

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE SELF-EFFICACY
BELIEFS OF TEACHERS WHO HAVE PERSISTED IN THE TEACHING
PROFESSION

by

Shana Market Norton

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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July, 2013

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study investigated the lived experiences of 12 secondary school teachers from public secondary schools in northern Georgia regarding their feelings about self-efficacy and why they have persisted in the teaching profession. The research questions centered around their perceptions on how self-efficacy influences the academic achievement of their students, on what personality characteristics they feel teachers add to their positive or negative self-esteem in teaching, and on what factors they identify as influencing their professional self-efficacy in teaching. Teacher self-efficacy, the belief in oneself to succeed at completing a task, is a key factor in retaining teachers. Four data collection methods were implemented to explore teacher self-efficacy: two focus groups, interviews, a self-efficacy assessment test, and open-ended survey questions. Results revealed that teachers believed that they would not remain in the profession if they felt they were not making a difference in the students' lives. The teachers repeatedly mentioned administrative support as a factor they believe impacts their self-efficacy. In addition, the attitude of surrounding teachers, collective self-efficacy, and students impacted their self-efficacy. Several of the teachers listed faith and exercise as two contributing factors to remaining in the profession with a continued sense of self-efficacy. The study revealed that teachers must have confidence in their specific

subject area to retain self-efficacy in a classroom. In summary, the 12 teachers interviewed noted self-efficacy in teaching as being influenced by surrounding factors, including physical, spiritual, and mental health.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my family and friends, without whom I would not have attempted, continued, and finally achieved this challenging endeavor. I am thankful to God for always being a constant, though I might have wandered to and fro. I dedicate this to my Mother, who has taught me more than any higher institution of learning could have ever taught me by her constant love, support, and wonderful example of how to be a Godly woman. Thank you for always supporting me in every way possible. I dedicate this to my late father, Grady Daniel Market, who I know loved me with all of his heart. I know that you are at peace with the Lord and watching over us. I also dedicate this to my husband, who has been a constant support and word of encouragement throughout this program. This is dedicated to my little sister, whom I will always look up to. You are such an amazing friend, sister, mother, and daughter. This is also dedicated to Mike, who has always been a good friend, an open ear, and a constant word of encouragement. You are truly my father on earth. This is dedicated to Tori, my precious niece. I pray that you conquer all things with that strong spirit and that you love the Lord with all of your heart! I also dedicate this to David Tardif. You won your battle with cancer. You never gave up and kept a positive spirit until the end of your time here on earth. You will always be remembered.

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you take something from this and know that you can go for any dream that you may have. Most importantly, I pray that you truly know and love Jesus throughout your lives. That, above all, is truly the most important thing.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Currently more than half of all teachers in the United States change careers in their first 5 years of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Reasons given by teachers for prematurely leaving the teaching field include overcrowded classrooms, unsupportive administration, and poor student classroom behavior (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Swift (1984) stated, “There is discontinuity between idyllic expectations and harsh realities” (p. 3), indicating that teachers are not psychologically prepared for the demands and limitations of the school setting. While there are many studies on teaching and learning, there are few studies on the emotional aspect of teachers’ lives, including self-efficacy and how it impacts persistence in the teaching profession (Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, & Reyes, 2010). According to Erdem (2007), self-efficacy postulates that human achievement “depends on interaction between one’s behavior, personal factors (e.g., thoughts, beliefs), and environmental conditions” (p. 574).

Bandura (1978) studied how teachers feel about remaining in their profession and found that when students succeed through grades, graduation, and low discipline referrals, teachers take pride because they feel as if they contributed to the success of the students. Conversely, when teachers believe that their students’ successes are dependent only on external stimuli, they do not feel self-satisfaction. This lack of student success can undermine a teacher’s sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1978). Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy experience less teacher stress than those with lower levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Bandura attributed this behavior to reciprocal causation, or a play between the personal factors, environment, and behavior. When either of these

factors is changed, the other is impacted. Bandura (1977) noted that one's perception about a situation can override actual occurrences. In other words, the teacher's thoughts can make things seem better or worse than they really are (Bandura, 1977).

Background

Numerous researchers have studied the variety of factors that impact teachers' positive sense of self-efficacy (Appleton, 1995; Burns & Gunderman, 2008; Covell, McNeil, & Howe, 2009; Swackhamer, Koellner, Basile, & Kimbrough, 2009). For example, Cenkseven- Onder and Sari (2009) found that teachers spend a majority of their time at school and, therefore, desire a higher sense of stature and want to feel as if they are important. Cenkseven-Onder and Sari (2009) also found that teachers desire a "magnificent place in their school where they spend a part of their time and want to feel themselves worthy by their colleagues, administrators, and students" (p. 1299). Other teachers noted that they desire to feel appreciated by their administrators, colleagues, and their students (Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009). A higher sense of self-efficacy can cause teachers to be highly motivated, and it also causes them to believe in themselves more than someone with a lower sense of self-esteem (Erdem & Demirel, 2007). Some of the factors related to teacher self-efficacy are described in further detail.

For one, having a strong sense of community not only helps to improve students' performance in school, but it also increases the teacher's sense of self-efficacy. In addition, teachers' beliefs that a sense of community reduces teacher burnout and stress are noted by scholars to be contributing factors to lower self-efficacy (Covell et al., 2009).

Another study suggested student engagement was a contributing factor to teacher self-efficacy (Covell et al., 2009). Student engagement can be increased by giving the students increased rights and responsibilities, such as meaningful roles in school rules, policies, and hiring expenditures. When student engagement is increased, teacher self-efficacy is increased (Covell et al., 2009). On the return, teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy put forth the extra effort and have higher beliefs in the students than teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy (Palmer, 2006).

Judge, Heller, and Mount (2002) examined the relationship of personality traits to job satisfaction in teaching. They found that extroverted teachers displayed more job satisfaction than introverted teachers. In addition, teachers who were neurotic showed less job satisfaction and expressed a lower sense of self-efficacy (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002). Neuroticism is defined as someone who experiences more negative life events than other individuals, partially because they put themselves in positions that have negative effects. When those events happen during a job, then the person's job satisfaction diminishes (Judge et al., 2012). Conversely, teachers who have high levels of emotional intelligence (the capacity to monitor one's feelings regardless of the extraneous circumstances) showed high levels of self-efficacy in teaching (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2008). In contrast, teachers who have high levels of anxiety, stress, and fatigue have lower levels of self-efficacy (Pajares, 1996). Teachers who are strongly emotional have greater anticipation about the outcome of a situation, which can predispose teachers to viewing life events in a negative way, thus lowering self-efficacy. In other words, seeing events in a negative light may lower a teacher's sense of worth, subsequently impacting the levels of self-efficacy (Kokkinos, 2007).

Finally, a teacher's behavior is often influenced and impacted by the surroundings. Many teachers report being under high stress in their jobs due to classroom size, long work days, and stress related to high stakes testing and the pressure of performance-based salary (Whitehead, Ryba, & O'Driscoll, 2000). However, those surroundings also include an environment that is partially produced in the teacher's mind (Bandura, 1978). Cenkseven-Onder and Sari (2009) also found that teachers who have a negative outlook on life also tend to have a negative job outlook, report more stress, and experience feelings of negative self-efficacy. These teachers with a higher sense of self-efficacy also remain longer in the profession (Wentzel & Wigfield, 2009). Bandura (1978) observed a continuous and reciprocal movement between the behavioral, cognitive, and environmental influences, meaning that one influence cannot change without affecting the others (Bandura, 1978).

The research in this study will examine factors such as community, student engagement, personality types, teacher behavior, stress, and participation in family and friend support groups, both in and out of the classroom, and other factors or thoughts that the teachers have about self-efficacy to reveal their perceptions. The research in this study will lead to ideas pertaining to helping the teachers to have a higher sense of self-efficacy, thus maintaining more teachers in the profession.

Problem Statement

According to Ingersoll and Smith (2004), many new teachers are not mentally or emotionally prepared for the profession and, therefore, experience more stress than those who have surpassed the 5-year mark in teaching. Over 50% of teachers leave the teaching profession within their first 5 years of teaching (Brown, 2006; Grant, 2006;

Ingersoll & Smith), and many teachers who leave the profession do so because of a lack of fulfillment in their teaching career due to a low sense of self-efficacy (Ingersoll & Smith). For example, in a study by Timms, Graham, and Caltabiano (2006), teachers reported leaving their teaching career after their first year because they found teaching did not fulfill their expectations. Due in part to large classroom size and lack of funding, teachers often feel helpless and burned out. These feelings of inadequacy can negatively impact students' self-esteem, grades, and graduation rates (Ingersoll & Smith). When teachers who report being stressed and burned out stay in the classroom, student achievement diminishes (Covell et al., 2009). In addition to the negative impact on students, teacher turnover has a negative impact fiscally on educational settings (Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Rivka, 2010). Higher self-efficacy in teachers helps to retain teachers and lessen teacher turnover, lessening the money that schools lose on separation, recruitment, hiring, incentives, and new employee induction and professional development (Watlington et al., 2010).

Through examining factors such as community, student engagement, personality types, teacher behavior, stress, and participation in family and friend support groups, both in and out of the classrooms, the study may reveal perceptions that teachers have about self-efficacy and the factors that they see contributing to their own self-efficacy. This study explores whether or not teachers perceive that positive self-efficacy impacts their decision to remain in the teaching profession. By interviewing through individual interviews and focus group interviews, as well as through having the teachers complete a self-efficacy survey and also complete essay questions, this study will investigate the thoughts of those who have remained in the teaching profession for more than 5 years.

The reason for studying teachers who have remained for more than 5 years is that 50% of teachers leave within the first 5 years (Brown, 2006; Grant, 2006). A majority of studies on teacher retention focus on the first 5 years of teaching (Brown, 2006; Grant, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001). Therefore, the problem of this study is persistence in the teaching profession and the role teachers feel that self-efficacy plays in their persistence in the profession. This study will investigate the points of view from 12 teachers who have persisted for more than 5 years in the profession, focusing on their overall beliefs about self-efficacy and their persistence in the profession. This research does not focus only on the first 5 years, but that 5-year mark is used as a factor that describes teachers who have persisted. This study adds to the literature on self-efficacy in that it explores and explains what teachers themselves feel and have experienced from their point of view, of positive or negative self-efficacy towards teaching and whether or not they believe that a positive sense of self-efficacy will keep them in the profession.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study is to examine the perceptions and characteristics of 12 teachers who have remained in the teaching profession for more than 5 years in order to explain the phenomenon of teacher self-efficacy as perceived by the teachers themselves. This study investigates perceptions teachers have about self-efficacy and the factors they believe contribute to their own self-efficacy. The study also investigates the factors that keep certain teachers in the classroom and pleased with their career choices, while others are dissatisfied and quick to leave the classroom. The desired outcome of this study is that it may prevent teachers from being dissatisfied and quickly leaving the teaching profession.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding how their self-efficacy influences the academic achievement of their students?
2. What personality characteristics do teachers feel add to their positive or negative self-efficacy in teaching?
3. What factors do teachers identify as influencing their professional self-efficacy in teaching (personality traits, outside circumstances, number of students, pre-service teaching experiences, etc.)?

Through this research, the beliefs and actions that impact teachers' self-efficacy were discovered.

Justification for the Study

This study evolved over 10 years while I was an educator. During that time, I observed teachers leave the teaching profession; I also observed teachers decide to remain in the teaching profession despite feelings of burnout. Both categories of teachers appeared to me to have a limited sense of self-efficacy. In essence, they did not believe in their own ability to impact students in a positive manner, and subsequently were unfulfilled in their teaching careers. This study seeks to provide descriptions and information about self-efficacy directly from teachers who have remained in the teaching field for more than 5 years. Understanding how these teachers experience and view self-efficacy in teaching provides insight into changes that can be made to improve experiences for other teachers. This study's findings can be used to aid administrators, teachers, and college professors in building a staff of teachers who enjoy teaching,

thereby remaining in the teaching profession. Ultimately, this research discovers the qualities and characteristics that contribute to teacher persistence in the profession. In addition, teacher self-efficacy is positively correlated to instruction, adapting education to individual students' needs, motivating students, keeping discipline, cooperating with parents and colleagues, and coping with changes and challenges (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). If educators and administrative staff can assist teachers in fostering a nurturing and safe environment that promotes a higher sense of teacher self-efficacy, students will benefit (Chong, Klassen, Huan, Wong, & Kates, 2010; Erdem & Demirel, 2007; Evers & Tomic, 2003; Jennett, Harris, & Mesibov, 2003).

Significance of the Study

According to one study, 39% of teachers in the United States leave the profession within the first 5 years of teaching (Ondrich, Pas, & Yinger, 2008), and other studies show that 50% of teachers leave within the first 5 years (Brown, 2006; Grant, 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Additionally, 11% of teachers leave within, or soon after, the first year in the profession (Ondrich et al., 2008). Many teachers consider leaving within the first year, though they do not (Cooper & Davey, 2011). Some teachers stay in teaching because they feel “trapped and powerless to leave a demanding profession” (Cooper & Davey, 2011, p. 98). Sixty-five percent of teachers who leave teaching report they are overall more satisfied in life after leaving the profession (Palmer, 2007).

Many teachers complete a teaching certification program and start teaching only to realize they are in the wrong occupation. Chang (2009) noted that the resulting shortage of teachers has not only created a staffing problem in schools, but also “degrades the quality of instruction in the classroom due to high turnover” (p. 194).

Henry, Bastian, and Fortner (2011) found that teachers who leave after 3 or 4 years of teaching are less effective in their last year of teaching than teachers who are in their 3rd or 4th year of teaching and who stayed past the 5-year mark.

Those teachers who end up leaving the profession are not as effective at administering instruction and at motivating students as those who remain past 5 years (Henry, Bastian, and Fortner, 2011). Subsequently, teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy work longer with struggling students, recognize and help correct more student errors, and enthusiastically attempt new teaching methods in the classroom than those teachers with lower levels of self efficacy (Milner, 2002; Swackhamer et al., 2009). Those teachers also make better use of their time, criticize wrong answers less, and are able to guide students to the right answers more often (Yilmaz, 2011).

Teachers and administrators need to find the reasons and resources to remain confident in their ability to teach students in a productive and efficient manner. This study explored in depth the perceptions that teachers have about self-efficacy in teaching as well as what personality traits and key factors contributed to having a positive sense of self-efficacy in teaching. This study investigated the teachers' self-concepts that have an impact on their self-efficacy. Many other studies that focus on self-efficacy of teachers include or explain external sources of problems, such as lack of support from administration, large classroom sizes, inadequate salary, perceived low status of the profession, lack of motivation from the students, work overload, and other external factors (Brackett et al., 2010; Covell et al., 2009; Santavirta, Soloviena, & Theorell, 2007).

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions and characteristics of 12 teachers who have remained in the teaching profession for more than 5 years in order to explain the effects of teacher self-efficacy on teacher persistence in the profession as perceived by the teachers themselves. The study's findings will provide educators tools to improve their self-efficacy in teaching to create a richer learning experience for students. Additionally, the study is important to teachers and students because the strong self-efficacy beliefs of teachers impact persistence in the profession. Sustaining teachers in the profession is important because of the commitment of resources and of energy to teachers who leave the profession due to unhappiness or a low sense of self-efficacy in teaching (Watlington et al., 2010).

This study sought to expand the body of knowledge related to teacher self-efficacy and contribute to improvement of self-efficacy in teachers, thereby improving the persistence of teachers. The information can be used to assist administrators and teachers in improving both teacher self-efficacy and student learning.

Research Plan

This was a qualitative phenomenological study conducted in a series of interviews, open-ended survey questions, a self-efficacy self assessment scale, and focus groups. Phenomenological research “emphasizes... the subjective aspects of people’s behavior” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 23) from the participants’ perspective. The participants were chosen based on their having taught for more than 5 years and also their willingness to participate. Effort was spent finding a variety of participants from various backgrounds, of various marital statuses, of varying subjects and disciplines, and of both

genders. There were many participants originally chosen who decided not to participate due to the time required for the study.

Initially, interviews were conducted individually with participants, with follow-up questions asked as necessary. The interviews were audio-taped, and they each lasted from 20 minutes to 2 hours. After the interview, the teachers were provided open-ended questions to complete independently and on their own schedule. After the interview and open-ended questions were collected, two focus groups were formed to gain perspective from individuals about the phenomenon of self-efficacy in teaching. These took place in a casual and non-threatening environment in the school's data room (conference room). The interview questions and the focus group questions were similar, but the interview questions pertained to their personal experiences, how they felt, how it was at their last schools, and what would help with self-efficacy; and the focus group questions were directed more towards starting group conversations, allowing the teachers to feed off of one another's answers. The focus group questions involved topics such as what helps their teacher self-efficacy and whether or not they feel that they make a difference in the students' lives. Two focus groups instead of one were executed for the purposes of allowing all individuals to have a chance to speak their own voices, versus a larger group setting where certain participants would not have a chance to speak up regarding their opinions. Creswell (2007) stated that focus groups are advantageous when "the interactions among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other, when time to collect information is limited, and when individuals interviewed one-on-one may be hesitant to provide this information" (p. 133).

Triangulation of the data occurred through various data collection methods. Triangulation in qualitative research means that many sources of data are better in a study than a single source because “multiple sources lead to fuller understanding of the phenomena that you are studying” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 107). The data were collected through memoing, interviews, self-efficacy self assessments, open-ended surveys, and two focus groups. The data were re-checked with the participants (Gutcliffe & McKenna, 1999) for credibility of data, ensuring that what was being reported was what was said or meant. The participants had the opportunity to withdraw any information that they desired. To ensure dependability to the fullest extent in this study, triangulation of data occurred to ensure that the different forms were consistent through collecting data from interviews, open-ended questions, self-efficacy self assessments, and two focus groups.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is comprised of five chapters. The following is a brief overview of each chapter’s contents.

Chapter One introduces the problem of teacher persistence in education based on self-efficacy and personality characteristics. The purpose of the study and the research questions are addressed in Chapter One. Chapter One also includes a justification for the study as well as the significance of the study. A research plan is also introduced. The organization of the study precedes the definition of terms.

Chapter Two introduces the theory of teacher persistence when examining self-efficacy and personality traits. Chapter Two contains a review of current literature relating to self-efficacy in education, including Rotter’s locus of control theory,

Bandura's social cognitive theory, and Bandura's reciprocal determinism; and it describes Tschannen-Moran's studies on cyclical self-efficacy thoughts. This chapter addresses current theories behind teacher persistence in education. Major self-efficacy surveys are also introduced. This chapter delineates the current research in the area of teacher self-efficacy and its correlation to student achievement, teacher happiness, and teacher persistence in education. Chapter Two introduces the theory of teacher persistence when examining self-efficacy and personality traits, including the Big Five (Judge et al., 2002). The chapter concludes with a summary of the research.

