in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private through the use of pseudonyms to protect participant identity. The questionnaire, which includes the demographic survey, timeline, and vignettes, will be located on SurveyMonkey. Findings from this questionnaire will be kept in a password protected database and not shared with anyone. In any sort of presentation or report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. The information will be stored on the researcher’s password protected computer for no more than seven years and will then be deleted from the computer database.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty by emailing mteodori@liberty.edu. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Marie Teodori. You may now ask any questions you have regarding this study by emailing mteodori@liberty.edu or calling [number deleted]. You may also contact me should you have questions later by using the same contact email or telephone number. This research is being conducted under Dr. Gary Kuhne [email deleted].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Boulevard, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

(Note: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT)

I have read and understood the above information. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have all my questions answered.

By clicking Yes in the check box and typing my name and date in the text box, I consent to participate in this study. Yes Name and Date: _______________________________
APPENDIX J: INFORMED CONSENT – INTERVIEW/FOCUS GROUP

Participant Informed Consent Form for Interview/Focus Group

Persistence in Teachers of Urban K-12 Christian Education
Marie C. Teodori
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be part of a research study that is exploring the experiences of teachers working in urban K-12 Christian education. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your employment as a teacher in this setting for a period of approximately three or more years. I ask that you would read this form and ask any questions you may have before deciding to participate. Marie Teodori, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University, School of Education, is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of teachers who have persisted in urban K-12 Christian education in order to better understand these educators.

If you agree to be in the interview/focus group portion of this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

- Meet with the researcher for an individual interview (approximately 75 minutes). The interview will take place in the participant’s school or other location convenient for the participant and will be audio/video recorded.
- Participate in a focus group with the researcher and other teachers in urban K-12 Christian education (approximately 75 minutes). The focus group will take place in the participants’ school and will be audio/video recorded.

Risks and Benefit of being in the Study:

As a result of participating in this study, awareness of stressors relating to your role as a teacher in urban K-12 Christian education may arise or increase. The study has minimal risks that are no more than you would encounter in everyday life.

The benefits to participation are as follows:

- Exploring the experience of teaching in an urban K-12 Christian school
- Participating in a qualitative research study
- Providing valuable service to future educators

Additionally, findings from this study may be published and potentially prove beneficial to teachers, administrators, and board members seeking to support urban education.
Compensation:

There is no compensation provided for participants in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. Any sort of presentation or report I might publish will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. As the researcher, I will have the only access to the records. Research records, including videotapes, digital recordings, and transcripts, will be stored securely in password-protected data files and written files kept in a secure location for no more than seven years, after which documentation will be deleted from the computer database and written files will be shredded. Pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants and schools to maintain confidentiality in all written or electronic records and reports. However, because focus groups will be held at the site schools, it is likely that focus group participants will be known to one another.

Voluntary Nature of the Study and How to Withdraw from the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty by emailing mteodori@liberty.edu. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. Should you withdraw from the study, all of your portions of audio/video recordings and written materials will be excluded from the data collection, analysis, and findings.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Marie Teodori. You may now ask any questions you have regarding this study by emailing mteodori@liberty.edu or calling [number deleted]. You may also contact me should you have questions later by using the same contact email or telephone number. This research is being conducted under Dr. Gary Kuhne [email deleted].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Boulevard, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

By signing below, I acknowledge the following:
I have read and understood the above information. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have all my questions answered. I consent to participate in the study.
(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)
By checking here, the researcher has my permission to audio-record and/or video-record me as part of the interview and focus group portion of this study for the purpose of transcription.

Print Name: __________________________________________________________

Signature: ___________________________________________ Date: __________

Signature of Investigator: ___________________________ Date: __________
APPENDIX K: SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY PERMISSIONS

Terms and Conditions applying to use of GCOS

Limited Use License Agreement

Before accessing the Materials (as defined below), you must agree to all of the terms and conditions set forth in this Limited Use License Agreement (this “Agreement”) between you and THE SDT Group, LLC and its AFFILIATES AND assigns (the “ORGANIZATION”). This Agreement governs your use of the materials and the relationship between you and the ORGANIZATION. Click “I Agree” checkbox only if you have read and understand this Agreement and agree to be bound by this Agreement. If this Agreement is not acceptable to you, do not click “I Agree” checkbox, but in such event you will not be provided with access to the materials.

This Agreement is entered into between you (the “User”) and the Organization and sets forth your rights and obligations with respect to the use of the theories, metrics, measurements, scales, publications and other tools and information regarding self-determination theory (SDT) and related psychological concepts and constructs (the “Materials”) accessible on this website located at www.sdtheory.org, as well as any reprinting, “mirroring”, or other publishing of the Materials on other affiliated or authorized websites (collectively, the “Website”). You and the Organization may hereinafter be referred to individually as a “Party” and collectively as the “Parties.”

The Organization changes these terms and conditions from time to time. The Organization will notify you of any such changes via e-mail (if you have provided a valid email address to the
Organization) and/or by posting notice of the changes on the Website. Any such changes will become effective when notice is received or when posted on the Website, whichever first occurs. If you object to any such changes, your sole recourse will be to terminate this Agreement and immediately cease using the Materials. Continued access to the Website and use of the Materials following notice of any such changes will indicate your acknowledgement of such changes and agreement to be bound by the revised terms and conditions. In addition, certain areas of the Website may be subject to additional terms and conditions of use. By using such areas, or any part thereof, you agree to be bound by the additional terms and conditions of use applicable to such areas. In the event that any of the additional terms of use governing such area conflict with these terms and conditions, the additional terms will govern.

1. License. During the term of this Agreement, the Organization hereby grants to User, a non-exclusive, non-transferable, limited use license to use the Materials solely for non-for-profit research purposes. User covenants and agrees that User shall not: (i) use the Materials or any portion of the Materials, directly or indirectly, for any commercial or for-profit purposes unless explicitly authorized in writing by the Organization; (ii) make available or distribute all or any portion of the Materials to any third party; (iii) materially publish or disclose any portion of the Materials in any articles, websites, reviews or other research publications for which the User utilized the Materials; provided that the User may reference only the name and brief description of the applicable metric(s) or scale(s) utilized by the User in such article, review or other not-for-profit research publication; or (iv) sublicense, assign, rent, lease, sell or otherwise transfer the Materials or any part or copies thereof in any form to any third party, (v) publish the Materials online in any form, without the prior written consent of the Organization. Any unauthorized use of the Materials by User or any third party shall be a breach of this Agreement and grounds for
immediate termination of this Agreement in accordance with its terms and without notification. All of the User’s rights to use the Materials are expressly stated herein and are subject to the further restrictions set forth herein; there are no implied rights, and the Organization reserves all rights not expressly granted to User.

2. Use of Website. User shall use the Website solely for non-commercial purposes and in accordance with the terms and conditions of this Agreement. User covenants and agrees that User shall not solicit or advertise on the Website’s forums or comments section on behalf of itself or any third party nor shall the User use obscene, offensive or inappropriate language or images on the Website’s forums, discussion boards and comment sections. User also agrees to abide by the terms and guidelines posted on the Website with respect to participation in the Website’s forums, discussion boards and comment sections, which may be modified and changed from time to time in the Organization’s sole discretion.

Registration and Compliance. User agrees to and affirms that User will supply the Organization with all requested registration information, accurately and completely, and will not misrepresent their identity or their corporate or institutional affiliations. Specifically, User must report any commercial affiliation which may result, either directly or indirectly, in the Materials being used for a commercial or for-profit purpose. Any misrepresentation, as determined in the Organization’s sole discretion, shall be deemed a breach of this Agreement and grounds for immediate termination of this Agreement in accordance with its terms and without notification. Upon the Organization reasonable request, User agrees to promptly report, in writing, the current or intended future use of the Materials in order for the Organization to verify the User’s compliance with this Agreement.
4. Term and Termination. This Agreement shall commence and become effective and binding upon User’s acceptance of all the terms and conditions of this Agreement, which acceptance shall be demonstrated by User clicking on the “I AGREE” checkbox, and shall continue until terminated by the Organization in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement. The Organization may immediately terminate this Agreement upon the occurrence of a breach of any term or condition of this Agreement without the necessity of providing User with notice or an opportunity to cure. The Organization’s termination of this Agreement upon a breach of any term or condition by User shall be in addition to, and not a waiver of, any remedy or right available to the Organization arising from the User’s breach of this Agreement. Upon termination of this Agreement, all licenses granted hereunder shall terminate and be revoked and User shall immediately cease using the Materials and the Website. Further, User shall, immediately upon such termination, destroy all copies of the Materials in the User’s possession, and shall delete and write over all copies of the Materials on all systems and media in User’s control or custody.