Chapter Three outlines this qualitative study from a phenomenological research design approach. This chapter includes a description of the population in the participating school, as well as an in-depth description of each of the seven participants in the study. For the purposes of this study, each teacher who consented to participate (Appendix B) participated in a face-to-face interview (Appendix D), completed a written survey (Appendix F), participated in a focus group (Appendix H), completed the Teacher Self-Efficacy Assessment (Appendix C), and participated in additional interviews where clarification or further explanation was needed. The teachers expressed their perceptions of teacher self-efficacy. The teachers interviewed were prompted to give their opinions and thoughts on current theories impacting contentedness in education as a career. Chapter Three begins with the methodology for data collection followed by the procedures for data organization and analyses. Chapter Three also details the steps that were involved in gathering, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data.

Chapter Four begins with an introduction, reiterating the research questions. Chapter Four then reintroduces the participants, allowing the reader to further understand

their points of view. Chapter Four then includes the summary of data from the surveys given, including a table summarizing and averaging the answers to the survey. This chapter also contains analyses and findings from the research and a reiteration of the research questions along with the corresponding findings. The three research questions provided insight into the subject of teacher self-efficacy from the perspective of the educators. The teachers reported their knowledge of teacher persistence rates and theories of self-efficacy in the classroom, along with their perceptions of the association between teacher persistence and self-efficacy. They also were asked about additional factors such as teacher personality, ways to deal with stress, their feelings about teaching, their knowledge of their subject level, and many other factors that were revealed through the data. It concludes with a summary of the findings.

Addressed in Chapter Five are summarizing conclusions with the extant literature framework from each of the three research questions. Limitations of the study are presented as well as recommendations for research, practice, and policy, plus implications of the study. Finally, a conclusion is presented.

Definitions

Emotion-Regulation Ability (ERA)

Emotion-regulation ability (Brackett et al., 2010) is the ability to enhance or control one's emotions as needed or the ability to act efficaciously in emotional situations. Emotion-regulation ability refers to people's ability to recognize that they are feeling an emotion, but they do not let the emotion overwhelm their actions. According to the ERA theory, ERA should influence how teachers express emotions and handle stress (Brackett et al., 2010).

Locus of Control

Individuals with a low locus of control feel that what they do will not have an impact on the world around them. In teaching, this pertains to whether or not teachers feels as if they can make a difference in the lives of their students. The locus of control theory explains that people can either feel an internal (persons feel that they can control their lives) or an external locus of control (persons feel that outside circumstances influence and control their lives) (Rotter, 1996).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is individuals' belief and ability in their performance for a certain situation, or how effective that they feel in being able to accomplish a certain situation. Bandura (1977) noted that "people's perceptions of their efficacy influence the types of anticipatory scenarios that they construct and reiterate" (p. 729). In teaching, highly self-efficacious teachers feel that they can teach the students and that they can succeed in teaching. Those who have a high level of self-efficacy will approach a challenge with their strength and resources, knowing that they will make a difference and can conquer that challenge. Those with a low level of self-efficacy feel as if no matter how hard they attempt something, they cannot make a difference.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Self-fulfilling prophecy describes any positive or negative expectation about a circumstance that may affect a person's behavior and cause that belief to be fulfilled. This can also be described as someone's performance being impacted by the expectations of others around them (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Stress

Stress is the interaction between a force and the resistance to it (Taché & Brunnhuber, 2008). Stress in teaching is the resistance to negative forces that occur in the world of the teacher.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy is the perception that teachers have of their own capabilities as teachers to bring out desired outcomes of student motivation and learning. It can also be described as teachers' self-beliefs being determinants of their own teaching behavior. According to Bandura (1986), teachers regulate their own behaviors and effort in accordance with "the effects they expect their actions to have" (p. 129).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the history and theories of teacher self-efficacy through presenting a conceptual framework and also a literature review, including the causes of, impacts from, and factors surrounding self-efficacy. In this chapter, the underlying principles of self-efficacy in teaching as well as the definitions and theories are addressed. The review expands upon Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977) and Rotter's locus of control theory (1996). This section also contains background information on reciprocal determinism, including Bandura's Triadic Reciprocal Determinism Model (Miller, 2010). The literature review includes information regarding cyclical self-efficacy thoughts, stress, teacher self-efficacy and student achievement, and sources of self-efficacy beliefs. The literature review section also includes self-efficacy influence in pre-service teaching, collective self-efficacy, changing self-efficacy, content knowledge and self-efficacy, and faith and self-efficacy. A section presenting four teacher self-efficacy scales will be included as well as sections about external and internal locus of control, teacher burnout, personality traits, emotional regulation ability, and finally a summary of the research.

Conceptual Framework

Rooted in Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977), self-efficacy can be described as how effective people perceive themselves to be and how they react to their surroundings. Albert Bandura, a well-known psychologist from Stanford University, defined self-efficacy as "our perceived abilities of learning or doing things at certain levels" (Wentzel & Wigfield, 2009). Self-efficacy can also be defined as teachers'

beliefs or convictions that they can influence how well students learn, even the most difficult students (Jennett et al., 2003). Even further, Ignat and Clipa (2010) defined self-efficacy as what people think they can do with their abilities in certain conditions. They also described self-efficacy as the ability to coordinate “skills and abilities in order to reach desirable objectives within particular domains and circumstances” (Ignat & Clipa, 2010, p. 181).

Bandura (1977) explained that teachers with a tenacious sense of self-efficacy have more creative and endearing classroom environments. They convey positive expectations and expend more time on the class materials and instructions (Bandura, 1977). However, when teachers start to feel exhausted, depersonalized, and unaccomplished, they tend to minimize their effort at work, become cold and distant, and feel inadequate (Friedman, 2000). Subsequently, teachers may have a low sense of self-efficacy, making them less confident in their ability to make a difference professionally (Friedman, 2000).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the teachers’ belief that the students can be taught despite factors such as the environment or their families (Jennett et al., 2003). Self-efficacy can also be described as the belief in the ability to “plan, organize, and carry out activities required to attain given educational goals” (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, p. 612). The expectations of personal self-efficacy in teachers “will determine whether or not coping behavior will be initiated, how much effort will be expended, and how long it will be sustained in the face of obstacles and adverse circumstances” (Bandura, 1977, p. 191). Teachers who have a

higher sense of self-efficacy perceive issues such as student misbehavior in a more manageable manner than those with a lower sense of self-efficacy (Kaplan, 1996).

A group of researchers at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, led by Frank Pajares, researched Bandura's theory and how it relates to self-efficacy in teaching (Pajares, 1996). Teachers who do not feel confident in their ability to teach and who expect that they are not creating positive outcomes with the students in terms of grades, behavior, and motivation will usually produce students who do not meet the standards (Pajares, 2002). When teachers feel that they cannot make an impact on the students, "an individual may be capable to do nothing because he feels impeded by these real or imaginary constraints" (Pajares, p. 6, 2002). Covell, McNeil, and Howe (2009) completed a study in 15 different schools, with 127 teachers. Half of the schools implemented a program called "Rights, Respect, and Responsibility," while other schools did not. The "Rights, Respect, and Responsibility" program taught children to feel good about themselves, their schools, their teachers, and their surroundings. When the students put into practice what they had learned through the "Rights, Respect, and Responsibility" program, the teachers felt more supported and more appreciated (Covell et al., 2009). They also showed a significant increase in teacher morale, which continued for 3 years after the program's completion (Covell et al., 2009). Student and teacher morale improve when the teachers feel that they can make a difference (Covell et al., 2009; Pajares, 2002). When the students were more respectful, the teachers had a higher sense of self-efficacy (Covell et al., 2009). On the contrary, when the students were disrespectful, the teachers felt less efficacious (Covell et al., 2009). There is a relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their school-related accomplishments (Dorman,

2003). Success or failure of specific tasks greatly impacts teacher self-efficacy. Students, parents, and colleagues' verbal feedback impacts self-efficacy (Milner, 2002). Self-efficacy is one of the most important factors contributing to successful performance in nearly every area of life, including leadership and relationships (Moen & Algood, 2009; Erdem & Demirel, 2007)). This research aims to investigate and to further report about the phenomenon of teachers' self-efficacy from their points of view.

Watson (1991) performed a study on 244 teachers and 5,361 3rd-grade students in which he studied the self-efficacy of the teachers in various South Carolina 3rd-grade classrooms to see if it varied amongst different types of schools. The data were collected at schools containing varying external factors, such as race and location, where teachers of varying self-efficacy levels were studied. The data were collected using the Teacher Efficacy Scale developed by Gibson (1983). The t test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Procedures were used to obtain the comparative analysis. Regardless of external factors such as majority race or location of schools, greater achievement was shown with teachers who had a higher sense of self-efficacy (Watson, 1991).

Rotter's Locus of Control Theory

Rotter (1996) has a theory that is essential to self-efficacy called the "locus of control" theory. The locus of control theory explains that people can either feel an internal (persons feel that they can control their lives) or an external locus of control (persons feel that outside circumstances influence and control their lives). This information is crucial when trying to understand the self-efficacy of teachers in their particular classrooms, especially in seeing if persistence in the profession is impacted by

self-efficacy. Rotter developed a two-question test as one of the earliest predictors of self-efficacy in teachers. After Rotter's studies, Rose and Medway (1981) formed a test called the teacher locus of control (TLC) in which teachers could answer what they attributed student success to. This test is rarely used anymore (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Instead of a survey regarding locus of control, the present study will involve having the teachers take a survey about self-efficacy and how they believe it affects persistence in the profession.

Social-Cognitive Theory

The philosophical assumption that led to this body of research regarding teacher self-efficacy is the social-cognitive theory. In the social-cognitive theory, the environment, self, and both cognitive and personal factors affect one another (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 1996). In the social-cognitive theory, people exhibit some influence over what they do because they are proactive and self-regulating (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). According to the social-cognitive theory, humans can self-regulate and can plan alternative strategies and have forethought in various situations (Pajares, 1995). They can self-reflect, thinking about and learning from their pasts (Pajares, 1995). They can "alter their thinking and behavior accordingly" (Pajares, 1995, p. 4). This is a variance from the behaviorist point of view where people react to the world around them. In 1977, Bandura wrote a book in which he identified an important aspect to the equation, the person's thoughts and self-beliefs. In his book, *Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change*, Bandura (1977) used his social-cognitive theory to add cognitive and personal factors into the equation. In the social-cognitive theory, the thoughts and ideas that people bring with them as well as their environment contribute to their

outcome. Prior to this theory, the behaviorist theory noted that people simply reacted to the environment surrounding them, not taking into account the personality types and behaviors. The social-cognitive theory relates to this study in that teachers take into account their thoughts, their surroundings, and their behaviors and actions in determining or creating their level of self-efficacy. This can also be used with the students, which in turn affects the teacher, where the behavior of the teacher, the behavior of the students, the environment, and the students' and teacher's thoughts all are interconnected.

Reciprocal Determinism

Reciprocal determinism is a model of behavior wherein behavior, environment, and person affect one another and are interconnected. Reciprocal determinism can also be called triadic reciprocity (Bandura, 1986). Reciprocal determinism describes how teachers' personal beliefs can greatly impact their environment, their behavior, and the behavior of those around them (Bandura, 1978). When teachers are burned out, they can exude an attitude that students or other employees around them deserve what they get (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Cognitive processes determine how external events and stimuli will be taken in and perceived (Bandura, 1978). Humans can engage in reflective thought and do not have to fall prey to the consequences of thoughtless actions brought on by external events and occurrences (Bandura, 1978). In the triangular model, behavior and environment are reciprocal and depend on one another (Figure 1).

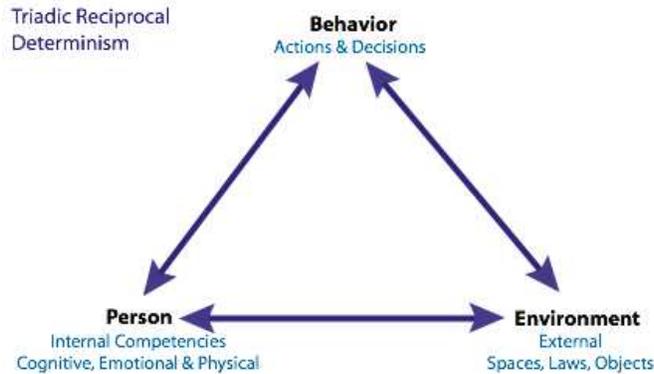


Figure 1. Bandura’s Triadic Reciprocal Determinism Model (Miller, 2010). From “Overcoming Obstacles to Avoid,” by B. Miller, 2010, *Learning Solutions Magazine*, 14, 1-7. Retrieved from <http://www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/474/overcoming-obstacles-to-avoid-/print>. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 1 represents how behavior is contingent on the environment and the person’s internal competencies. If a teacher has a higher sense of self-efficacy and feels in control of the setting, then the students respond in a much calmer and more orderly fashion. Teaching efficacy is the “teachers’ beliefs that students can be taught despite external factors, such as their family environment” (Jennett et al., 2003, p. 584). According to Bandura (as cited in Wentzel & Wigfield, 2009), self-efficacy is a stronger indicator of behavior than self-esteem or self-concept.

The concept of reciprocal determinism can also be used by teachers with students, in that the teachers can challenge and work towards improving the students’ cognitive abilities, manage and control the classroom and school (environment), and also work to improve their own behaviors toward the students as well as the students’ attitudes and beliefs (Pajares, 1995).

Cyclical Self-Efficacy Thoughts

Tschannen-Moran and colleagues have performed numerous studies (Tshannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998) on self-efficacy including creating the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tshannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). They expanded the social-cognitive theory in that they added that teachers' senses of self-efficacy reflect their judgments on their capabilities within a specific parameter, being their discipline or the student population (Silverman & Davis, 2006). Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) believe that a teacher's self-efficacy beliefs will "transfer to the extent that he or she perceives similarity in the task resources and constraints from one teaching situation to another" (p. 800). Tschannen-Moran et al. developed a model of teacher self-efficacy identifying the ways in which a teacher uses the perceived sense of self-efficacy and the consequences of that, such as higher goals, learning goals, effort and persistence, and resilience, and turns that into student outcomes such as student achievement and a student's sense of self-efficacy as well as teacher outcomes such as teacher commitment, risk taking, and innovation. See Figure 2 below.

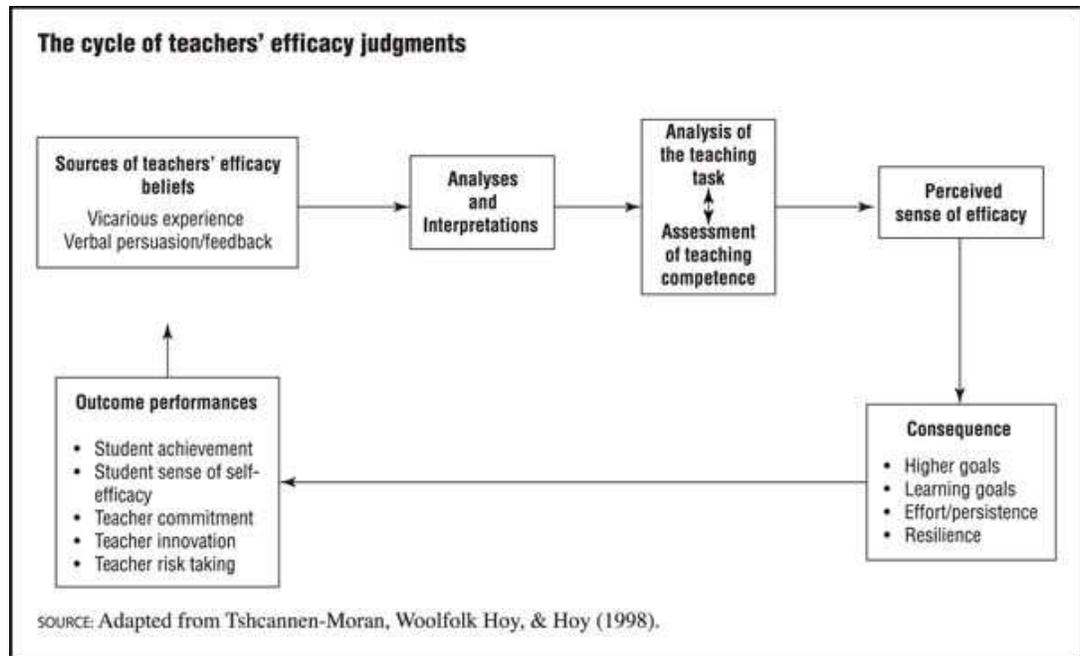


Figure 2. The Cycle of Teacher’s Efficacy Judgments (Tshcannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; and Silverman & Davis, 2008). From “Teacher efficacy: Its meaning and measure,” by M. Tshcannen-Moran, A. Woolfolk Hoy, & W.K. Hoy, 1998, *Review of Educational Research*, 68, 202–248. Reprinted with permission.

Stress

Goddard, O’Brien, and Goddard (2006) noted that while there are a large number of studies on work climate, social factors, work resources, and role conflict, there are few studies on the factors that could alleviate burnout and stress. According to the existentialist view of Rogers (Goddard et al., 2006), stress arises from a mismatch between actual and self-image. In education, stress comes from a mismatch between teachers’ misconceptions of what they thought teaching was going to be like and the harsh reality of teaching (Goddard et al., 2006). Research suggests that higher expectations aimed toward teaching careers lead to higher burnout levels (Friedman,

2000; Goddard et al., 2006). Friedman (2000) described “the sharp realities between the ‘observed’ and the ‘expected’ in teaching as the result of a rude awakening from an idealistic dream and the shattering of anticipations of an enjoyable and satisfying professional career of service” (p. 598). Finding ways to alleviate burnout and stress could improve teachers’ levels of self-efficacy, resulting in higher teacher persistence in the profession.