Disclaimer of Warranties. The Materials and all other information, content and services available on the Website are provided “AS IS.” The Organization and its affiliates make no warranties, express of implied, with respect to the operation of the Website, the Materials or the information, content and services available on the Website pursuant to this Agreement. To the fullest extent permissible under applicable law, the Organization and its affiliates disclaim all warranties, express of implied, included, but not limited to, any warranties of fitness for a particular purpose, title and non-infringement, or any implied warranties arising by statute or otherwise in law, or from a course of dealing or usage. The Organization and its affiliates do not warrant that use of the Website will be uninterrupted or error free. The downloading of any materials or other information or content from the Website is done at User’s own discretion and risk and User will
be solely responsible for any damage to the User’s computer system or loss of data that may result therefrom. The Organization and its affiliates make no warranties with respect to any third-party software or offerings on the Website.

Limitation on Liability. In no event shall the Organization or its affiliates be liable for any direct, indirect, special, incidental, punitive, exemplary or consequential damages, including, without limitation, loss of profits, revenue, goodwill, use, data, anticipated savings or other economic advantage even if advised of the possibility of such damages and notwithstanding the foreseeability thereof. User acknowledges that this limitation of liability is an essential term between the User and the Organization and that the Organization would not provide the Materials or access to the Website to User without this limitation.

Indemnification. User agrees to indemnify, defend and hold harmless the Organization and its employees, officers, agents and affiliates from and against any losses, expenses, liabilities, costs, fees (including reasonable attorneys’ fees) and damages, arising out of or resulting from any claim or action relating to User’s use of the Materials or the Website or any violation by User of any term or condition of this Agreement.

Ownership of Intellectual Property. The Parties acknowledge and agree that the Organization owns all right, title and interest in and to the Materials (and all any and all patent rights, copyrights, rights in mask works, trade secrets, trademarks, trade dress and all other forms of intellectual property protection applicable) and shall at all times remain owned solely and exclusively by the Organization, its successors and assigns. The Parties acknowledge and agree that any updates or modifications to the Materials shall be the sole and exclusive property of the Organization, whether developed by the Organization or any other person. No title to the
Material or ownership of the Materials Software or any part thereof is hereby transferred to User. User shall notify the Organization immediately and in writing if User becomes aware of any actual or suspected unauthorized use of the Materials, in whole or in part, by any third party.

Confidentiality. During the term of this Agreement, User may gain access to and/or become exposed to certain trade secrets and other confidential and proprietary information of the Organization, in the form of, without limitation, ideas, data, programs, methods, solutions, strategies techniques, methods, practices, know-how and processes and other tangible and intangible information, including by reason of accessing the Website and the Materials (“Confidential Information”). User agrees to (a) keep all such Confidential Information confidential and undisclosed to any third party, (b) use such information solely in connection with its use of the Materials as expressly licensed under this Agreement, solely for research and other non-commercial purposes and (c) surrender or destroy such Confidential Information, and any copies or embodiments thereof, when requested to do so by the Organization. User’s obligations under this Section 9 shall survive termination of this Agreement.

Equitable Remedies. User acknowledges and agrees that irreparable harm would occur in the event that any of the agreements and provisions of this Agreement were not performed fully by User in accordance with their specific terms or conditions or were otherwise breached, and that money damages may not be an inadequate remedy for a breach of this Agreement because of the difficulty of ascertaining and quantifying the amount of damage that will be suffered by the Organization in the event that this Agreement is not performed in accordance with its terms or conditions or is otherwise breached. It is accordingly hereby agreed that the Organization shall be entitled to seek an injunction (temporary or permanent) or other equitable relief to restrain,
enjoin and prevent breaches of this Agreement by User and to enforce specifically such terms and provisions of this Agreement, such remedy being in addition to and not in lieu of, any other rights and remedies to which the Organization is otherwise entitled to at law or in equity. The Parties agree that the covenants set forth in this Agreement are reasonable in all circumstances for the protection of the legitimate interests of the Organization and shall be enforced to the fullest extent permitted by law.