Literature Review

A review of literature in the field of self-efficacy in teaching uncovers different descriptions and interpretations of the concept. The following literature review includes the background of the research leading up to and surrounding self-efficacy in teaching, as well as the conceptual theories surrounding self-efficacy in teaching. The literature review represents current, relevant research as it relates to teacher self-efficacy and persistence in the field of education. The literature review is organized by first explaining how the social cognitive theory describes teacher self-efficacy and those factors that teachers believe affect self-efficacy. The chapter goes on to explain more of the background in self-efficacy with teachers, including studies by Bandura as well as Pajares, a more current researcher at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Next comes information about sources of self-efficacy beliefs according to current studies (Corkett Hatt, & Benevides, 2011; Jennett et al., 2003) and following that comes information about how self-efficacy’s foundation for teachers starts with pre-service teaching (Garvis, Twigg, and Pendergast, 2011). Theories on collective self-efficacy (Swackhamer et al., 2009) will be revealed as well as sources of information regarding changing self-efficacy (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2007) and whether or not what starts with teachers in terms of

their self-efficacy can be changed. Content knowledge of teachers and theories on whether or not that impacts the self-efficacy of teachers (Bandura, 2007; Swackhamer et al., 2009) are discussed as well as various self-efficacy scales that have been used in past research. External and internal locus of control (Rotter, 1990) as well as teacher burnout (Jennett et al., 2003) will be explained so as to provide background knowledge and how this study might be affected by those factors. Personality traits (Howard & Howard, 2000; Judge et al., 2002; Pajares, 1996) are explained further in this chapter as well as the emotional-regulation ability (Bracket et al., 2010; Corkett et al., 2011), which is when teachers have the ability to control their emotions. Lastly, the topics will be summarized and regrouped in the final section summarizing the research.

Teacher Self-Efficacy and Student Achievement

Self-efficacy not only impacts teachers, but students are also affected in tremendous ways (Schwackhamer et al., 2009). Whether or not they feel a strong sense of self-efficacy, all teachers do have a measurable impact on student learning and student placement (Corkett et al., 2011; Grant, Stronge, & Ward, 2011).

The teachers that a student has in grades K-12 have a significant impact on the student's learning path (Grant et al., 2011). Teachers with a lower sense of self-efficacy are more "critical of students who make errors, work less with students who struggle, and are more likely to refer a difficult student for special education services than teachers with high self-efficacy" (Corkett et al., 2011, p. 72; Egyed & Short, 2006). Teachers who have a higher sense of self-efficacy may work harder in the classroom and exhibit a greater interest in the students, persisting at working with difficult students (Corkett et al., 2011, Wentzel & Wigfield, 2009).

Teachers who do not have the personal belief that they will be successful with certain students do not put forth the effort that people who believe they can make a difference would put forth towards instruction (Garvis, 2009). Teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in reading and literacy influences a student's self-efficacy, which impacts the student's literacy development (Corkett et al., 2011). Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2008) found that teachers who have high feelings of self-efficacy "emphasize the value of individual differences, enhance group work and problem-solving ability, and channel students to develop adequate social competencies" (p. 315). When teachers implement good practices, such as spending time on classroom activities, putting forth more effort, and being more motivated due to higher self-efficacy, students have more respect for the school property, which creates a higher sense of self-achievement for teachers (Egyed & Short, 2006). Self-efficacious teachers also implement more inquiry-based and student-centered approaches than teachers who have a low sense of self-efficacy, who typically use more textbooks and lecture methods of teaching (Swackhamer et al., 2009; Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2008).

Sources of Self-Efficacy Beliefs

There are four basic sources of self-efficacy beliefs according to Bandura (1986) and Pajares (1996). In these four sources of self-efficacy beliefs, a cycle is formed between the teacher's self-efficacy beliefs and the actions of the teacher.

The first part of the proposed source of self-efficacy is when teachers gauge the outcome of their actions to determine their self-worth. This first source of self-efficacy beliefs is sometimes called "mastery experiences" or "experiences of mastery" (Bandura, 1986).

The second source of self-efficacy beliefs comes from the actions of the people surrounding the teacher and how that impacts the teacher (Bandura, 1986). When people are not sure about themselves and have a lower sense of self-esteem, they tend to be sensitive to what others are doing around them. This could imply the importance of having a model or mentor for a teacher to learn from and to develop a strong sense of self-efficacy.

The third source of self-efficacy beliefs is the influence from other people's verbal persuasions (Bandura, 1986). Negative verbal persuasions from other teachers and staff can damage the ego of both teachers and children alike. Verbal persuasions are also called "social persuasions." Individuals who receive social support from those surrounding them feel cared for and secure (Bracket et al., 2010). These teachers know that they have someone to communicate with during times of stress (Bracket et al., 2010).

The final source of self-efficacy beliefs, according to the writings of Pajares (1996) (in accordance with Bandura), is that psychological traits affect self-efficacy beliefs. When teachers are emotional, their anticipation of success or failure is greater (Pajares, 1996). Burns and Gunderman (2008) said that, "much of our distress arises not only from what happens in our lives, but from the way we interpret those events. Once we see the impact of our interpretations, we can turn each adverse event into opportunities" (Burns & Gunderman, p. 566, 2008).

According to Tsouloupas, Carson, Matthews, Grawitch, and Barber (2010), teacher efficacy in handling student misbehavior (TEHSM) is another, more recently termed, factor that contributes to self-efficacy. Teacher efficacy in handling student misbehavior is the way that teachers feel about whether they can or cannot handle a

discipline situation, impacting how they feel about their ability to adapt and respond to situations in which students are misbehaving (Tsouloupas, Carson, Matthews, Grawitch, & Barber, 2010).

Self-Efficacy Influence by Pre-Service Teaching

The most important learning experience of a teacher's education is during the final internship experience and the relationship with that supervising teacher (Sprague, 1997). Garvis, Twigg, and Pendergast (2011) performed a study in Queensland, Australia surveying 21 teachers. They found that, according to their surveys, teachers' sense of self-efficacy is influenced by their professional experiences during their pre-service teaching. Pre-service teachers' self-efficacy and sense of worth are influenced by their mentor teachers' supervising practices, supervising teachers' feedback, and the profile of the arts as a subject (Garvis et al., 2011). This occurs because the mentor teachers are usually significant and believable in the eyes of the new teacher (Garvis et al., 2011). The new teacher's ideals are influenced by whether or not they are led to "sink or swim" in student teaching, how much support that they receive, and how they interact with students during student teaching (Erden & Demirel, 2007). Often, student teachers or pre-service teachers will lower their standards to "reduce the gap between the requirements of excellent teaching and their self-perceptions of teaching competence" (Erdem & Demirel, 2007, p. 2). Models in teaching can help a teacher to improve self-efficacy through seeing someone who is similarly successful in the profession (Schunk, 1995). Similarity to other teachers is also an indicator of self-efficacy, in that when teachers feel that they connect emotionally with other teachers, their self-efficacy tends to be higher (Schunk, 1995; Sprague, 1997).

Collective Self-Efficacy

Collective self-efficacy has also been termed “outcome efficacy” or “general efficacy.” This can be defined as the teachers’ beliefs that the school system as a whole can have a positive impact on the students’ learning regardless of where the student comes from, or other outside influences, such as gender, socio-economic status, or parental influence (Swackhamer et al., 2009). Goddard et al. (2006) described collective efficacy as the teachers’ thoughts and beliefs about the efforts and capabilities of the entire school as a whole to have a positive effect on student achievement and the outcomes of the students. A high sense of collective efficacy “enhances a group’s capability to enlist administrative support, fosters creative problem solving, and influences decision making and the individual capability for classroom management, which, in turn, leads to teacher commitment” (Chong et al., 2010, p. 183).

Bandura (1986) described four sources of self-efficacy formation that can also be applied to a collective self-efficacy. They are mastery experience (teachers thrive when they succeed and are limited and bothered when they fail), vicarious experience (teachers do not solely gather their feelings of self-efficacy from themselves, but from the stories of those around them), social persuasion (talks, professional development, positive feedback, and a feeling of closeness with the staff can persuade people to feel more efficacious in teaching), and effective states (efficacious faculty groups can react in a more positive way to very stressful situations) (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000).

Many teachers work with other teachers in teams; therefore, sometimes the teachers’ individual self-efficacy is impacted by how their team functions (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Sadly, stress can also occur from working with other teachers. Schools

that have a higher collective efficacy set higher goals for the teachers, which keep those teachers striving to be better, even in the face of adverse situations (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Schools that set higher goals for their teachers have students who also set higher goals for themselves (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Students absorb the positive feelings that they get from being in a school where the teachers have a higher sense of common self-efficacy and feel as if they can make an impact on the students' lives (Goddard et al., 2000). This relationship between the teachers and students creates a cyclical affect, confirming the teachers' beliefs in themselves and their ability to teach (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) performed a study on 2249 Norwegian elementary and middle school teachers. The purpose of the Norwegian study was to examine relations between individual teacher self-efficacy, collective teacher self-efficacy, and external control defined as teachers' beliefs that factors external to teaching put limitations to what they can accomplish. They also studied the relations between teacher burnout and teacher self-efficacy. Another purpose of the study was to explore teacher self-efficacy and teacher burnout and how it is related to a teacher's perceptions of the school context and to job satisfaction. Skaalvik and Skaalvik ran a series of tests on the teachers. Those tests included the Norwegian Teacher Self-Efficacy scale to test for teacher self-efficacy, a seven-item scale to test for collective teacher self-efficacy, a five-item scale to measure external control, the Maslach Burnout Inventory to test for burnout, and teacher job satisfaction with a five-item scale, and teachers' perceptions of the school climate were studied with three questions answered using a scale. The data were analyzed through a factor analysis using the AMOS 7 program. The study revealed that

teacher self-efficacy was strongly related to teachers' relations to parents, showing that positive relationships with parents predicted stronger self-efficacy beliefs (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). When teachers are in a positive academic climate, they may be more inclined to believe that their collective capacity can "foster changes that promote school performance" (Chong et al., 2010). Collective self-efficacy was shown to be positively related to supervisory support (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2010). Collective efficacy is a variable that can be used to predict teacher self-efficacy beyond what the other school variables--including students' socioeconomic status and prior academic achievement, and the effect of teachers' longevity on the academic achievement of students in various middle schools--can predict (Chong et al., 2010; Pajares, 1996).

Changing Self-Efficacy

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) stated that "self-efficacy is conceptualized as a context-specific and malleable belief about what the individual teacher can accomplish given the limitations caused by external factors" (p. 612). Teacher self-efficacy while teachers are in college is higher and slowly declines during student teaching (Erdem & Demirel, 2007). A reason for this may be that many student teachers act as peers with their students while they are student teaching, which quickly leads to a classroom being out of control in regard to behavior. They realize that their ideals and fantasy-like expectations about teaching no longer hold true (Erdem & Demirel). Garvis (2009) believed that a beginning teacher's self-efficacy is acquiescent and is shaped by school context, collective efficacy, school locale, and demographics. Henry et al. (2011) suggested that schools provide novice teachers with supportive mentoring programs, limited class sizes during their first year, networking, collaboration programs between

teachers, and reduced teaching loads for novice teachers to improve and build on the novice teacher's sense of self-efficacy. Teachers greatly increase their effectiveness between their first and second year of teaching, but for those teachers who are leaving during their third or fourth year, they have a lower sense of self-efficacy during their last year of teaching (Henry et al., 2011). There is a lack of increase in the gains in the effectiveness of teachers after their third year (Henry et al., 2011), which leads to the inability to increase the self-efficacy of a teacher. However, Moen and Allgood (2009) believe that self-efficacy beliefs are formed prior to engaging in a particular task, meaning that pre-service teachers have already formed their self-efficacy beliefs.

According to Lev and Koslowsky (2008), collective self-efficacy of a school impacts the teacher's self-efficacy only in the areas of social relations amongst students and in dealing with their behavioral problems. Collective self-efficacy does not affect the ability to advance the students' academic outcome (Lev & Koslowsky). Henry et al. (2011) also found that after completing the National Board Certification (NBC), teachers' self-efficacy did not increase.

Teachers who have a modest self-efficacy, when placed in a school where there is focus on past failures, have a lowered sense of self-efficacy over time (Lev & Koslowsky, 2008). In addition, whether one has a supervisory position, or a position of leadership, it impacts one's sense of self-efficacy, meaning that some teachers' sense of self-efficacy can be increased by giving them a position of leadership within the school (Lev & Koslowsky, 2008).

Content Knowledge and Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1997) termed the first source of self-efficacy as experiences of mastery (or success) because he felt that this was the most dependable source. For math teachers to feel competent in teaching mathematics, they need specialized skills that exceed the average adult (Swackhamer et al., 2009). When teachers are taught content courses that specifically show how to teach the content, it increases the pre-service teachers' efficacy levels (Swackhamer et al., 2009). A higher sense of self-efficacy gives teachers the desire to want to spend more time in their subject matter, visuals for the classroom, and lesson plans, whereas someone with a low sense of self-efficacy will often avoid their subject or profession (Palmer, 2006). Teachers in music education who believe that they can impact the students' learning and who have a high sense of self-efficacy themselves have students whose future performances are of a much higher quality than students of teachers who do not believe they are competent in teaching the fine arts (Garvis, 2009). There is a significant positive relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their perceived subject level knowledge (Yilmaz, 2011). Teachers who study their lesson plans ahead of time have an improved sense of self-confidence, which positively impacts the students' behavior (Rock & Wilson, 2005). Self-efficacy is known as task specific self-confidence, which is when an individual believes that he or she can perform given his or her "unique and specific capabilities" (Moen & Allgood, 2009, p. 2). Teachers who are more confident in their area of expertise have more confidence in planning their activities and in the execution of those activities (Moen & Allgood, 2009).

A study was performed in India, where 226 teachers were surveyed on self-efficacy for the purposes of studying self-efficacy in secondary school teachers (Aziz,

Hassan, Khatoon, & Shazadi, 2011). The researchers used a 9-point Likert scale based on Bandura's self-efficacy scale and ran t tests and a one way ANOVA. The findings showed that teachers who have a degree in their subject area scored higher in self-efficacy than those who had a degree outside of their subject area. In addition, the mean difference between graduate and postgraduate teachers was significant (Aziz et al., 2011).

Teachers who are coached have the opportunity to better learn how to analyze the tasks at hand and to increase their subject matter, thus improving their self-efficacy (Moen & Allgood, 2009). Coached teachers also know how to assess their own personal competence about a certain situation (Moen & Allgood, 2009). Self-efficacy is higher in schools where the teachers are teaching in their subject areas, where the school culture is one of a collaborative nature, and where there are more orderly students who have higher abilities (Ross, 1992).

Faith and Self-Efficacy

The history of religion and public education is long and diverse, though there has been an almost constant separation of church and state. However, in teaching, self-efficacy is dependent not only on the teacher's knowledge and skills, but also on the teacher's ability to develop the character of the student in four areas: performance, moral, civic, and intellectual. Many teachers' self-efficacy in teaching depends on their personal beliefs in these areas (Eckert, 2011).

While there were many articles found on God, faith, and teaching, there were few articles that directly related God and faith to self-efficacy. Through extensive searches of journal articles, searching for terms such as self-efficacy, faith, God, and teaching, very few results were found surrounding self-efficacy and a teacher's religious beliefs.

Teacher Self-Efficacy Scales

There are a myriad of self-efficacy scales available to researchers. Four of these assessments are listed below. While all of the tests listed below were not used in this research, the test questions will guide the questions for the interviews with the 12 participants in this study. Every participant was assessed using the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, which is described in further detail below.

The Ohio State Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (OSTES) was created at Ohio State University by Drs. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001). It has both a long and a short format. The long form has 24 questions while the short form has 12. This test is specific to teachers in regard to the students. The questions ask about calming students down, fostering creativity in the classroom, using assessment strategies, and responding to defiant students.

The Self-Efficacy Teaching and Knowledge Instrument for Science Teachers (SETAKIST) is a newer instrument, created in 2000 by Roberts and Henson. This questionnaire is aimed at science teachers. This test has 247 questions, which results in an analysis of the teacher's efficacy in teaching science. The test results show that there are two types of efficacy for teachers of science. They are teaching efficacy and knowledge efficacy. This test includes statements such as the following: I find it difficult to explain why science experiments work; I generally teach science ineffectively'; or I feel anxious when teaching science. The teachers respond using a 5-point scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) was created to assess a general sense of perceived self-efficacy. This test was developed in Germany in 1979, but has been

revised and rewritten in 26 other languages. This test is self-administered and takes approximately four minutes to take. This test can be used for teachers or for other adults. According to Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995), this test would not detect a slight change but provides a general outcome.

The Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES) was developed by R. Schwarzer, G. Schmitz, and G. Daytner in 1999. By following Bandura's social cognitive theory, the researchers started with 27 items and reduced them to 10 after being administered to a group of 300 German teachers. The items on this test are personalized, using the words "I can" or "I will be able to." The authors divided job skills into four major areas: job accomplishments; skill development on the job; social interaction with parents, students, and colleagues; and coping with job stress. The 10 statements are each rated on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being "not all of the time," 2 being "barely true," 3 being "moderately true," and 4 being "exactly true." The scale is scored on a range of 10 to 40. The test retest reliability is as follows: after 1 year, .67 (N = 158) and after 2 years, .65 (N = 161). This test was administered to each of the 12 participants prior to their individual interviews. The scores were used to assess the participants and their answers as well as the triangulation of the data, in ensuring that the data and information given by the participants were accurate.

External and Internal Locus of Control

Rotter (1990) described external and internal locus of control as the following:

Internal versus external control refers to the degree to which persons expect that a reinforcement or outcome of their behavior is contingent on their own behavior or personal characteristics versus the degree to which the persons expect that the

reinforcement or outcome is a function of chance, luck, or fate is under control of powerful others, or is simply unpredictable. (p. 489)

Teachers with a lower self-esteem usually have an external locus of control (Rotter, 1990). According to Covell et al. (2009), when teachers have an external locus of control, they have a reduced sense of accomplishment. Teacher self-efficacy can also be described as “the teachers’ beliefs that the students can be taught despite external factors, such as their family environment” (Jennett et al., 2003, p. 584). Teachers will have a high sense of self-efficacy if they know that the student can be influenced by them and that the student enjoys being taught by them.

External locus of control is the dimension of self-efficacy in which teachers feel that factors are out of their control (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Locus of control is a concept in psychology referring to whether a person feels able to control or affect surrounding situations. Teachers with an external locus of control put limitations on what they can accomplish with students (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). If teachers believe that the students are more influenced by external stimuli, such as their parents, friends, or neighbors, then the teachers do not feel as if they have an impact on the students (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Rotter (1996) asserted that individuals with a higher internal sense of locus of control believe their actions determine the outcome of the situation.

Teacher Burnout

“Burnout is the endpoint in the process of coping unsuccessfully with chronic stress” (Jennett et al., 2003, p. 583). Maslach and Jackson (1981) described individuals who are burned out as ones who are emotionally exhausted and who view their clients

(students) with cynicism and without care. Those who are burned out view themselves through a negative light, thus negatively affecting their classroom management due to a low sense of self-efficacy (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000). Burnout impacts the most capable teachers because they seem to be those who are the perfectionists who are extremely committed (Skillern et al., 1990).

There are three dimensions to burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and negative personal accomplishment (Dorman, 2003). Dealing with students' classroom behavior is one of the key factors in teacher burnout and emotional exhaustion (Friedman, 2006). Teachers who are burned out and who have exhausted personal resources make more special education referrals of students with behavior problems than those who do not feel burned out (Egyed & Short, 2006).

Throughout different cultures, teacher burnout is a determining factor in the teacher's motivation and job satisfaction as well as the teacher's health (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Being exhausted from burnout is strongly related to teacher self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). When teachers are burned out and are experiencing low self-efficacy, they tend to withdraw from positive student relationships (Chang, 2009). Teachers who are burned out tend to feel inefficacious (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Throughout the literature, relatively little is mentioned on ways to prevent teacher burnout.

Personality Traits

A key indicator in determining which teachers will either leave the profession or remain but feel burned out, is personality types (Pajares, 1996). Multiple studies have been conducted on personality traits and job choices (Howard & Howard, 2000; Judge et

al., 2002). The personality traits are often broken down into a major theoretical framework that is called the Big Five (Judge et al., 2002). The five major traits used in determining job satisfaction are neuroticism, extraversion, openness to new experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Judge et al., 2002).

Kokkinos (2007) found that certain characteristics, including neurotic tendencies and introverted personality types, influenced teacher burnout. Neurotic teachers tend to be more negative or have negative events in their teaching experience (Kokkinos, 2007). Neuroticism impacts emotional accomplishment and also personal accomplishment in teaching (Goddard et al., 2006). Kokkinos also found that teachers who participated in the study who exhibited neurotic tendencies also had lower self-efficacy levels. Teachers who are neurotic typically react less consistently on surveys than those who are not classified as neurotic (Goddard et al., 2006).

Teachers who are conscientious exhibit higher levels of teacher accomplishment, causing a higher level of correlation between conscientiousness and accomplishments (Kokkinos, 2007). Conscientiousness can be defined as the tendency to respond in certain ways to a situation under certain circumstances, or the ability to think, feel, and behave in a consistent fashion across varying situations (Leary & Hoyle, 2009). Teachers who are low in conscientiousness and are neurotic tend to exhibit exceptionally high burnout rates, thus leaving the profession or staying and disliking their career (Kokkinos, 2007). Skillern et al. (1990) reported that conscientious teachers burn out at a more rapid rate than those who are not as conscientious.

Extroverts (Judge et al., 2002) are predisposed to positive emotions and are more likely to view the relationship with their jobs as a positive one. Because extroverts spend

more time with friends and in social situations, they are more likely to find their interpersonal relationships in and out of work in a more positive light and seem to be happier at work.

One of the five personality traits associated with determining job satisfaction is “openness to new experience.” According to Judge et al. (2002), this describes someone who is more liberal and open to new ideas. None of the other psychological states are as closely connected as this. Someone who is described as having openness to new experience feels the good as well as the bad more so than someone who is not open to new experiences; therefore, this can be a positive or a negative trait in regard to job satisfaction.

Agreeableness is the final of the five personality traits that are linked to job satisfaction, according to Judge et al. (2002). This trait can be described as getting along with other people so as to achieve greater interpersonal intimacy, which should lead these employees to greater levels of well-being. Along with the greater sense of well-being comes job satisfaction.

Emotion-Regulation Ability

Emotion-regulation ability (ERA) is the ability to regulate emotions (Bracket et al., 2010). ERA is positively correlated with positive emotions and feelings of personal accomplishment and negatively correlated to emotional exhaustion (Bracket et al., 2010). Bracket et al. (2010) compared teachers’ emotion-regulation ability with performance measure and job satisfaction. They found that teachers who could regulate their emotions could “elicit positive responses from those in which they interact, which in turn could lead to greater personal accomplishment” (Bracket et al., 2010, p. 413). Bracket et al.

explained how a teacher with high levels of HRA tends to establish warm and caring relationships, can deal with student problems, and can create a relaxing classroom atmosphere, which in turn causes the teacher to feel a greater sense of accomplishment.

Corkett et al. (2011) found that emotional intelligence in teachers is a malleable trait and can be increased through training programs (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2008). Burns and Gunderman (2008) found that optimism is one factor that leads to lower turnover and higher productivity in the workplace. If a teacher is at a school where there are higher-track students who are naturally actively engaged, the teacher's ability to teach is reinforced (Chong et al., 2010). This reinforces the teacher's self-confidence and increases the ERA and self-efficacy (Chong et al., 2010). A teacher who shows a lower level of ERA cannot always deal with the range of emotions that come from teaching students, leaving the teacher drained and uncaring towards others (Bracket et al., 2010). When teachers lose their temper one time with a student, they can forever change the way that student feels towards school and towards that teacher. Bracket et al. (2010) produced one of the few literature articles pertaining to the relationship between ERA and job satisfaction and burnout among teachers.

Summary of Research

Bandura (1977) explained that personal self-efficacy determines how much people can endure in future circumstances in the classroom or elsewhere. Personal self-efficacy determines how much effort will eventually be put into teaching and into classroom work (Bandura, 1977). Those teachers who are successful and who put forth great effort have a higher sense of self-esteem and of self-worth. Frank Pajares (1995) followed up on Bandura's findings and explained how the self-fulfilling prophecy also

pertains to the classroom. If teachers do not believe in positive outcomes, they will not achieve positive outcomes with the students (Covell et al., 2009). When teachers believe that they can make a difference, the students work harder for and with the teacher (Covell et al., 2009). Research supports that teachers with a higher sense of teacher self-efficacy have more enthusiasm for teaching (Milner, 2002).

Many different factors impact personal self-efficacy (Pajares, 1995). Some people are greatly affected by the verbal persuasion going on around them. Some teachers determine their self-worth by gauging the outcomes of their situations. Psychological traits determine some teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Pajares, 1995).

Kokkinos (2007) conducted various studies and found that teachers who are low in conscientiousness and are neurotic have strong burnout rates. In additional research in regard to gender and self-efficacy, gender did play an important role in determining the prediction of personal accomplishment, which leads to self-efficacy (Ozdemir, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to investigate and study 12 teachers' beliefs about self-efficacy. This research examined the contributing factors to self-efficacy. The study was conducted at a suburban middle school and high school. The information regarding self-efficacy and teachers who persist in the profession will be used to help improve the settings and situations for teachers who struggle with self-efficacy. This study investigated the factors that contribute to teachers remaining in the classroom. Another purpose of this study is to prevent teachers from being dissatisfied and quickly leaving the teaching profession. The study also investigated the factors that keep certain teachers in the classroom and pleased with their career choices.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions and characteristics of 12 teachers who have remained in the teaching profession for more than 5 years in order to explain the phenomenon of teacher self-efficacy as perceived by the teachers themselves. Another purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers see teacher self-efficacy and how it relates to their contentment or discontentment in the teaching profession. The study also investigated the factors that keep certain teachers in the classroom and pleased with their career choices while others are dissatisfied and quick to leave the classroom. A phenomenological approach was appropriate for this research because a phenomenological study researches and investigates “the building blocks of human science and the basis for knowledge” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). This methodology section describes the research design and rationale. The research questions are presented in this section, along with an introduction to the study participants and research site. My role as the researcher is explained, and a biographical summary is provided introducing my background and my perspective on the study problem.

This section also contains a detailed description of the various types of data collection, including focus groups, interviews, and open-ended written questions. Information and details about memoing (Creswell, 2007), audit checks (Moustakas, 1994), and horizontalization (Creswell, 2007), coding of interviews (Seidman, 2006), focus groups (Creswell, 2007), and essays (Bogden & Biklen, 2003) are delineated. Ethical issues are noted along with an explanation of the trustworthiness and reliability of this research. The emerging themes were audited by other professionals in the field to

ensure that the data collected are true to the subject matter or phenomena and not biased by my perspective. In describing the phenomenon of self-efficacy and teacher persistence, the participants told their story to me, and I then described the phenomenon to the reader.

While Denscombe (2007) defined the role of the researcher in quantitative research as being one of detachment, the qualitative researcher takes a more involved role. The qualitative researcher is considered a constructor of data and a crucial measurement device whose “social background, values, identity and beliefs have a significant bearing on the nature of the data collection and the interpretations of that data” (p. 250). Moreover, according to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2009), “I or we (meaning the author or authors) can replace the experiment” (p. 69). Therefore, in this qualitative study, I will refer to myself in the first person.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions of secondary school teachers of the influence of their self-efficacy on student academic achievement?
2. What personality characteristics do teachers feel add to their positive or negative self-efficacy about teaching?
3. What factors do teachers identify as influencing their professional self-efficacy in teaching (personality traits, outside circumstances, number of students, pre-service teaching experiences, etc.)?

Research Design

The nature of this study lent itself to a phenomenological, qualitative design rather than a quantitative design for the following reasons. This study revealed the experiences in self-efficacy in teaching from the viewpoints of the teachers. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) stated that qualitative research examines “how people such as teachers, principals, and students think and how they came to develop perspectives they hold” (p. 3). Qualitative data are referred to as “naturalistic” because the researcher is the key instrument in collecting and gathering the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

While a case study, narrative, and ethnography were various research types considered, phenomenology was chosen because it studies the individuals’ conceptions of reality, or the reality as it appears to the individuals (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The case study limited this research because it focuses on a single case or a limited number of cases (Creswell, 2007). Through using the phenomenological study, I got insight into 12 participants’ perceptions of their situations. The narrative study (Creswell, 2007) was strongly considered, but I wanted to study a larger population and study people who all had experience with self-efficacy and how that impacts their persistence in teaching. Ethnography was considered as well, but in ethnography a common culture or feeling is described. With studying self-efficacy and persistence in teaching, not all participants may have the same opinions, which is why I chose the phenomenological study over this one.

In the present phenomenological study, 12 participants were researched to provide for a broader range of opinions and insight into the phenomenon. The interview processes for phenomenological study are wide ranging, allowing many different aspects of the

experiences to arise and to be revealed. The data were compared for themes and meaning units or clusters, and gathered across the individuals to reveal a description of the phenomenon (Gall et al., 2007). I explored how different teachers perceive and experience self-efficacy and how they believe it impacts their persistence in the profession. Phenomenological research seeks to “make the invisible visible” (Laverly, 2003, p. 15) and to focus on the building blocks of experiences. Phenomenology seeks to define the world around it, “to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). This research investigated, through focus groups, interviews, a self-efficacy assessment, and open-ended questions, self-efficacy as it was experienced by the teachers themselves. Had I used the case study, narrative study, or ethnographic study, there would not have been enough opinions gathered because of the smaller number of participants. This would not have allowed for a very structural description of the phenomenon. The study investigated and researched what teachers feel has swayed them towards higher or lower self-efficacy in the classroom and whether or not that keeps them in the teaching profession or hinders them.

Qualitative data are normally collected where people spend a majority of their time, such as the classroom, cafeteria, street corner, or the home (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003). This type of data collecting is also referred to as “field work” because the data are collected in the field versus in a sterile laboratory setting. The “field” where data for this research were collected is a classroom or teacher workroom at the research site of the middle school and high school in northern Georgia.

Creswell (2007) noted there are two types of phenomenological studies: transcendental phenomenology (Mousakas, 1994) and hermeneutical phenomenology. In

hermeneutical phenomenology, the researcher and the participants communicate through extensive language, and both the researcher and the reader seek to interpret experiences through their own lived experiences. In hermeneutical phenomenology, a definitive answer is rarely possible. The reader interprets the text and thus interprets the world, producing more of a reflective interpretation of events (Van Manen, 1990). The research for this study was in the form of transcendental phenomenology (Lavery, 2003) in that I bracketed (epoched) out my own ideas and thoughts before reporting study participant data.

In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher looks solely at the phenomenon of the experience and brackets, or removes, him or herself from the experience (Lavery, 2003). The term *transcendental* means “in which everything is perceived as fresh, as if for the first time” (Lavery, 2003, p. 31). Transcendental phenomenology is a logical and clear path to investigating data. This type of research is called “transcendental” because it transcends everyday thoughts that plague the original idea. This type of research is called “phenomenological” because it investigates the phenomenon of self-efficacy through the eyes of the teachers themselves (Mousakkas, 1994). In transcendental phenomenology, the ideas surrounding the phenomenon are studied, but the perceptions of the researcher are removed, letting the data speak for itself. Transcendental research was used to investigate the data, thereby disregarding my opinion to the highest extent possible. Edmund Husserl is one of the primary researchers of transcendental phenomenology, in which “perceptions of the reality of an object are dependent on the subject” (Mousakkas, 1994, p. 27). Without the subjects’ points of view and beliefs, the researcher is simply completing a scientific study with mere facts and numbers. In this

study, my viewpoint was extracted to the fullest extent possible through writing about my experiences. This was done prior to reporting information gathered from the participants. The purpose of this research was to investigate what teachers feel and believe about teacher self-efficacy.

The researcher should think backwards in qualitative research, especially in phenomenological research (Merriam, 1991). This is an investigative study that is not skewed in one direction or another, but rather interested in the emergence of data as described by the participants.

Participants

The participants in this study were 12 teachers from a middle and high school located in northern Georgia. Creswell (2007) recommended using from five to 25 people to interview for phenomenological studies so that the researcher can deliberately choose participants who create a deep understanding of the phenomena, not to focus on the number of participants being tested. The participants in this study were diverse enough to add richness and depth to the study (Laverty, 2003). Random sampling is not appropriate for phenomenological studies because phenomenological studies rely more on chosen participants for the purposes of gaining in-depth information (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000). The participants in this study were purposefully selected, attempting to involve teachers from various subject areas, different ages, ethnicities, marital and family statuses, and both genders, as well as some who have been honored with “Teacher of the Year” and those who have not (Creswell, 2007). The teachers were chosen because they portrayed a general sense of self-efficacy in their teaching style as heard from other colleagues and students. The teachers chosen were also chosen as teachers who seemed

as though they might be willing and accepting of participating in such an extensive study, even in the midst of their busy lives. The school system from which the participants were chosen has a reputation of not keeping teachers who are not teaching to the best of their abilities. Many teachers from this school have been “let go” in the past. The teachers who remain at these schools are usually teachers who are outstanding in their field. In addition, convenience sampling was also used, as the participants were asked for their willingness to participate in this study. In addition to asking the teachers questions, data were collected from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission’s website on each teacher in regard to their teaching certificates and years of teaching. Data were collected through focus groups, observations, interviews, the Teacher Self-Efficacy Assessment, and open-ended questions until the participants introduce no new topics or ideas regarding the subject of teacher self-efficacy. The following teachers were used in this study:

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

| Name | Years of experience | Teaching area | Prior grade levels | Current grade level |
|---------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Kai | 6 | Chorus remedial | 6-8 | 7-12 |
| Liz | 6 | Math/enrichment | 7 | 6-8 |
| Abby | 7 | Science | 7 | 7 |
| David | 7 | Math | 6 | 8 |
| Alex | 8 | Science | 7 | 7 |
| Michael | 10 | Computer literacy | 6-12 | 6-8 |

| | | | | |
|----------|----|----------------|--------|------|
| Andrew | 14 | Math | 6-12 | 7 |
| Jennifer | 16 | Math | 6-12 | 6 |
| Sharon | 17 | Language arts | 6-12 | 9-10 |
| Carla | 24 | Social studies | 6-12 | 9-12 |
| Frida | 24 | Science | 6-8 | 6 |
| Sarah | 24 | Language arts | PreK-8 | 6 |

Note: All names used in this study represent pseudonyms.

Kai

Kai is a 31-year-old Caucasian chorus and music appreciation teacher at a middle school in northern Georgia who has taught for 6 years at the same school. She has also been pulled to teach computer literacy skills in the past. She is a single woman who has been dating the same man for 5 years and who has recently purchased her first home. She participates in choral activities outside of the school, such as singing in the Atlanta Symphony’s Chorus. She also takes the students from the middle school to many performance competitions. Kai has a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Voice from Westminster Choir College at Princeton and a Master of Music Education in Vocal Pedagogy from Columbus State University. She had scholarships to attend both schools.

Liz

Liz is a 37-year-old Caucasian remedial mathematics teacher who teaches 6th-8th graders. She has taught for 6 years. She has a daughter who is 8 and a son who is 10. She has previously taught Special Education to 7th graders. Her husband is the State Magistrate Judge in the town in which she works and lives. She earned her Bachelor’s in Psychology and English from Presbyterian College and a teaching certificate from

Brenau in Special Education and English. She is about to start her Master's in Middle Grades Education from Piedmont College.

Abby

Abby is a 31-year-old African American female who has taught 7th grade Science at the middle school in northern Georgia for 7 years. She and her husband have a 3-year-old son. She went to the University of Georgia, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a Master of Education in Science Education. She also has her Educational Specialist from Liberty University in Educational Leadership.

David

David is a 47-year-old Caucasian male who teaches 7th grade mathematics at a middle school in northern Georgia. He is a single male and was recently named "Teacher of the Year." He has been teaching for 7 years. He previously taught 6th grade mathematics. He arrives at school at least an hour before other teachers arrive, and he is usually the last to leave the school. In addition to teaching, he is responsible for the school's computerized grading system and for teaching the program to the staff. He has a Bachelor of Science in Math and Science Education from Georgia Southern, and a Master's degree in Math and Science Education from Brenau College.

Alex

Alex is a 36-year-old Caucasian teacher who taught and worked at a science center as an educator for 4 years and has now been teaching Life Science at the middle school for 8 years. She is married with a 2-year-old son and a 3-year-old daughter. Her husband is an English Literature professor at a small local college. She has a Bachelor of

Science in Biology and a Masters of Education in Science Education for grades 7 through 12, with an emphasis on Biology, from the University of Georgia.

Michael

Michael is a 38-year-old Caucasian male who teaches various computer courses as well as a CRCT coaching class and also an enrichment class. He co-teaches the CRCT coaching classes to help with the computer aspect of the class. He has worked as a derivatives trader and also in corrections. He has his Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of Georgia in Work Force Development. He has taught at three schools, two previous high schools and his current middle school for a total of 10 years. He is married to the Visual Arts Teacher at the local elementary school, and they have a 4-year-old daughter. He is an avid Georgia Folk Art Collector. He and his wife share that interest and have an extensive collection.