11. Governing Law; Jurisdiction. This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Delaware, without regard to the conflicts of laws principles thereof. The Parties agree that any action or claim arising out of or relating to this Agreement or a breach thereof, shall be brought and maintained only in the federal and state courts located in Orange County, Florida and, if applicable, the courts of appeals therefrom. The Parties each consent to the exclusive jurisdiction and venue of such courts and waive any right to object to such jurisdiction or venue and will accept as due and adequate service of process served pursuant to the notice provisions herein.

12. Relationship of the Parties. Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed as creating a partnership, joint venture or any other form of express or implied legal association or relationship between the Parties capable of imposing any liability upon one Party for the act or failure to act of the other Party.

13. No Third Party Beneficiaries. No provision of this Agreement is intended nor shall be interpreted to provide or create any third party beneficiary rights, and all provisions hereof shall be personal solely between the Parties.
14. Waiver, Amendment or Modification. The waiver, amendment or modification of any provision of this Agreement or any right, power or remedy hereunder shall not be effective unless in writing and signed by the Party against whom enforcement of such waiver, amendment or modification is sought. No failure or delay by either party in exercising any right, power or remedy with respect to any of the provisions of this Agreement shall operate as a waiver thereof.

15. No Assignment. All the terms and provisions of this Agreement shall be binding upon and inure to the benefit of the parties hereto and their successors, assigns and legal representatives; provided that in no event shall User assign or otherwise transfer this Agreement (or any of its rights hereunder) or any license granted hereunder or delegate any of its duties hereunder, in whole or in part, without the Organization’s prior written consent (which consent may be withheld in its sole discretion) and any attempt to do so shall be void and of no effect.

16. Severability. If any provision of this Agreement is held to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, such provision will be conformed to prevailing law rather than voided, if possible, in order to achieve the intent of the parties and, in any event, the remaining provisions of this Agreement shall remain in full force and effect and shall be binding upon the parties hereto.

17. Construction. Unless the context of this Agreement otherwise clearly requires, (i) references in this Agreement to the plural include the singular, the singular the plural, the masculine the feminine, the feminine the masculine and the part the whole and (ii) the word “or” will not be construed as exclusive and the word “including” will not be construed as limiting.
APPENDIX L: DEBRIEFING EMAIL

Dear Participant:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in a research study exploring the experiences of teachers in urban K-12 Christian education.

I have finished collecting and analyzing the data and attached you will find a summary of my findings for you to review. Please take some time to review the findings generated in part from your participation in the study. As a form of member checking – a process that is customarily used in qualitative research – I welcome any feedback, thoughts, impressions, or suggestions you have related to the findings as currently presented. You are welcome to place your comments directly on the document using Track Changes function in Microsoft Word, or you may simply reply to this email by leaving your feedback in the body of an email.

Beyond my dissertation, if the findings from this study are published, I will be sure to let you know.

Again, I wish to sincerely thank you for your participation in this research study. I am so appreciative of your time and willingness to share your experiences related to this important topic.

With gratitude,
Marie C. Teodori, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University
APPENDIX M: STANDARDIZED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

General Background Questions

1. Please share a little about yourself – where you grew up, your family, your background.
2. What kind of education did you have (i.e., elementary through college)?
3. How did you come to your current position at this school?

Experiences as a Teacher in an Urban K-12 Christian School

4. How would you describe what it means to be a teacher in an urban K-12 Christian school? (As a teacher, discipler, colleague, partner with parents, partner with pastors)
5. How would you describe what a teacher in an urban K-12 Christian school does? (In the classroom, outside of the classroom)
6. How would you describe what is challenging about being a teacher in an urban K-12 Christian school? (Follow-up questions will pursue elaboration/additional insights)
7. How would you describe what is simple about being a teacher in an urban K-12 Christian school? (Follow-up questions will pursue elaboration/additional insights)
8. How would you describe your motivation for teaching for _______ (length of service) in a Christian school? An urban school? (Sources of motivation)
9. How would you describe your goals as they relate to teaching for _______ (length of service) in an urban K-12 Christian school? For the future? (intrinsic vs. extrinsic goals as associated with long-term persistence vs. short-term persistence)
10. How would you describe what you consider to be essential supports to your motivation teaching for _______ (length of service) in an urban K-12 Christian school? (Spiritual,
emotional, academic, physical, mental, cultural, contextual, environmental, autonomy-supporting)

11. How would you describe what you consider to be essential supports toward your goals as they relate to teaching for _______ (length of service) in an urban K-12 Christian school? (Spiritual, emotional, academic, physical, mental, cultural, contextual, environmental, autonomy-supporting)
APPENDIX N: STANDARDIZED FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Questions

1. What essential advice would you offer to the college or university education programs that prepare pre-service teachers? (Urban settings)

2. Why? (Follow up to Question 1, plus how would this advice assist in teacher motivation, intrinsic goal framing, and/or contextual/environmental supports?)

3. What essential advice would you offer to first time teachers entering urban K-12 Christian schools?

4. Why? (Follow up to Question 3, plus how would this advice assist in teacher motivation, intrinsic goal framing, and/or contextual/environmental supports?)

5. What essential advice would you offer to administrators of urban K-12 Christian schools?

6. Why? (Follow up to Question 5, plus how would this advice assist in teacher motivation, intrinsic goal framing, and/or contextual/environmental supports?)
APPENDIX O: EXPERT REVIEW AND PILOT TEST протокол

Expert Review: Prior to the proposal defense, an expert review of the proposal for this study was carried out by the dissertation Chair and Committee members. The Chair and Committee members each held earned doctorates in the education, was an expert in the field of education, and had an expressed interest in the study’s research. The review resulted in recommendations and considerations utilized for improvement to the proposal. In April 2015, the proposal was accepted by the Chair and Committee.

Pilot Test Protocol: Following IRB approval and before conducting research at each site, a pilot test was conducted with three participants who met the research criteria. Each participant completed the informed consent forms, survey, GCOS, met with the investigator for an individual interview, and participated in a focus group with the other pilot test participants. The pilot test participants used the materials that were subsequently utilized with the site participants for the purpose of (a) testing the instruments and research questions prior to their use in the field, (b) estimating the approximate time it would take to complete the instruments and conduct the interviews and focus groups, and (c) identifying any necessary adjustments to wording for better clarity in communication. Audio and videotaping equipment were also testing in the pilot study with the permission of the participants. The pilot test was conducted in May, 2015.
APPENDIX P: TIMELINE & AUDIT TRAIL/REFLECTION EXCERPTS

Key steps in the dissertation research study process are noted below, followed by excerpts of researcher reflections recorded during the data collection, transcription, and analysis phases of research.

August-October, 2014: Prospectus completed; chair and committee members search completed

January – April, 2015: Proposal written, reviewed, and satisfactorily defended. Created instruments such as the survey and GCOS using SurveyMonkey.

April, 2015: IRB approval sought and obtained; site gatekeeper permissions sought and received

May – June, 2015: Pilot study conducted, followed by research in the field at five sites. Fourteen participants completed the survey, GCOS, interview, and focus group.

Representative reflection from data collection phase, May 15, 2015: After my first three interviews today, I am thinking I will ask a more direct question in my future interviews specifically about persistence. Persistence was mentioned by participants in interviews today, and in future interviews, I will ask participants who mention this for further elaboration – what made them persist? What led to their persistence?

June – August, 2015: Transcription of interviews and focus groups, resulting in 227,000 words of raw data.

Representative reflection from transcription phase, June 10th, 2015: These interviewees from [a particular site] seem to have a similar no-nonsense approach to teaching, obviously love what they are doing, take a long view of what they do, and are evidently people with a deep and abiding faith in God. Interesting that they seem to share these characteristics.

August – September, 2015: Entry of raw data into Atlas Ti program; coded data resulting in 100 total codes from 19 documents (14 interviews, 5 focus groups).

Representative reflection from coding phase, August, 2015: There are so many codes, and so many seem to overlap in a confusing way – but then there are the almost “Lone Ranger” codes that seem to be hanging out by themselves. It is evident, though, that faith, motivation, persistence, challenges, roles, and relationships were described often by participants during one-on-one interviews.

September, 2015: Development of themes through development of code families. Example: The code family for faith was formed by grouping 24 codes in which an aspect of faith was described by participants, along with the number of times that aspect of faith was coded for. The faith code family included 189 total references to an aspect of faith.

189 Faith
   6 Faith – Community
   7 Faith – Dependence
   25 Faith – Destiny
Analysis of all of the code families resulted in the five major themes, including (a) faith, (b) hearts wide open, eyes wide open, (c) unsolvable problems, problem solvers, (d) receiving and giving, and (e) the fuel source. Sub-themes were also identified through analysis of code family members. 