Andrew

Andrew is a 43-year-old Caucasian male who has been honored as “Teacher of the Year” within the past few years. He has taught for 14 years at two different schools. He currently teaches 7th grade Social Studies. He has three children who are ages 20, 12, and 10. He also has a wife who teaches at the local elementary school. He has noted that he had a hard time in school as a student, which is why, according to him, that he is so energetic about making school an interesting place for his students. He appears positive with the other teachers as well as the students. He served in the United States Army for 4 years prior to attending college. He has a Bachelor of Science in Social Studies Education from the University of Georgia, a Master of Education in Middle Grades Math

and Science from Lesley University, and a Specialist in Educational Leadership from Liberty University.

Jennifer

Jennifer is a 37-year-old Caucasian teacher who has taught at the middle school in northern Georgia for 16 years. She has taught Special Education in the past but currently teaches Math to 7th graders. She has a foster daughter who is 10 and has been with her for approximately a year. She holds a knitting club after school one day a week and is very involved in the Leadership Committee at the middle school in northern Georgia. She has a Bachelor of Arts in French Education from Wartburg College and several courses, but no official degree, in Special Education from the University of Georgia.

Sharon

Sharon is a 47-year-old Caucasian female who has taught English language arts to 6th through 12th graders and also Social Studies to 6th and 7th graders. She has taught for 17 years. She is currently teaching three levels of 9th and 10th grade English Language Arts. She is in her 2nd year at her current high school, but has also taught for 3 years at another high school and also for 13 years at a middle school. She has a Bachelor of Journalism from the University of Georgia, a Master's in Mass Communication from the University of Georgia, an Educational Specialist from Brenau, and also an Educational Doctorate that she just earned from Georgia Southern. She has been married once before and is remarried with no children (only canines and felines, as she says). She and her husband are active travelers and explorers. They go overseas as well as traveling in their recreational vehicle.

Carla

Carla is a 48-year-old Caucasian single female who has a Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in Leadership. She has taught school for a total of 24 years. She recently volunteered to teach 7th grade math to prevent another teacher from having to resign. After 2 years of that, she was asked to teach at the high school due to the fact that she earned her Ph.D. She currently teaches social studies to 9th-12th graders. She teaches Sunday School, works with the other girls at her church, and expects the best from each student. She is also known as one of the hardest teachers at the middle school in northern Georgia because she cares greatly for the students and holds them to high standards. She is currently divorced. Her mother and a close friend passed away within the last 2 years. She also has a Bachelor of Science, a Master of Education, and a Specialist Degree from the University of Georgia in English Education as well as a Specialist Degree from Georgia Southern University in Leadership.

Frida

Frida is a 44-year-old Caucasian teacher who has taught at the middle school for 13 years, as well as at another school for 11 years, for a total of 24 years. She and her husband are both in the school system. They have two girls, one who is in high school and one who attends college. She has a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Education in Science and Math Education from Georgia Southwestern as well as her Specialist in Leadership from Brenau University in Curriculum and Instruction.

Sarah

Sarah is a 50-year-old Caucasian teacher who has taught school for 24 years. She has three girls who are 23, 18, and 13. She is married to someone who is a recreational

sport coach, working at the YMCA and with various church groups. She has lived in many places and has worked at seven schools, ranging from preschool to high school and from private to public schools. She has her Bachelor’s degree in Middle Grades Education from the University of Georgia. She currently teaches 6th grade Language Arts at a middle school.

Setting

The study sites are a middle school and a high school located northeast of Atlanta, Georgia. This small community is now considered suburban due to the recent growth. The school is predominantly White, and the full demographics can be seen in Table 3.2. There are approximately 670 students at the middle school and 890 in the high school.

Table 2

Demographics of the School System

| Demographics of population | Caucasian | African American | Asian | Hispanic | Other |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------------|-------|----------|-------|
| Ethnicity | 81% | 10% | 2% | 6% | 1% |

Note. Data based on most recent information provided by the Georgia Department of Education (2009).

The town that contains the middle school and the high school in northern Georgia is a small, mostly Caucasian community, which prides itself as being a tightly knit community, with high academic test scores and competitive sports programs. The schools are Title I schools due to the number of free and reduced lunch participants.

Thirty-six percent of the students from the 2009-10 school year received free or reduced lunch.

The principal at the middle school is a male who is 41. He is a new employee who has 9 years of prior experience in teaching as well as 6 in administration. This is the principal's first year in this role. For the past 2 years, he has been the assistant principal, but the principal, a female in her late thirties, who was a graduate of the same school system, resigned to take care of her 10-year-old son, who was diagnosed with a rare form of Leukemia in October of 2011. She was on leave for the 2011-12 school year and was part-time in 2012-13. The current principal has been in a unique position since the diagnosis. The current assistant principal was a lead teacher at the local elementary school. That position was dissolved, and she was given the role as technology specialist for a year, and was then placed in this role as assistant principal. She has been in the school system for over 19 years now. She is married with two children and is in her early forties. She has her Specialist in Leadership.

The school has a young teacher population, with the majority of teachers being in their mid-thirties to mid-forties, and only a few near the age of retirement. The school was chosen because of the willingness of the administrators to support the researcher, as well as for the population being of great interest to me. The middle school in northern Georgia has a low teacher turnover rate compared to other school systems. People rarely leave this school for lateral career moves.

The high school is in the same school system, which is comprised of an elementary school (K-2), a school called the "academy" (3-5), the middle school (6-8), and also the high school (9-12). The principal at the high school, a male who is in his

late fifties, has been working at the school for 3 years. He came to the school system after having been in education for 22 years. The assistant principal at the high school, a male in his early forties, is in his first year of being an administrator and has previously taught social studies for 13 years. The high school building has been in existence for over 100 years, and the school itself has many graduates of the school system working as teachers or staff. The middle school and the high school are less than a mile apart.

Researcher's Perspective

The goal of a phenomenological study is to explain and describe how other people perceive the phenomenon itself and also to add knowledge about the subject matter being contaminated by the researcher's opinion (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). A researcher is to become a part of the participant's world in one way but is to remain silent in another (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). To reduce any biases that could have arisen in the study and to make myself more invisible to the reader, I provided a summative evaluation of my background in education as well as my personal life. The information about my personal life was included to reveal any biases that I may have had towards the participants.

I, Shana Market Norton, am the researcher for this dissertation. I currently (2011) teach 6th through 8th grade visual arts at a middle school in northeast Georgia that is comprised of approximately 700 students. I am the department head and have taught English Language Learners (ELL) for the K-12 school system. I am in charge of the In-School Suspension students in the morning and maintaining the ISS documentation for the middle school in northern Georgia. In addition, I am head of the Technology Committee and a board member for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) committee in the school district for the 2011-12 school year. I was also on the

SACS committee 5 years ago. I see over 200 students each day for 18 weeks in a row. This is my 9th year of teaching at this school, but I also taught for a year at another middle school in the state of Georgia. I worked part-time throughout my college career in after-school programs throughout the suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia. I have also taught part-time elementary visual arts in addition to substitute teaching in Kindergarten through 12th grade for various subjects.

Being the department head of the connections department does not give me authority over anyone in the school nor in this study. A majority of the teachers being interviewed in this study are core subject teachers, with two being connections teachers. The title *department head* simply means that my responsibilities include communicating any information from our department head or leadership meetings to those teachers. I am in charge of giving information to them and collecting items as necessary, but hold no authority over these teachers.

While I was a part-time server in a restaurant and also a substitute teacher, I earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art Education, a Master of Education in Educational Psychology, and an Educational Specialist in Instructional Supervision and Leadership. I also have Teacher Support Specialist certification. In addition to working fulltime, I am also working towards an Educational Doctorate in Teaching and Learning.

I currently reside in a small college town, where I live with my two small children and my husband. I work 50 hours a week in addition to working towards my degree and raising my family.

Reflections on the Topic

The topic of self-efficacy in teaching is important to me for personal reasons. I started out teaching with a very low sense of self-efficacy, meaning that I was even timid when speaking with the students. I had extremely low levels of self-efficacy in regard to teaching. I completed my student teaching and took over a long-term substitute position at a local middle school where the students were bused in, and they were going through some extreme changes in regard to student population. The prior visual arts teacher had been dismissed due to how she handled the students, and I was hired to take over the last 3 months of school. It turned out to be a meaningful experience, as I was able to succeed with the students in their efforts to create and to complete work. I was offered the position for the next year, but I did not take it due to the location of the school. The next year, I was offered another visual arts position at a local middle school, one that was one mile from my home. I took the position. The classroom was overcrowded, and the students were unruly. As a new teacher, I was given all of the “overflow” students as well as the students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders and no paraprofessional. In addition to the classroom setting, the principal had been let go, and a new principal was in position, as well as a new assistant principal. Neither one of the new administrators had any experience. This created quite a difficult situation, as I was not familiar with the laws regarding class sizes and paraprofessionals with special needs students. Though the students produced amazing art work, I would go home every night exhausted and in tears. That year, due to extremely low self-efficacy, I was certified in Real Estate as well as English Language Learners. I knew that I had to find another position. At this time, I became interested in studying self-efficacy in teaching and how that impacts persistence

in teaching. When I finished up that year, my husband and I were moving to the north end of the district, and I was able to find another job closer to our new home. I did not want to teach Visual Arts again. I took a job teaching English Language Learners, where I would have a smaller class size. Eventually, those numbers dwindled, and I was moved into a visual arts position. I accepted it with great hesitancy. I felt as if I had nothing to offer in terms of learning and growing with visual arts because of my first experience. I have now been teaching visual arts at the same school for approximately 10 years and am extremely pleased. I feel as if I do make a difference and that I do have an impact on their lives. That is what keeps me “persisting in the profession.” That began my interest in teacher self-efficacy and how that impacts their ability or desire to persist in the profession.

Data Collection

No data were collected until full submission of IRB application was completed and the approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was completed by both Liberty University and the participating school district. The principal and administrators in the school system and at the middle school in northern Georgia were contacted via email and hard copy format. Written and informed consent from the administrators and principal was on file before any research was started. Upon approval, the individual teachers were questioned about their willingness to participate in the study. Written and informed consent was collected from those who agreed to participate (Appendix B). Participants were informed of the time commitment before consenting to participate. There was no monetary compensation for participating in this research.

The teachers were informed or educated on the definition of self-efficacy before the collection of data began so that the data results could be broken down into accurate clusters of meaning that could be used to describe the structural description of the phenomena. Teacher self-efficacy was described to the teachers as “the *perception* that a teacher has of their own capabilities as a teacher to bring out the desired outcomes of student motivation and learning.” The term *self-efficacy* was also used to describe teachers’ self-beliefs being determinants of their own teaching behavior. The following data were collected.

Focus Group

Focus groups were used in this study to better understand the teachers’ perception of self-efficacy in teaching. In recent phenomenological research, focus groups have been conducted online, throughout various areas of the world, but also in smaller group settings face-to-face. There are problems with the online methods, such as trying to convene at times that are convenient for each participant, having the appropriate consent forms, and recruiting individuals to participate (Creswell, 2007). Two focus groups were used for this study to allow for smaller groups of individuals, allowing more voices to be heard. This also allowed for more themes to arise by comparing the two groups. Focus groups for this study were conducted in the local school settings where the participants work. The focus groups were each comprised of six participants and myself. They were held after the individual interviews were performed and lasted approximately one hour. The focus group interviews were recorded but not videotaped so that the participants felt more comfortable. The questions for the focus groups involved information about each individual, how they felt when they first started teaching versus how they feel now, if

they believe that how they feel about teaching keeps them in the profession, what they believe impacts their self-efficacy in teaching, and how the self-efficacy that they feel can be improved. Focus Group questions were as follows:

1. Please tell us your name, what you teach, and how many years you have been teaching.
2. Think back to when you first started teaching. Did you feel as if you were making an impact on the students' lives? Why or why not?
3. How did you feel the first few weeks of teaching?
4. Do you think that your self-efficacy, or how effective you feel that you are in the classroom, determines whether or not you remain in teaching?
5. Why do you continue to teach?
6. What personality characteristics do you feel impact a teacher's level of self-efficacy about teaching?

Think of a teacher who believes that they make a difference in the students' lives.

Describe their personality.

7. What do you think that teachers would say impacts your self-efficacy in teaching?
Having a mentor? Seeing grades improve? Students listening to you? Students coming back to visit you? Various personality traits within the teacher?
8. What makes someone's self-efficacy in teaching improve?

Creswell stated that focus groups are advantageous when “the interactions among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other, when time to collect information is limited, and when

individuals interviewed one-on-one may be hesitant to provide this information” (p. 133). There can be challenges with the focus groups in that it is sometimes difficult to encourage timid members of the group to speak out and voice their opinions (Creswell, 2007). The participants were encouraged to be open, avoiding timidity, by explaining that the information would remain strictly confidential by my word as is binding in the application for the IRB. They were also reminded of the professional nature of the interviews.

Interviews

Teachers must be interviewed and observed to thoroughly understand and study the phenomenon of teacher self-efficacy (See Appendix C). Through interviews, the researcher gains insight into participants’ behavior and the reasoning behind their actions (Seidman, 2006). To ensure credibility of the instrument being used for interviews in this study, three professionals, including the school psychologist, the assistant principal, and a Special Education teacher convened to review the interview questions. The school psychologist has her Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in School Psychology and currently is the school psychologist of the school system in which the middle school is located. The Special Education teacher has her Master’s in French and is certified in Special Education by passing the Praxis test in the state of Georgia. The assistant principal has his Specialist from the University of Florida and has been in administration for 8 years. The expert panel agreed that the questions were appropriate for the study, and no changes were made.

A pilot interview was administered with an individual who has a demographic profile similar to the participants to ensure that the questions flowed in an appropriate

manner and also to ensure that there was a substantial amount of data collected so as to provide a rich textural and structural description. The interviews followed a list of questions but left room for discussion and open dialogue. The interviewer asked prompting questions, allowing for the participants to expand on their perspective of the phenomenon. “When the interviewer controls the content too rigidly, when the subject cannot tell his or her own story personally in his or her own words, the interview falls out of the qualitative range” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 96). The participants and the interviewer can talk at ease so that rich data are produced for a detailed transcript and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Though I elicited conversation through the written questions and probes, I also attempted to remain neutral to avoid biasing the participants’ responses.

It is important that the interviewees are comfortable so that they will participate and share information as needed (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). To encourage participation, Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggested the following:

- Communicate clearly to the participants that you are there to learn from them and not to judge them.
- Communicate that you value their opinion and those of the other participants in an equal way (students, principal, and teachers individually).
- Clearly stress to the subjects that you are not a spy and that you do not intend to report the information back to the administration using their names. They are to remain anonymous, and their identities will be masked. The information will remain anonymous because the participants will have code names and the data will be kept under lock and key and password entry only.

The data will be reported in a way so as not to give away the identity of the participants.

The interview questions are below:

1. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were utilized in place of the participants' names. Interview questions were as follows:

How many years have you been a teacher? At how many schools have you taught?
2. How old are you? What is your family/marital status?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. Have you taught at other schools? Do you think that your stress level was different at each school? If yes, what is different about each school? Why do you think that one job was more or less stressful than the others?
5. Do you believe that you can make a difference in a child's life?
6. What part of the children's lives do you feel that you have the most impact on?
7. Why do you think that this is so?
8. Do you feel that other teachers around you, and how they feel about teaching, affects your personal feelings of self-efficacy in the classroom? Have you ever worked somewhere where you were surrounded by people with low self-efficacy, and did this affect your level of self-efficacy?
9. When you get home from school, what do you do to decompress and relieve your mind from the stressors of the day? Do you feel that this helps you to feel efficacious in the classroom?

10. Do you think that your administration helps, or do they worsen your self-efficacy level or beliefs in your ability to teach? Why? How? What can administrators do to improve you self-efficacy in teaching?
11. What makes you want to leave the profession?
12. What convinces you to stay in the profession?
13. Have you ever gone so far as to apply for other jobs?
14. Were they in or out of education?
15. Do you think that the need for a teacher in your subject area is the same as other areas? Why or why not? How are they different?
16. Do you feel effectual in helping to create high test scores with your students on Federal and State tests?
17. Does communicating with parents help you to feel as though you can achieve more with the students in terms of grades, social responsibilities, etc.?
18. Please describe your personality. Do you consider yourself an extrovert or introvert? Why so?
19. Does this (your) personality type help or hinder you in the classroom?
20. If you said that you were an introvert, does teaching leave you exhausted at the end of the day? What career path might not?
21. Do your feelings of self-efficacy keep you in the classroom? If not, what keeps you in the classroom?
22. Do you think that your level of self-efficacy, or feeling as if you really make a difference in the students' lives, really impacts student achievement?

23. What factors outside of personality add to or take away from you feeling efficacious in the classroom? (For example, whether or not you exercise, participate in religious activities, attend further schooling, have a family or do not have a family, are married or not, how the administration treats you, groups of teachers around you, etc.)
24. Is there anything else that you would want me to know in regard to how successfully you feel that you can make an impact on the students' lives?

Essay Questions

Participants composed answers and thoughts to open-ended questions (Appendix F). The questions should prompt them to reflect upon their view of the phenomenon of teacher self-efficacy. The participants received open-ended questions, also called “nondirective” and “flexibly structured” questions (Bogden & Biklen, 2003), that they comfortably and openly answered in their own settings and in their own time, without being prompted by a structured interview. The essay questions were as follows:

1. What is your perception of how self-efficacy influences your remaining in the teaching profession? (For example, if you feel that you do have an impact on the students and that you feel confident in the classroom, does that keep you in the teaching profession?)
2. Do you feel that your self-efficacy in teaching impacts the students' achievement?
3. What personality traits do you feel add to your positive or negative self-efficacy in teaching?

4. What factors do you identify as influencing your professional self-efficacy?
(outside circumstances, number of students, religion, pre-service teaching experiences, etc.)