Representative Reflection from development of themes, September 10, 2015: While the first four themes are fairly certain from the code families, I am having trouble with the codes for persistence and motivation – they frequently merge or blur and co-occur in at least 50 coded passages – is this a theme? Is there a word for this blended idea?

September, 2015: Chapter 4 organized into participant portraits, themes, answers to research questions, and composite textural/structural/essence descriptions - written and submitted to chair on September 29, 2015.

Reflection from writing Chapter 4, September 20, 2015: This is the most difficult part of the process so far – I feel so responsible for faithfully giving voice to the participants and do not want to misrepresent or water down the sharing of their experiences in any way. Praying!

October, 2015: Chapter 5 written and sent to chair on October 13, 2015.

Reflection from writing Chapter 5, October 14, 2015: There is a sense of excitement in sending off the draft of this chapter, but also a wondering of what other avenues I may have not fully accounted for or fully explored. Hoping for feedback that will indicate I am close to hitting the mark.

November 6, 2015: Permission to defend dissertation granted, defense scheduled for 11/19/15.

November 19, 2015: Successfully passed dissertation defense!
APPENDIX Q: INTERVIEW & FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPT EXCERPTS

Excerpt from one-on-one interview:  I = Investigator; C = Marsue

I: So, what would you say is the most challenging thing for you about being in this setting?

MS: You want specific, general, in this setting are you referring to the school, my position?

I: I was going to kind of let you decide.  But, if someone said, “Okay, [Marsue], what’s your biggest challenge?” What would you answer? What do you find the most challenging?

MS: Sometimes dealing with other adults in positions of authority.  And I’m not talking about administrators over there.  Sometimes I, you know, and then on another day I would say dealing with parents who deny that their child might be capable of doing some naughty things.  Um, I don’t know how to put it.  I’m just, you know.

I: Well, those are two good ones.

MS: My immediate co-workers and I back each other wonderfully.  [Administrator A] is wonderful.  [Administrator B] is great.  He’s pushed and really prodded all of us to stretch ourselves to be better.  That – you need that.  Um, [Administrator C] has done a wonderful job with the financial end.  Very few Christian schools operate like he does.  And there have been raises in the last two or three years.  But the biggest problems are with supervisors, quote, some teachers, who do not see that everything a child does isn’t always true, isn’t always right, and that some kids need to have swift action.  That loving on them is not enough to create the change.  Sometimes you have to have tough love.  And even with that, if tough love doesn’t change them, then it’s time to – you know, we’ve really tried, we’ve done all of this, and it’s time for you to leave.  And I hate it.  I hate that.  But sometimes that happens.  So it’s kind of round about, but oh, well.

I: Yeah.  That’s good.  It’s not really with your interactions with the children that you find the most challenging.  Have you ever had, or maybe you’ve had this often, or maybe more than once, but, you know, something is occurring and you’re like, “That is it, I’m walking.  I’m out.  Goodbye.”  Have you ever had the experience of feeling that way?

MS: (no hesitation)  Oh, yes.

I: Yeah.  What precipitates that?

MS: There’s this one individual here that if I would say I was ready to leave, it would be because of how one person deals with things.  Doesn’t – I should say doesn’t deal with things.

I: Mm hmm.  So what makes you stay?

MS: The kids.
I: The kids.

MS: The kids. It’s always the kids. I’m very passionate for kids, I will fight for those that don’t have the ability to fight for themselves or, you know, I will fight for kids here that need help.

I: Yeah. And the things is, physical therapy [previously mentioned as a career possibility] is a helping profession, too.

MS: Yeah.

I: Were you thinking that in terms of pediatrics or did the kids just . . .

MS: Yeah, but I’ll be honest, the sciences killed me. Oh, they absolutely killed me.

I: Yeah. But I just wanted to know where the kids came in. But that was even at that time, you were thinking kids.

MS: Oh, yeah. Kids have always been my passion.

I: As long as you can remember?

MS: Yeah

I: Even when you were younger?

MS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

I: How did that happen?

MS: You know, I remember the special needs kids always took my attention. I used to go with my dad, he used to be a milkman, one of the many jobs he had. And I remember going past a home where a little boy with hydrocephaly was there. And he would look out a big window, his head was huge, and I’d think, “Wow.” Going to an institution, “Wow.”

Excerpt from Focus Group: I = Investigator; Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

I: For a new teacher who maybe doesn’t have a support system, you know, maybe her college roommate was her buddy back in college, but now, she’s a career person so to speak – how do you help a newbie develop those supports? How do you help them do that?

4: The other 2nd grade teacher is new this year, and I’ve been just, I hope I don’t throw too much at her, but I just give her tidbits and I just say, you know, even if I have to – we’re like on other ends of the world (laughs) almost because her classroom is further down and I wish I could just pop in, but we can’t do that, so I’ll throw her emails of, “Hey,” or, you know, attachments of,
“Hey, this worked well with this lesson,” or whatever, and I’ll try to just give her stuff as I – “If you use it, great, if you don’t, great. Look at it, see what you think.” Because everyone needs a little bit of something just to help out.

I: So not overwhelming but just enough to … yeah.

4: Yeah. You don’t want to throw too much at them at one time ‘cause it is overwhelming, but, um, try to give, you know, as much as you can.

1: I think just reaching out. When I came here after spending 31 years in a public school in an inner city in the worst school system in the state . . . I came here and I’m telling you, I was, my heart was overjoyed. I mean, I started to see things that weren’t perfect either, but as a whole, you know, so people reached out to me. So I did that, made it my point, that anybody that came in this junior high hall, I reached out. Because and then you become friends. And it doesn’t necessarily mean that just because she’s in the high school now, but when she came here, we got a bond. You know? And any teacher that’s been here new I really reached out to them. Because I think, again, there you go, it’s the relational, talking to the people, and . . .

2: You help a new person build relationships by being available to them.

I: Super. ‘Cause sometimes I think we’re so busy that you have a good intention, but then it’s like, “Whew, when am I going to have time to go . . . “

2: Hey, I was in this school, a teacher in this school for two weeks before I knew the code to get in the door. No one had ever told me the code on that door. I kid you not!

5: I still don’t know the code.

[ Lots of laughter and chatting about not using the door, about them changing the code too much, etc. ]

2: Basically, they walked me up and said, “There’s your room.” I mean they had me teaching the class that had no curriculum. Integrated math – what’s integrated math? “Teach what you want to teach.” I’m like, “What are you talking about?” And then when I started to do what I wanted to do, [an administrator] didn’t like it and told me to change it. (lots of laugh) He wanted a basically pre-algebra class and it’s like, “Hey, integrated math – I’ve got a kid in 9th grade, 10th grade, 12th grade, you know, 4th math, 1st math, they threw everybody in my class that needed an extra credit of math. That class was the worst one I ever had to teach. And then I was going to do personal finance with them, but [an administrator] wanted them prepared, some of them needed to get a year of math to get prepared to be able to get into algebra.
APPENDIX R: CODING EXAMPLES – ATLAS TI

This page contains coding examples for ATLAS TI, a software tool used for qualitative data analysis. The examples demonstrate how to code data and generate codes. The screenshot shows a section of a coding process in ATLAS TI, with various codes and notes related to various themes such as "Urban Christian Ed - Team", "consistency", and "faith". The codes are organized in a tree structure, allowing for hierarchical coding. The examples are likely to be useful for researchers and analysts working with qualitative data, providing a practical guide on how to use ATLAS TI for coding and analysis.
APPENDIX S: OUTLINE OF THEMES EMERGENT FROM DATA ANALYSIS

I. Faith – “Faith is, is Me.”
   A. Called to teach – “I knew that was God’s call on my life.”
   B. Gifted to teach – “He has given me a gift.”
      1. Gifts facilitating teacher effectiveness
      2. Gifts connecting teacher with particular groups
   C. Sent to teach – “I always felt like I was going into the missions field while I was working.”
      1. Educational ministry - “I can’t imagine separating God from school.”
      2. Freedom – “As a public school teacher, I had to kind of bootleg the Gospel.”

II. Hearts Wide Open, Eyes Wide Open – “I Wasn’t Always Lovable…But God Still Loved Me.”
   A. Open hearts – “I guess the simplest thing is to love these kids like I love my own.”
   B. Open eyes – Kids “bringing their garbage to my classroom.”