Researcher Reflective Field Notes

I took field notes after every interview and focus group and at least biweekly during data collection. Laverly (2003) suggested including notes taken during the preparatory phase of the research to help with bracketing any of the researcher's personal thoughts out of the study. In addition, field notes should be taken so as to record and remember every detail of the interview, such as the participant's emotion, the interview setting, the mood of the interview, etc. As Gall et al. (2007) described, the notes should be descriptive and reflective. They will also be comprised of personal reflections that occur throughout the research. The notes should also include field notes such as reconstruction of dialogue, verbal information, and information about the events and settings, but also should include reflective notes, which entail the data using the researcher's frame of mind, thoughts, and interpretations. Field notes should have the following features (Gall et al., 2007):

- They should be descriptive and reflective (they should include verbal portraits of the research participants, description of the setting, accounts of events, and descriptions of the participant's behavior).
- They should be detailed and concrete (they should not be vague and over-generalized). The information needs to be detailed enough so that the researcher can look back at it for themes and patterns when he or she is ready to explore the data.

- Field notes should include visuals when appropriate (pictures can be included as well as words).

The purpose of writing these reflections is to become “aware of one’s own biases and assumptions in order to bracket them” (Laverty, 2003, p. 17). The reflective notes helped to keep from having any imposing personal beliefs to hinder results of the study. The field notes were kept for the purposes of adding rich detail and support to the researched topic when the time came for analyzing the data.

Teacher Self-Efficacy Assessment

All 12 participants were given the Teacher Self-Efficacy Assessment (Schwarzer, Schmidt, & Daytner, 1999) prior to their interview. The Teacher Self-Efficacy Assessment is a short assessment comprised of 10 questions where the participants can respond with either a number 1 (not at all true), 2 (barely true), 3 (moderately true), or 4 (exactly true). The test is scored on a 10 to 40 point total. The test was created by Ralf Schwarzer, Gerdamarie S. Schmitz, and Gary T. Daytner in 1999. The test originally included 27 items that were part of a lengthy questionnaire administered to 300 German teachers in a nationwide study on teacher self-efficacy in schools. The test-retest reliability resulted in .67 ($N = 158$) for a period of 1 year. After 2 years, it was .65 ($N = 161$). Test-retest reliability proves whether or not the test is reliable over different time periods or at different locations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The 10 statements are as follows:

1. I am convinced that I am able to successfully teach all relevant subject content to even the most difficult students.

2. I know that I can maintain a positive relationship with parents even when tensions arise.
3. When I try really hard, I am able to reach even the most difficult students.
4. I am convinced that, as time goes by, I will continue to become more and more capable of helping to address my students' needs.
5. Even if I get disrupted while teaching, I am confident that I can maintain my composure and continue to teach well.
6. I am confident in my ability to be responsive to my students' needs even if I am having a bad day.
7. If I try hard enough, I know that I can exert a positive influence on both the personal and academic development of my students.
8. I am convinced that I can develop creative ways to cope with system constraints (such as budget cuts and other administrative problems) and continue to teach well.
9. I know that I can motivate my students to participate in innovative projects.
10. I know that I can carry out innovative projects even when I am opposed by skeptical colleagues.

The test was administered to the 12 participants to enable me to look at the teachers in regard to their level of self-efficacy as well as to back up that the teachers chosen were thought to be teachers with strong levels of self-efficacy. This also allowed the participants to realize what the primary area of research was centered upon, which might have skewed the results. Should any teachers score extremely low on the self-

efficacy scale compared to their cohorts, the option of choosing another participant could have been entertained.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research occurs through collecting rich data in the form of interviews, open-ended essays, and focus groups. Through collecting qualitative data through two focus groups, reflective note-taking, Teacher Self-Assessment, interviews, and essay questions, the triangulation of data occurred. Triangulation of data in phenomenological research is when multiple sources of data collection are used to lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

A Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer et al., 1999) was administered to all 12 participants. This was obtained from <http://www.ralfschwarzer.de/> in December of 2012. The scale was created by following Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997). The answers are scored on a 4-point Likert scale, with statements written from the first person point of view, saying "I" since the aim is to assess the teacher themselves. The items included "can" or "be able to" so the survey could assess personal competence, and the items included issues that were barriers to teachers and were not part of the everyday routine (Schwarzer et al., 1999). Though the Teacher Self-Assessment was given to each participant, the primary sources of data collected in this research were from the two focus groups, interviews, and essay questions. The results of the Teacher Self-Assessment survey are described in further detail in Chapter Four.

Horizontalization

After the participants verified that the interview information was correct, I used horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994) to analyze the data taken from the focus groups,

interviews, and essay questions. Horizontalization occurs when the researcher highlights each statement and assigns a code word or statement that describes the topic or theme that the sentence describes (Moustakas, 1994). The purpose of horizontalization is to “highlight significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide(d) an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61) to give them equal value (Moustakas, 1994). I developed a list of non-overlapping significant statements, which were later grouped into larger units called themes (Creswell, 2007). Horizontalization is a form of reducing the data into significant groups.

The data were also horizontalized by cutting the printed out interviews into strips of paper per statement made by the participants. This was a second way to literally visualize what the significant statements were and how they should be grouped. These were then physically grouped into like stacks, reviewed, and restacked, and eventually the major themes presented themselves.

Clusters of Meaning

After highlighting the data gathered from the interviews, focus groups, and essay questions, the data were clustered into needed themes or meaning groups (Creswell, 2007). Any overlapping or repetitive statements were removed. I made every effort, again, to bracket out my own thoughts and ideas, staying as true to the phenomenon as possible. The statements were grouped into clusters of meaning where there seemed to be a naturally occurring relevancy between statements. The clusters of meaning were organized multiple times so as to accurately group them. Moustakas (1994) suggests grouping the data into groups, listing significant statements. Those statements and groups of statements were used to write descriptions of what the participants experienced

through a structural description (Moustakas, 1994). After writing a structural description of this phenomenon, my thoughts and feelings about the phenomenon were also documented. In addition to bracketing out my ideas and thoughts about the phenomenon to prevent any presuppositions from intermingling with the data, the dissertation committee and I resolved any discrepancies regarding the interpretation of the data (Hycner, 1985). The data were reviewed several times in order to remove any of my personal thoughts in order to decrease the appearance of bias.

The survey was used primarily at the beginning of the research to obtain an overall sense of the teachers' self-efficacy beliefs before beginning the interviews, focus groups, and essays. Each of the 12 teachers surveyed scored themselves above a 3.125, meaning that they scored moderately true or above on rating themselves as highly self-efficacious. Though most teachers rated themselves as highly efficacious, many also revealed their opinions or personal beliefs that influenced their feelings of self-efficacy. Results from the survey are revealed in more detail in Chapter Four.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in phenomenological studies is often questioned because of the inability to ensure validity and reliability as found in a quantitative study (Shenton, 2004). Qualitative studies use smaller subgroups and populations, which leads to less reliability and validity. Guba (1981) suggested four criteria for establishing trustworthiness. They are credibility (internal validity), transferability (generalizability), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity). The four criteria for establishing trustworthiness (Guba) are described below:

Credibility (Internal Validity)

Credibility should be established in a qualitative study as in a quantitative study. Credibility can be established using different methods or approaches to confirm ideas (Gutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). In this study on teacher self-efficacy, credibility was established through focus groups, interviews, and written essays. In addition, triangulation of data occurred where the data were checked and validated by the original source of the data. According to Gutcliffe and McKenna (1999), the most important form of credibility occurs when the readers can take the information and data and apply that to their lives. Data were also checked by the participants through member checking to ensure correct interpretation of thoughts and ideas. They had the opportunity to withdraw any information if they chose.

Transferability (Generalizability)

Stake (1994) and Denscombe (1998) suggested that research is transferable because it is an example within a broader group. The data from this research is transferable to other teachers and schools because the viewpoints came from various genders, ages, subject areas, and marital statuses of teachers. Shenton (2004) disagreed and suggested that because qualitative studies are taken from smaller populations, it is nearly impossible for data from a qualitative study to be applicable to other situations. I believe that the results from this study are applicable to other school settings that are comparable to the middle and high schools in northern Georgia by means of socio-economic status, gender, and ethnicity of the students and by the age range, gender, and teaching experience of teachers.

Dependability (Reliability)

Dependability or reliability occurs when the results from different researchers tend to be similar. In qualitative research, this does not always apply. For example, the background and academic training of various researchers, along with various locations, will lead to the researchers collecting and reporting different types of data and reaching different conclusions depending on the viewpoint of the researcher (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003). There is, however, a close relationship between credibility and dependability where credibility helps to ensure dependability. Dependability was ensured by overlapping data collection methods, such as through focus groups, written essays, and interviews (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability (Objectivity)

Precautions were taken to ensure confirmability with the interpretation of the results. In qualitative research, confirmability means that the researcher's opinions were omitted from the data gathered from the participants (Shenton, 2004). Confirmability entails using different methods in the same study so that the data confirm one another (Gutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). This was done in this study through interviews, re-checking with participants, and essay questions.

Member Checking

After completion of the data collection, member checking or audit checks were used to ensure the reliability of the data collected from the 12 participants (Moustakas, 1994). An audit check, taking into account the recommendations made by the participants, ensures the accuracy of the data and ensures that my ideas and thoughts have been bracketed out of the data. Shenton (2004) suggested that audit checks, or member

checks, where the participants guarantee the accuracy of the information being proposed by the researcher, ensures that any emerging theories and inferences are in accordance with their beliefs and thoughts. The 12 participants were given transcripts of their interview statements and were provided opportunity to check them for completeness and accuracy.

Memoing

Researcher memoing, or journaling, was used in this study to document what I heard, saw, experienced, and thought. Creswell (2007) describes memoing as written pieces of analysis that eventually help with the formulation of the theory. After each interview, I recorded my thoughts about the interview. Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that memoing does not “report data, they tie together different pieces of data into a recognizable cluster, often to show that those data are instances of a general concept” (p. 73). Memoing groups ideas into conceptual events and/or categories, which can help the reader to understand the events and data. Memoing sometimes can start off broad in nature, but, as time progresses, it becomes more specific and focuses more on the interviews and data collected. Memoing can be beneficial in that the researcher can go back after completion of the study and see what further research needs to be completed or questioned.

Data Triangulation

Triangulation is “used to generate findings to see if they are corroborated across the variants” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 474). Data triangulation in this study was accomplished in five ways. The first way was through memoing. The second way was through administering the Teacher Self-Efficacy Assessment. Third, each teacher was

interviewed with follow-up phone calls and/or emails when needed. Open-ended essays were also collected from each participant. Shenton (2004) found that using different methods of data collection in the same study compensates for their individual shortcomings. The fifth way was through two focus groups. The data were broken down into each separate participant and their textual themes and statements and were then further analyzed by integrating that data into one universal textual description, without repeating any statements, themes, or data (Moustakas, 1994). The data were written as a textual description (what was experienced by the teachers, a detailed description) for both the individuals and the group, and then will be written as a structural description (how it is experienced) for both the individuals and the group in regard to the phenomenon of self-efficacy and persistence in teaching (Creswell, 1998).

Bracketing

According to Creswell (2007), bracketing is the “first step in phenomenological reduction, the process of data analysis in which the researcher sets aside, as far as humanly possible, all preconceived experiences to best understand the experiences of participants in the study” (p. 235). Bracketing is often referred to as *epoche*, which is Greek for “to stay away from or abstain” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Bracketing should be done at the beginning of a study (Creswell, 2007). For the purposes of this study, epoch was referred to as bracketing. One form of bracketing occurs when the researcher takes away his or her experiences and tries to interpret the data from a neutral standpoint. Creswell (2007) suggested using open-ended questions with the researcher and participants so as to avoid leading the participant toward the researcher’s point of view.

In my study, I sought to examine the phenomenon of self-efficacy and its impact on persistence in the classroom. I used bracketing in this study by writing about my experiences and documenting those experiences in order to put my ideas and views out before the reader in an open manner. The purpose of bracketing is to pull away only the participants' points of view while extracting the researcher's point of view so as to leave only the essence of the phenomenon of teacher self-efficacy and what the teachers feel contribute to that sense of self-efficacy.

Transcriptions

The responses and answers to questions given during the interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were used at a later time to gather and report the information given by the various teachers and participants. The recorded and transcribed interviews were kept on a jump drive kept on me, printed and locked in a closet, and also kept on the hard drive of my computer. They will be disposed of 3 years after I complete the doctoral program.

Ethical Issues

The principals of the schools participating were asked via email and written consent whether or not they would be willing for their teachers to participate in the research. Each teacher was asked to read over and to sign a written consent form prior to participation in any interview or survey. Participation was completely voluntary, and there was no risk of danger.

The documentation and data were kept confidential. The information was kept either on me at times (either in a file or on a thumb drive) or locked in a closet. The information on the computer was kept under strict password-only availability. Records

will be destroyed 3 years after completion of the doctoral program at Liberty University. The records will not be used in the future for any other research. The participants had the opportunity to listen to their interviews and were given the opportunity to withdraw comments or erase the interviews entirely.

I used pseudonyms for the names of the schools, administrators, teachers, and other staff. The reasoning behind the pseudonyms is that using the actual names could have a negative and lasting effect on the image of and the reputation of the school and those involved. The school system is small, and the possibility of knowing who was speaking in the interviews simply by context clues is a possibility. A code book was developed and kept since pseudonyms were utilized.

As a Christian, I feel that I am accountable to God for any information in this paper. I tried to be as truthful and honest as humanly possible, to the best of my knowledge, citing everything that I found. I upheld and will uphold the strongest moral standards in regards to confidentiality.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative research study was to examine and explore the perceptions and characteristics of 12 teachers who have remained in the teaching profession for more than 5 years in order to explain the phenomenon of teacher self-efficacy as perceived by the teachers themselves. The goal of this study was to investigate the perceptions that teachers have about self-efficacy and the factors that they believe contribute to their own self-efficacy, the factors that keep them in the classroom, and the factors that keep them pleased with their careers.

The teachers were asked to sign a consent form, participate in a one-on-one interview, participate in one focus group, and complete a teacher self-efficacy scale that consisted of 10 statements that were rated on a scale of 1 to 4. They were also asked to answer four essay-style questions that asked about their personal opinions and beliefs about their experiences with teacher self-efficacy and persistence in the profession.

The problem addressed in this study was persistence in the teaching profession and the role teachers feel that self-efficacy plays in their persistence in the profession. Kokkinos (2007) found that certain characteristics, including neurotic tendencies and introverted personality types, influenced teacher burnout and that those teachers experienced students with diminishing achievement. This study revealed the perceptions that teachers have about self-efficacy and the factors that contribute to their own self-efficacy. This study explored whether or not teachers perceive that positive self-efficacy impacts their decision to remain in the teaching profession. Teachers who do not have the personal belief that they will be successful with certain students do not put forth the

effort that those who believe that they can make a difference would put forth towards instruction (Garvis, 2009). This research examined the factors that motivate teachers to persist in the classroom and in their careers by interviewing and observing teachers who have remained in the teaching profession for more than 5 years.

The surveys, essays, interviews, and focus groups were analyzed for data relevant to the three research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of secondary school teachers of the influence of their self-efficacy on student academic achievement?
2. What personality characteristics do teachers feel add to their positive or negative self-efficacy in teaching?
3. What factors do teachers identify as influencing their professional self-efficacy in teaching (personality traits, outside circumstances, number of students, or pre-service teaching experiences)?

Moustakas (1994) states that in horizontalization, “each phenomenon has equal value as we seek to disclose its nature and essence” (p. 95). To reveal the themes from the many pages of data, I used horizontalization in revealing major themes. Though there are many computer programs available, the most practical way to execute this research was to highlight like themes and group them together. The interviews were also printed out, cut into chunks of like data, and sorted into themes or groups of like information. The data were grouped multiple times until major themes were clear. Bracketing the ideas allowed the themes to present themselves with the least amount of bias from the researcher.

Introduction of the Participants

In a phenomenological study, the data comes from the voice of the participants and through their stories and lived experiences. Only through knowing more about their points of view and their experiences with teaching can one understand the phenomenon. Originally, I had planned to study only middle school teachers, but as time progressed, two of the teachers from the middle school earned their doctorates and were quickly moved up to the high school. This is the first year there for both of them, each completing only one semester at the high school. This group of teachers was chosen because they are considered highly successful teachers in their peer groups and in their communities. The participants are introduced below in order from the shortest time in the classroom to the longest time in the classroom. Though the participants were briefly introduced earlier in the study, they are further described below so that the reader can know more about them and their points of view on the phenomenon.

Kai

Kai came to the school 6 years ago as a new teacher, directly after getting her Master's Degree in Vocal Pedagogy from Columbus State. She sings in the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Choir and has headed up the All State Choir for the state of Georgia. She was the first choral director at the middle school where she is employed.

After speaking with Kai many times, it is apparent that her fire for teaching has dwindled. This is not due to the students, but she no longer feels efficacious due to the various issues that she has run into with administration as well as parents. For 5 years now, she has come to the middle school, the high school, and back to the middle school every day to teach various levels. Recently, she has been made to teach a "music

appreciation” class for each grade. At the middle and high school, her numbers reach into the sixties.

Kai will have to look for more of a fulltime job somewhere else for next year, as she has put in her notice that this will be her last year. There was a misunderstanding somewhere in the communication between her and the previous administration. Kai summed up that she cares about the students, but that her self-efficacy has been greatly impacted by the parents and the administration as well as the logistics of her job.

Liz

A meeting with Liz quickly reveals that she is full of life, a petite, well-dressed, in shape, blond haired lady with a fiery spirit. She is willing to answer any questions and to help you in any way, regardless of the fact that she is busy teaching many subjects and has at least three preps. She is currently teaching the CRCT Math Coaching class, an enrichment class, and also a different gifted class that is co-taught with the technology teacher. She also has two children, a boy who is 10 and a girl who is 8. Other teachers portray Liz as full of confidence in the classroom and in life. She says that she knows that she makes a difference with everyone that she meets, and this radiates from her.

Liz and her husband are both tri-athletes and both energetic. They are both highly intelligent and both prominent members of this small town. When asked about why she teaches and whether or not she feels effective in the classroom, she said, “I love it. I enjoy it. If I didn’t, I wouldn’t come back. . . I chose not to be a stay at home mom to do this. . .”

Abby

Abby has a great presence about her. She is the only African American female teacher at her school. However, she has an amazing impact on many students of all ethnic backgrounds. Abby and her husband have a 3-year-old son, Gavin.

Abby is a self-professed extrovert in and outside the classroom. She “lays it out there,” in her words. Abby does have to work, so money and having a job is an important part of why she teaches, but she is loving towards the students, and that, combined with her love for God, keeps her focused on trying to have an impact on them, socially, morally, and academically, year after year.