III. Unsolvable Problems, Problem Solvers – “Their Needs are so much Bigger than My Ability and My Resources.”
   A. Unsolvable problems
   B. Problem solvers
      1. Relationship - solving the problem of classroom discipline
      2. Solving the problem of engaging students in learning
      3. Solving the problem of trusting God with the unsolvable – a work in progress
IV. Receiving and Giving – “If She Can Help You, She Will.”

A. Receiving

B. Giving

V. The Fuel Source – “Just Because He Purposes You for Something, It’s Not Going to Come Easy.”

A. Motivation

B. Goals

C. Persistence
APPENDIX T: QUESTIONNAIRE

Research Purpose: The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of teachers who have persisted in urban K-12 Christian education in order to gain a better understanding of these educators. Completing the following questionnaire, including the demographic survey, the timeline, and the vignettes assists me in purposefully selecting participants who meet the research criteria.

Demographics Survey

1. Please indicate your gender.
   a. Male
   b. Female
2. Please indicate your age range.
   a. under 20
   b. 20-29
   c. 30-39
   d. 40-49
   e. 50-59
   f. 60-69
   g. 70-79
   h. 80 or older
3. Please indicate your ethnicity.
   a. African-American
   b. Asian
   c. Caucasian
   d. Hispanic
   e. American Indian
   f. Other (please specify)
4. Please indicate your marital status.
   a. Single
   b. Married
   c. Divorced
   d. Widowed
5. How many children do you have?
   a. 0
   b. 1
   c. 2
   d. 3
   e. 4
   f. 5
   g. 6
   h. Other (please specify)
6. What is your highest degree earned?
   a. Associate
b. Bachelor

c. Master

d. Educational Specialist

e. Doctorate

f. Other (Specify)

7. Do you hold ACSI teaching certification at the standard, professional, or lifetime level?
   a. Yes
   b. No

8. Do you hold state teaching licensure?
   a. Yes
   b. No

9. How many years have you worked in urban K-12 Christian education?
   a. 20 or more years (Specify)
   b. 15-19 years
   c. 10-14 years
   d. 4-9 years
   f. 0-3 years

10. Are you currently employed in an urban K-12 Christian school?
    a. Yes
    b. No

11. How many hours do you work during a regular school work week?
    a. More than 60 hours
    b. 40-59 hours
    c. 20-39 hours
    d. 1-19 hours
    e. 0 hours

12. What grade levels do you currently teach? (Choose all that apply.)
    a. Pre-kindergarten-Kindergarten
    b. Grades 1-2
    c. Grades 3-4
    d. Grades 5-6
    e. Grades 7-8
    f. Grades 9-12
    g. Other (Specify)

13. What content areas do you currently teach? (Choose all that apply.)
    a. Mathematics
    b. Science
    c. Social Studies/History
    d. Language Arts
    e. Bible
    f. Foreign Language
    g. Physical Education
    h. Fine Arts
    i. Other (Specify)

14. In which settings have you been employed as a teacher? (Choose all that apply.)
    a. Rural
b. Suburban
c. Urban
d. Private (secular)
e. Private (religious)
f. Public
15. Do you consider your role as a teacher to be something you are “called” to do?
   a. Yes
   b. No

Timeline

16. In what year were you born?
17. Please list three events you consider to be most significant in your life, and the approximate years in which each event occurred.
18. At what point in your life did you recognize a desire to teach?
19. Please briefly describe your education as it pertains to teacher preparation, and the approximate year(s) in which that education occurred.
20. In what year were you first employed as a teacher?
21. In what year did you begin employment as a teacher in an urban K-12 Christian school?

GCOS - Vignettes

*Note:* The GCOS has been removed from this final survey section, in compliance with the licensure agreement for its use (See Appendix K, Section 1, subsections ii-v).
Marie,

It was a pleasure speaking with you today. I talked with my department head, Erin Willis, Assistant Vice President for Academic Services. She asked me to send you wholehearted permission to publish these three documents as appendices to your dissertation:

– Biblical Studies Requirements
– Secondary Teacher Requirements
– ACSI Christian Philosophy of Education Checklist

Please let us know if you require additional documentation.

Sincerely,

Charla

Charla Huckabay
ACSI Certification Evaluator

Association of Christian Schools International
PO Box 65158, Colorado Springs, CO 80962-5150
Office: 800-367-5181
ACSLero