David

Upon first meeting David, you know that he is a humble, kind, and gentle fellow. He currently teaches 8th grade math and previously taught 6th grade math. He arrives at school each day between 4:30 and 5:30 and stays late. When given the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, he rated many of the items (ranging from 1 to 4) as a 2.5 He is a self-proclaimed introvert who said that he leaves exhausted at the end of each day. He is not married, but has feline friends at home.

Observations of David in the classroom, as well as with teachers and students in the hallways, reveal that he is a kind soul who cares about the students and others around him. He has previous work experience in restaurant and trucking company management.

Alex

When first meeting Alex, you already know a bit about her. She dresses naturally. She always is wearing earth tones, simple pants and shirts, and casual shoes, and she has long, partially curly hair. Alex teaches Life Science and has only taught at this school.

She has taught for 8 years and was awarded Teacher of the Year a few years back. Her love for her subject is clear to all of those around her. Alex is also a vegan. She has headed up the recycling division at the school, recruiting students to help her collect paper, cans, and bottles.

She feels effective in piquing the students' curiosity and interest in nature but not in improving test scores. Despite the lower test scores at this school in life science each year, she continues to make a difference in the students' lives, which can be revealed by asking any of her former or current students.

Michael

Michael currently teaches computer literacy and co-teaches the CRCT Math and enrichment classes. He has previously been a derivatives trader and has worked in corrections. He is married to the elementary school art teacher and they have a 4-year-old daughter, Lucy.

He been helpful in improving technology and has assisted the media specialist, as well as administrators and teachers, with many different issues. Michael firmly believes, and in a critical way, that students need to be taught and trained by the career paths they should be heading towards. He believes that he is in the classroom for good reason, to teach the students about technology, but also to expose them to various jobs.

Andrew

Andrew has taught for 14 years at the middle school level. Andrew's classroom is full of geographic items from his travels abroad. Andrew is considered by his peers to be a great teacher and basketball coach. He is married to a teacher, and they have three children. He is former military, and the students enjoy his laid back teaching personality

as well as the structure and expectations in his classroom and teaching. He admittedly experienced a rough time in middle school himself, which adds to him being a great example and an understanding man.

He scored mostly 3's (moderately true) and 4's (exactly true) on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale. He scored a total of 37/40 points. He admits in his short answer essay question that "community and personal background" are the two key factors that play into his having such a strong sense of personal self-efficacy in teaching.

Jennifer

When you meet with Jennifer, she gives you a warm and friendly smile that automatically makes you comfortable. She is a Christian and a lover of people, which shows in her teaching methods. She has been teaching for 16 years at the middle and high school levels. She taught Special Education when she first arrived at her current school. She worked as an inclusion teacher when that was something fresh and unique to the school system in which she teaches. While the other Special Education inclusion teachers were frowned upon, it was known in the teaching community that "the inclusion teachers were bad except for Jennifer." She currently teaches her own math class, after being pushed into having her own classroom by a colleague who works at the school. She says that the verbal nudge from a co-worker gave her the needed boost of confidence to have her own classroom.

Her creative abilities and craft skills help her in the classroom because many of the new standards involve manipulative and hands-on examples of math, which she is creative at incorporating into the lessons. She is a self-professed introvert. She is not

married, but has a foster daughter with whom she came together approximately a year ago.

Sharon

When you first meet Sharon, you see a tiny, petite little woman who is animated and friendly. Other teachers and students perceive her as having an amped energy level. She openly admits that adults and meetings make her uncomfortable, but she is comfortable in the classroom. According to her former and current students, her excitement and energy make it fun and interesting to be in her classes.

Sharon taught for 3 years at an abrasive high school, got out of teaching, and worked at a non-profit organization, where she said that she got “hot lunches and paid time off,” but she missed the students and went back to a career in education. She returned to Jones Middle School and has been employed at her current school system for approximately 15 years. She taught for 14 years at the middle school level, teaching 6th grade social studies when she earned her Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Georgia Southern College and State University. She was recently moved to the local high school and teaches 9th and 10th grade English/language arts. She is in her second marriage and has no children, but many cats and dogs. She and her husband travel in their RV every summer and on many long weekends.

Carla

Carla admits to expending all her energy in teaching and the classroom, even after 24 years of teaching. She scored herself all 4's (meaning “exactly true”) on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale. She knows that she can make a difference in the students' lives. Carla taught at the middle school level for many years as an 8th grade English/language

arts teacher, but to save another teacher's job, kindly agreed to teach 7th grade math on a team of much younger teachers. She taught there for 2 years and then recently was moved to the high school, where she is teaching social studies.

Other teachers perceive Carla as an intellectual type who is not outgoing and bubbly, though she would do anything for anyone. She is a self-proclaimed introvert, with teaching leaving her drained at the end of the day. Carla knows that, even with her personality, she can connect with a few students in a deep way. She admits that she has been less involved with students over the past few years. She has been involved in her Ph.D. program through UGA for 7 years now and attributes her lack of attending events to that graduate program, as well as to having two different new curriculums.

Frida

Frida is the type of teacher and person that everybody is drawn to. She consistently has students coming back to visit her classroom. At any given time, before or after school, there are current students staying in her classroom simply to talk to her.

After 24 years in teaching, she says,

There are a million things that make me want to stay. I love it, I love what I teach, I love the kids, um, I just enjoy it. I know, I really believe this, that teaching has to be a calling for you to be satisfied with it and while teaching is not what I chose to do originally, God just directed me into it. Thank goodness he knows better than I do.

She cherishes her two daughters--one who is a senior in high school and one who recently got married and is in college--along with her husband more than anything in the

world. She loves her students, friends, co-workers, and everyone else on earth so much that she literally cries when she speaks to you.

She holds a Bible study on Wednesday mornings at school for teachers that want to participate. She sponsors FCA and is involved in helping out whenever she can. Her name came up twice in the focus group as someone who is an effective teacher. She believes that with a sense of humor, she can conquer it all. She says, “People are going to rub you the wrong way, but, you just gotta deal with it, smile, and go on.”

Sarah

Sarah has taught preschool through 8th grade for 24 years. She currently teaches 6th grade Language Arts. According to her, she enjoys life and is a caring person. She believes that,

If you aren't happy with your job, you wouldn't be happy in life because you dedicate at least eight hours each day. You've got to be happy with your job. You don't have to be, but then you end up being miserable.

She believes that it takes a village to raise children. She was not able to stay at home with hers with the exception of 1 year, but she believes that is important. She can be less strict with discipline at times. She is caring and seems to give students multiple chances. She firmly believes that mentor teachers can assist teachers with self-efficacy during their first few years. She is a great supporter of people having mentors and helpers at their new schools or in new positions.

Survey Summary

As part of the triangulation of data, and to enrich the data that were collected through interviews, surveys, and the essay questions, the participants were asked to

complete the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer et al., 1999). This was obtained from <http://www.ralfschwarzer.de/> in December of 2012. The scale was created by following Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997). The statements were written from the first person point of view, saying "I," since the aim was to assess the teachers themselves. The items included "can" or "be able to" so the survey could assess personal competence, and the items included issues that were barriers to teachers and were not part of the everyday routine (Schwarzer et al., 1999). The survey was given as a part of this research because the phenomenon is teacher self-efficacy and persistence in the teaching profession.

The teachers were sent the survey form via email and hard copy. They were asked to complete the form and to return it via email or by hand. The 12 participants rated 10 statements on a scale from 1 to 4 indicating whether they felt that the statement was (1) not at all true, (2) barely true, (3) moderately true, or (4) exactly true. The results of the data are compiled in Table 4.1.

An analysis of the survey results revealed the following overall averages: The teachers scored themselves above a 3.125 (slightly above moderately true) on self-efficacy. The teachers scored the highest overall, a 3.92 rating, on the statement "If I try hard enough, I know that I can exert a positive influence on both the personal and academic development of my students." The second highest ranked statement was "I know that I can maintain a positive relationship with parents even when tensions arise" with a 3.54. The third highest ranked statement, with a 3.5, was "Even if I get disrupted while teaching, I am confident that I can maintain my composure and continue to teach well." These ratings demonstrated that the teachers examined in this research study have

high levels of teacher self-efficacy and they perceive they can make a difference or an impact on the lives of the students. The lowest ranked statement in this group still had a 3.125 on the statement “I am convinced that I am able to successfully teach all relevant subject content to even the most difficult students.”

Table 3

Self-Efficacy Scale Answers

| | Question | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | |
| Participant | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | |
| 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | |
| 4 | 2.5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 4 | 3 | 2.5 | 2.5 | |
| 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | |
| 6 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | |
| 7 | 3 | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | |
| 8 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | |
| 9 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | |
| 10 | 3 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 4 | 3.5 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | |
| 11 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | |
| 12 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | |
| Average | 3.125 | 3.54 | 3.33 | 3.25 | 3.5 | 3.29 | 3.92 | 3.17 | 3.21 | 3.34 | |

Scale: 1 – not at all true, 2 – barely true, 3 – moderately true, 4 – exactly true

Note: Adapted from Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory

These teachers were selected because they are efficacious and have remained in teaching for more than 5 years. The study revealed that the teachers in this group believe that they can exert a positive influence on students, maintain positive relationships with students and parents, and continue teaching well even when disrupted by a difficult student.

Major Emerging Themes

In phenomenological studies, the researcher seeks to compile the group thoughts of the participants. This research study sought to discover further information about self-efficacy as experienced by upper grade teachers who exhibited high self-efficacy and remained in the teaching profession for more than 5 years. The major themes revealed:

- administration
- love of children
- knowledge of and importance of content
- personality: Being an introvert or extrovert
- surrounding teachers
- parents
- exercise and faith
- supporting family and friends
- sense of humor

The themes, organized by research questions, are explored further below in the sections that follow.

Research Question 1: What are the Perceptions of Secondary School Teachers of the Influence of Their Self-Efficacy on Student Academic Achievement?

When presented with this question, the teachers wanted to discuss the *reasons* they believe they make a difference in terms of student achievement. Many of the teachers wanted to discuss reasons that affected them negatively as well as positively. From reviewing the teachers' summative Teacher Self-Efficacy Survey results, it was apparent that this group of teachers felt efficacious. However, the following themes emerged as factors that impact the teachers' self-efficacy on student achievement, or how much of an impact they believe that they have on student achievement.

Administration. The prominent theme that emerged during the interview, focus groups, and essay questions was factors surrounding administration. The teachers discussed current administration and past administration at their current and previous schools. They felt that administration has a great impact on student achievement. Regardless of the population of the students, number of students in the classroom, budget available, or other surrounding teachers, this theme was the first topic mentioned in the interviews and focus groups.

Many teachers revealed that administrators helped them in the classroom. Abby observed,

Administration has always helped with self-efficacy, um, just in terms of trying to support, you know, what you try to do in the classroom and actually respecting how, you know, how you value your classroom and deem things important.

If a teacher had an administrator asking questions about their subject area or asked them to present something in that area, it will increase the teacher's self-efficacy,

which helps with student achievement. Jennifer revealed that the administrators had asked her various wildlife questions, and had asked her to present something to the foreign exchange students from Scotland. She said that it was the “pat on the back” she needed to remain efficacious in the classroom.

The teachers believed that administrators should, while being supportive with discipline, also allow them to have freedom in their teaching. Sharon believed that it enabled her to reach the students better:

Probably here is less stressful to teach because I feel like we are given a lot of freedom to follow the curriculum and the standards and so forth, but I feel like we have a choice. At some other schools, you were told, “here is what you are going to do and how we are going to do it,” and you pretty much had to follow what they set forth. There is some leeway. The principal of each school makes a difference

. . . . At Jones, we have a little bit of freedom to do some things, and that makes a huge difference.

Other teachers mentioned that the support of the administration at their current schools, as well as their past schools, impacted their teacher self-efficacy as well as students’ academic achievement. They believed that it helped when the administrators supported their decisions. Abby revealed,

I just feel that they, if I had a situation where I needed support, they would be there. So, in that respect, I think that they help because I feel that there is a place to go if decisions that I make, reach a point where there comes a question or

something and like that. They could improve a bit by just being there and knowing that they are in a supportive role.

Many teachers discussed ways they believed the school administration negatively impacted their self-efficacy, which impacted student achievement. Sharon said, “To me, the stress level comes from the negative teachers, demanding parents, critical administrators. I feel like, even an exhausting student doesn’t exhaust me the way that the parents do.” Kai said about parents and administrators,

They scare me and I don’t know if administration plays a role in that. I feel like the way that the culture of a school would dictate the way that you feel in talking to a parent. . . . The parent who is not here wins. Or the kid who is not causing destruction wins. That’s difficult to overcome.

Carla, who is new at her school and new to the subject divulged, “I’ve learned not to count on administration. It’s not to say it’s a bad relationship, but I cannot depend on them to pat me on the back.” She mentioned that at her former school, the administration would not support her during parent conferences, which in turn affected student achievement because the students would not respect her authority, knowing that it would be undermined by the administrators. Yet another teacher, Jennifer, in 7th grade life science, mentioned her frustration with dealing with administrators who did not take her seriously. She said that the students would come back from the office with a disrespectful attitude because the administrators would not support her decisions. Jennifer said:

I feel like the teacher has a say so, in the way that things are handled, because you experienced it, and you know what you have done to encourage the student, to motivate the student. You know how many times you’ve talked to the parents or

sent home emails or warned them, so it's for a reason, it's serious. So, I want the consequence to kind of mirror that.

Kai has taught for 6 years and revealed the following when asked about the administration:

I think that I would like to say that they don't have a lot of impact. I would LOVE to say that it's just what you believe about yourself that matters the most. I know that there are specific times when I've done the right thing, or even handled a situation, or even let things go where I just needed to separate a student or needed to make them be quiet or something and they have not seen it as I have. I have walked away from that situation not feeling supported or backed up. That makes me feel like I'm doing something wrong. . . control of the classroom is essential, so I walked away feeling not supported or backed up, and also not knowing what else to do.

Liz, who is new to her subject, said that she would feel more effective if the administrators would lead her in the correct direction:

Tell me what to do, more direction. And I hate to say it, I like the way that we were given freedom. I love that, and I've said it even before the previous principal left, I said, tell me what to do. Sometimes I want to know what to do. I don't think that it's micromanaging, I don't think that whatsoever.

She also said she was given three or more preparations this year, being new to her subject, and was asked to learn a new computer program on her own, but was given no direction on how to use it with the students. She was then reprimanded in an email about

not using the program the right way. In this case, the administrators were greatly impacting her self-efficacy and subsequently students' achievement.

When asked what administrators could do to improve teacher self-efficacy and to help impact student achievement, one teacher mentioned the observations and ways in which the administrator performed walk-throughs. This topic came up many times. Most teachers welcomed the visits and thought it helped with student achievement, but only if handled the right way, as Michael revealed:

. . . The way that they deal with, with observations or with dealing with pop-ins.

When an administrator comes in and they have a clipboard and write down about five or six things and they leave, it makes everyone feel judged and exposed and all of that. When an administrator comes, in my opinion, it should be a positive experience, it should be a learning experience, it should be handled like that. . . .

When you do a lesson and you don't know how it will be perceived. When you have someone come in while you're doing it for the first time and watching what's going on, it creates that, really, you know, that clenching feeling where you just don't know. . . I think that being a coach and less of a teacher, I think that people come from strong academic backgrounds and don't have any coaching skills. They come in and look at every situation as an administrator, whereas from a coaching standpoint, you have to deal with somebody.

Many of the teachers actually mentioned leaving their past schools because of the administration, not the students. They felt that they could have achieved more with the students in terms of academics, morals, and social issues if they had felt supported.

The administration at the middle school where some of the participants are located are fairly new, within the past few years. There have been many changes taking place. Sarah, who has been teaching for 24 years, said that it would help to be “more visible. I think that they, and there have been a lot of problems with this school because of the moving (turnover of the principals), but I feel like the administration works best when visible.” The teachers were hesitantly hopeful about the support of the administrators, as Carla mentioned:

I think that they actually have helped at my other school because of the transition we have seen lately in the administration. I think that when the new administration gets their feet under them, it will get better.

Michael, the computer literacy teacher, summed up how the majority of teachers felt about administration when he said,

I think that administration has some of the most, biggest driver on how you feel as a teacher. I think that being under good leadership and bad leadership in that area, I've seen it, you know, completely. A lot of it is the approach. Am I looking to catch somebody doing something wrong or am I looking to develop teachers? Of course, their job is to make sure that we're doing what we're supposed to be doing, but a lot of that is approach. If you feel like you're being scrutinized in every decision that you make. . .

He further noted that when teachers felt scrutinized, they tended to stick with mediocre lesson plans, not thoroughly engaging the students for fear of being spoken to by the administration if something went wrong with a lesson.

Love of the children. The teachers interviewed had a belief that their self-efficacy, or how effective they felt they were, impacted the students' achievement. Frida, who has earned "Teacher of the Year" four times during her teaching career, said,

I think that my kids know that I love them. I don't doubt that every single kid that I teach knows that they are loved, that I care about them. I think that helps them to work for you.

The teachers who impact the students' lives love the students and believe they make a difference in their lives, either academically or socially, as David revealed:

I do feel that I make a difference and I feel that it comes through when I talk to the kids. I always think and worry every year how much I talk about it and how much I shouldn't, but I feel that I leave the kids at the end of the day with that it's not a test to get stressed about, but success is really not a question. It's just how successful you can be.

The teachers repeatedly discussed how their love for the students, and knowing that they make a difference, caused them to remain in the profession. They know that the more efficacious they felt, the greater the impact on their students. Andrew, who is a former "Teacher of the Year," retired military, and who also coaches basketball, noted:

I know that when I was in middle school academically. More about life, a hand shake, how to shake someone's hand as a young man, how to look them in the eye as a young adult. I think that it's socially more than academic.

Two teachers left the profession but eventually returned to teach. Sharon said,

I missed the kids in that other job, thank you. In that other job, with all of its wonderful things, I was lonely. I had just been a student or teacher all of my life, and I love the students.

That same teacher, Sharon, reminisced about how many times over the past decade that she had profound lessons with the students. She knew that she impacted them. She talked about teaching them how to use chopsticks, having an airport activity, letting them experience different ethnic foods, showing them pictures of her travels. She talked about how a student whom she believed she had not impacted, came back to see her years later. He was always a behavior problem, but came back to see her. She asked him why and he said, “You were fine. You were always so nice. You were always fair. . . .I’ve grown up.”

Many of the teachers discussed their self-efficacy and how it impacted student achievement, inside and outside of the classroom. When asked about what area he felt that he had the most impact on, academics or socially, Michael said,

I think both. I think that, just your being in the situation, and being a figure, of authority, and probably a role model to some kids who don’t have role models, that regardless of your intention and really if you believe it or not, you’re changing people’s lives just by the way that they look at you, and the way that you handle yourself on a day-to-day basis. They are kind of establishing, you know, their ideas about role models and things.

Interestingly, teachers do not always believe that they have the most impact in their subject area. The chorus teacher, Liz, said:

I think that I have more of an academic impact on them more than anything else. I don't know what other teachers do, but I ask them a lot about their grades and what they are doing and if they did their homework and that kind of thing. A lot of students act as though or respond in a way that makes me think that other teachers haven't asked them or aren't interested? So, that way for sure [academic impact].

In addition to the teachers noting that love of the students kept them feeling effective, they also witnessed the students make connections. The more that they saw students making connections, the more they felt that they had an impact on them. One teacher said,

The act of teaching, I like making somebody figure out that they can do something that they didn't know that they could do is fun for me. I like that. The part of the actual, what you're doing in the classroom and seeing it work, seeing somebody learn and figure it out, that's exciting and makes me want to stay.

Another teacher, Liz, who has taught for 8 years, teaches Math Coaching Gifted Enrichment, and chose to work, not because of the paycheck, discussed how she enjoys interacting with the students. She chose to teach instead of being a stay at home mom. She thrives on seeing the impact that she makes:

I hope that I make a difference, and so obviously that does keep me here, but I just love the kids. I do. I think about it a lot, what keeps me here and keeps me coming back, because I think that we're gluttons for punishment, especially coming here into middle school and doing what we do. I do enjoy it. I enjoy interacting with the kids. . . . As cliché as all get out, but if you have one student

who is like, “hey, I really did get it!” or just not even getting it, but the kid who you can say to, I went through the same thing. I was that awkward child. . .

The teachers all seem to say that their self-efficacy definitely impacted the achievement of a child, either academically, socially, or morally. They felt their love for the students showed in what the students achieved. A life science teacher, Abby, reports,

My self-efficacy does keep me in the classroom, especially when I have students that do come back. . . . I’m surprised that no one is here today. It’s not about life science as much as life lessons. That’s what’s important for me.

Knowledge of and importance of content. In discussing self-efficacy with teachers, what impacted their self-efficacy, and how much they feel that they impacted student achievement, many teachers mentioned content. They mentioned how new content affected their teaching, how lack of knowledge in an area impacted their teaching, and how the more familiar they were with a subject, the greater impact they felt that they had on their students. The one exception was Jennifer, the 6th grade math teacher, who mentioned that when she introduced a new lesson, she felt more excited and that it was contagious to the students.

Teachers who are new to a content area have trouble establishing flow in a lesson. Liz mentioned that she was teaching a new content area with no curriculum or direction:

Nobody said, “Hey. This is what you’re supposed to be doing.” I feel like I’m making it up as I go. I wonder if I’m doing the right thing. It falls back into self-efficacy. The days that I come in and feel like I’m not being effective, it completely and totally affects my classroom.

This teacher is still successful with her students from the outsider's perspective, but has not felt she was doing her best job because she is uneasy with her subject matter. She is certified in Special Education and, because of administration's request, went on to take the test to become math certified. Another teacher that spoke before the recording started, mentioned how difficult it is to teach a new class called "Music Appreciation" when she received no money for curriculum, supplies, or technology. Liz believes this class is often used as a dumping ground for students. However, she also believes she could still have an impact on the students if she felt and knew she was supported with the curriculum.

Many teachers felt overwhelmed by the amount of information that they have to teach the students in a short amount of time. This greatly impacted their self-efficacy and, thus, student achievement. Sarah, who has taught for 24 years and currently teaches 6th grade language arts, said,

With language arts, it's too much information to put forth in one year. We have to do two subjects, grammar, and although you think that they go hand in hand, they are different. There are some similarities and some things cross over, but right now, we have to do writing, reading, grammar, and put it all together in less than nine months.

She felt that she impacted her students socially and morally, but not as much academically due to the large amount of content.

A teacher at the high school, Frida, who has taught for 24 years and has previously taught math and language arts, said that the amount of curriculum to teach in 18 weeks was overwhelming. She felt ineffective connecting to the students or making a difference in their lives:

[when compared to her previous year's experience]. . . I was left with nothing and had no one to work with. You know, pacing was so different, um, if you look at the history objectives. There are so many. We go from pilgrims to 911 in 17 weeks. That is a lot of information. In general, I typically feel effective. Math was new and it was like, "are you kidding me?"

Frida had taught language arts successfully for many years before taking on a math position for 2 years. She felt out of place teaching the new math curriculum. She now teaches social studies at the high school and said she felt like a first-year teacher again. She said that it does impact the students' achievement because her self-efficacy was so low at this point. She knew that it would improve with time and learning of the material. Another teacher, now teaching language arts, who taught social studies previously, mentioned that she is trying "to get back to social studies."

Many teachers, though they felt that their subject area may or may not be as important as others in other aspects, regarded their classes as being important for keeping the students coming to school. Michael mentioned that one child at his old school came to school and graduated because of football. While at school, they taught him vocational classes, which is why Michael deemed his classes as important. Michael has great self-efficacy that influenced student achievement because he knew that, though not in a testing fashion, his classes were important. About that student, he said,

[to the student] "Hey, you're not going to be a rocket scientist, you haven't put forth effort in the classroom, you've not gone to SAT prep classes that we set up for you. You need to go to career tech classes if you want to learn how to do something." He went on to be a mechanic to this day, and the last time that I

checked on him, he was a shade tree mechanic. To me, it's like, English didn't teach him that, math didn't teach him that. Football taught him that. Football is what kept him in the door. He has a job and is now a successful member of our society.

Michael discussed how he felt that he had an impact on students. He had a strong sense of self-efficacy about what he teaches, especially the career tech aspect of it. He felt confident in showing students different career paths out there, which will impact student achievement. Liz, who doesn't teach a core subject, went on to talk about how the arts are sometimes more important than the other fields in the real world. She was discouraged and felt less efficacious about her place here at the school. She knew that her subject was important, but did not feel so at this school:

It feels like EVERYTHING comes before the arts. I guess it comes down to how you're managing what education means to me. I think that it's a well-rounded kid who is going to succeed and I've done a bit of research about music and fine arts and how it impacts decision making and problem solving and that kind of thing. That's the person that I want to work for me someday. I don't necessarily want a multiple choice, a perfect bubbler!

Carla continued to say that she did not feel that the math and social studies that she has taught are what students need. She felt discouraged and believed she has not made a tremendous difference in their lives as far as what they need for the real world:

The math that I taught, they don't need that math in real life. I don't really care what they try to tell me, the college level for most of them, they aren't going to take advanced math. We're asking them do to things that they really don't need

outside of this. When I taught English, who cares what a gerund was?I think that what we ask them to do in the classroom turns them off rather than what it turns them on to do it. I don't have the leeway because of other constraints such as testing and time-wise. . .

This teacher taught a core subject area but felt a low sense of self-efficacy because she was discouraged by the content that she taught, the amount of content as well as the actual content itself.

Some of the 12 teachers interviewed mentioned they felt their subject areas were of great importance, which made them feel highly efficacious. For example, Abby confessed,

I don't think that the need for, um, teachers in science is the same as other areas. I think that it's more than in a lot of other areas, because, if they are paying teachers \$5,000 to be in science, I feel like something is happening and they do need science teachers.

Another teacher who taught science felt the same way. She felt that math and science are highly important because they are skills that are needed for technical positions; many teachers felt this is the direction education is heading. They felt efficacious in teaching something that will be used, as Alex mentioned:

Science is so much math and language arts, obviously it combines everything in a way that is going to apply those skills for a technical position, which is what a lot of jobs will be or are now. . . the economy.

Along these same lines, another teacher, Frida, who has taught for 24 years, expressed her concerns:

There are things that are aggravating. You know, the curriculum sometimes, when they ask them, the kids to do a certain thing that you know they are not ready to. And I don't believe that all kids are the same. We all need different things, but just, just the kids make me want to be here.

Frida absolutely feels a high sense of self-efficacy. Though it may not be tied into the curriculum, she knows that she has an impact although she feels frustration.

Research Question 2: What Personality Characteristics Do Teachers Feel Add to Their Positive or Negative Self-Efficacy in Teaching?

Personality characteristics are of great importance in this research. One of the primary topics of study was extroverts versus introverts in and outside of the classroom. In addition to that, was the topic of how other teachers affect a teacher's personality and that teacher's belief in his or her ability to be an effective teacher. Having a sense of humor was a topic that teachers frequently mentioned during the interviews, focus groups, and essay questions. In addition, the major theme of confidence surfaced multiple times in the interviews and focus groups. Confidence in their topic, of being in front of the classroom, confidence that they are making a difference, and confidence in who they are as a teacher were some of the topics brought up during the interviews and focus groups. This confidence can be impacted by other teachers, as well as parents. Many teachers brought this topic up during the interviews.

Personality type. Many of the teachers claimed to be extroverts in the classroom and introverts at home or with people whom they did not know so well. One teacher who is introverted when it comes to adults in meetings or in the hallway discussed how she was uncomfortable coming back to school for fear of having to talk to other teachers after

the summer. There were no teachers interviewed who said that they were introverted in the classroom. If anything, the teachers put on an act while they were teaching. Being an extrovert in the classroom seemed to be a necessity when teaching. When discussing if she was an extrovert or an introvert, Sharon, who has taught for 18 years, said,

I'm very extroverted with you because I'm comfortable with you. I guess I'm swinging. . . quite a bit, but in the classroom, I'm very much an extrovert, VERY much an extrovert. . . . I don't mind doing whatever I need to get the point across.

David, who taught 8th grade math, said that he is an introvert but comes alive in the classroom. He said that he has to go home and recharge in the evenings, being away from any other people. Of being an introvert or extrovert, he said,

I'm not social at all, very much to myself. This is getting into my personality, but that is what you're asking. I almost put on an act here [he got quiet and had to think about his words]. . . an act that I hope that I'm showing the kids that I want to be here, and I do, but all of this social action, interaction, between myself, my peers, and my students, takes a lot, really out of me, so at the end of the day, it's like a rechargeable battery. There is no dinner, no going out with teachers. When I leave here, I want to be alone.

He was not the only teacher who claimed to be drained at the end of the day. The other introverts in the sample also claimed to need to be alone in the evenings, with little talking to other people, and they needed to reenergize. Carla says, "I am draaaaaaiined at the end of the day. If I could go back, I would be an accountant."

Abby, a 7th grade life science teacher, is an extreme extrovert at all times, from the way that she is when you approach her to the way that she dresses. She had a great

presence about her. She felt that it helped her in the classroom and is a necessity for being highly efficacious. She described herself as being

An extrovert. Both inside and outside of the classroom. I believe in being up front and honest with students and I think that either way they will, most of them, at first, don't quite understand, but by the end of the year, they understand that I mean business. My expectations of you are high and if you don't have, let's say, you don't have it, let's not make excuses. Let's put it out in the open.

Students seemed to respond well to her. She has students come back and visit, hang out after school with her, and respect her. Her personality does influence her self-efficacy in a positive way. She was not the only teacher who was an extrovert both in and out of the classroom who felt that students were a bit intimidated at first, but later appreciated it.

Liz, the math coaching and enrichment teacher, mentioned that

Some kids can handle it and some kids, it kind of intimidates them. This is my first year teaching sixth graders. They cry. They really do and they are like scared of me a little bit and they don't know what to do with me [Liz weighs close to 100 pounds and is very non-intimidating in physical stature]. . . . I fall and trip. I think that if you're embarrassed easily, this is not your profession.

Alex, a 7th grade science teacher, described herself as an introvert at parties but an extrovert in the classroom. She discussed moving around and being dramatic in the classroom. That helped with her self-efficacy and engaged the students:

It's boring to sit in a classroom setting, you know, the traditional classroom setting and sit down and listen. That's not a great way to learn all of the time.

It's okay some of the time. If the teacher is being silly and having you get up and

move around and go outside, that's part of being an extrovert. I don't want to sit behind a desk. I'm not comfortable sitting behind the desk. I want to be moving with the students. I think that it keeps them awake. I think that it keeps them interested.

Another teacher, who seemed confident in what he does, says that he had an "Opera Michael" personality when he came into the classroom, but yet he was more reserved outside of the classroom. This seems to be a key trait of highly efficacious teachers, that they are extroverts in the classroom, leading to greater self-confidence. He said that he took time getting to know people, but that in the classroom,

As far as class, I mean, I look and this kind of thing goes back to what we talked about earlier, turning on the work and turning off the work. I'm a different person with the students than I am in most environments. I don't want to say that it's an act, but it's pretty close to it. That's just my teacher personality.

Surrounding teachers. According to those interviewed, teacher self-efficacy was strongly tied to those teachers and staff that surround them. Though one or two teachers said that they did not let it affect them, most of them said that it greatly influenced their personality in and out of the classroom. One 7th grade science teacher said that it did not impact her to have negative teachers around her because she could isolate herself in her room, but later admitted that if it was a co-teacher, that would impact her positivity. A math teacher expressed how the teachers that surround her do affect how she feels and how she reacts in the classroom. Even those teachers who said that it did not affect their personality later admitted that it would, as Carla revealed:

I have my own personal values that I have to live up to and if others are working towards the same values, that is fine, but if not, then I just kind of move on and do my own thing. I hesitate to say that because, I certainly feel more positive and have more energy when I work with people who have good, who have, you know, good attitudes about it, but I just. . . I learned a long time ago what I need to do and I don't worry about anyone else.

Liz, who taught math, discussed how she felt the negative effects from working with a department where everyone was negative. She is a positive person and has a hard time remaining that way when she has worked around those types of people, the people who call the children "stupid" and such. She admitted that it brings her personality and self-efficacy down. Carla, who has taught at another school mentioned,

There were a couple of real negative people in my department, and it sort of bleeds over. I mean, you end up having kind of, I wouldn't say that it necessarily set my tone, but it definitely impacted my tone. Where I normally come in with a good attitude and the feel of it... that kind of negative, you start to really question what you are doing, certainly in that environment.

Negative situations greatly impacted the teachers' personalities, brought them down, and hindered their self-efficacy in the classroom. Carla went on to say that as confidence is developed, you end up being impacted less, but that it takes effort not to be affected.

Being around positive people at work can affect one's personality in teaching. Many teachers interviewed discussed how they felt negative if surrounded by negative

peers and how they have to pick and choose, when possible, which teachers and staff to surround themselves with.

Interestingly enough, Kai admitted that when she was always around people with happy attitudes all of the time, it intimidated her, but that she would also not like to work around someone that is negative. Both affected her personality:

People that are constantly hallmark card positive kind of intimidate me a little bit, so I'm not comfortable talking to somebody if they are too happy. It's just awkward, for me, but I would much rather have somebody that I can vent to in a second. . . . I think that the same thing would be true for a completely negative person, but I have never had that experience.

Overall, the theme that emerged from this group of teachers was they obviously needed people around them to be positive in their teaching and in their self-efficacy in teaching. Building each other up and encouraging each other are key traits that Frida wrote about:

I do think that it's important to surround yourself with people who believe like you and who have the same values and things, and I think that it's important to pick up a bad attitude or a bad way to look at things or even bad ways to handle situations when that's what you are around and that's what you see all of the time. I think that it's important to encourage each other and build each other up and tell each other when you see something that somebody did that you notice that made a difference for a kid; we don't sometimes share those things and we only hear the bad, but I think that it's really, really important to do that and help each other do that [spread the word of good deeds].

Many teachers went on to say that they felt beaten up when they went home after a day of being around negative people. They all said that no matter how hard they tried to remain positive, that being around other people greatly impacted their personality and mood.

Another factor regarding working with others was the collaboration aspect. Many of the teachers mentioned how helpful it was to have a good co-teacher or neighbor-teacher. When asked about teams and surrounding colleagues, Frida, who teaches alone at the high school, said, “Being able to collaborate with other staff and colleagues and being part of a team that I like and I had at the middle school was a huge difference.”

Sense of humor. The topic of humor and having a good attitude also came up multiple times in the interviews and focus groups. Many teachers interviewed for the present study said that a sense of humor and flexibility was required to remain in the profession. As Alex said, “Just having an open sense of humor, because you have to laugh, and you can’t take this too seriously with a 12-13 year old. That makes me more affective.” This is supported by Bracket et al., (2010), who found that “teachers with higher ERA (emotional regulation ability) feel a greater sense of accomplishment because higher ERA likely contributes to the establishment of warm, caring relationships, the ability to deal effectively with student problems, and the creation of a relaxing classroom atmosphere, to the extent that it enhances positive emotion and preempts conflict and tension” (p. 414). Frida, a Teacher of the Year for three various years, mentioned,

I’m a fairly positive person and I, if you don’t look at the positive side, and if you don’t see humor in the silly, crazy little things, if you are not able to, to smile at a

kid who just really messed up, um, you know, it's just all about making people feel comfortable.

Teachers with a higher ERA (happier teachers) are more knowledgeable about themselves and are more confident than teachers who are anxious around students (Brackett et al., 2010). In keeping with other studies, during the focus groups, the teachers in the present study expressed that flexibility and a sense of humor helped to increase their self-efficacy levels in the classroom.

When asked what personality traits helped to improve self-efficacy, Alex said that “being able to adapt to the classroom setting is really important personality trait and flexibility and maybe a sense of humor...” Jennifer followed up by saying, “They sense that, if you think that they are funny and sometimes they get your humor, too.”

Parents. Parents were also a main topic or theme that emerged out of the data collection with this research. When asked about factors affecting personality with self-efficacy, many teachers mentioned in great depth parental relationships having an impact. One teacher said that she is afraid of parents. Jennifer, who has had a foster child for close to a year, mentioned that parents can help them with the students, although they do not like dealing with parents:

It makes me uncomfortable to communicate with parents, so I don't do it as much as I should, but when I do, when we do have parent conferences, with stupid parents, I do feel like, especially at the sixth grade level, that it makes a difference. And you know, now, being a parent, I feel a little bit differently about communicating with parents and seeing the importance of it. It's amazing.

Before, I was like, oh, whatever, they don't care. That's not true! Even though I have 120 kids, those parents want to know.

Jennifer was not the first to mention that having children helped her to understand the parents more. Abby also revealed:

Communicating has helped me to become a better parent. I feel, because I don't want my child to experience some of the things that I've seen as a teacher. It helps me to understand how parents may respond to me, the mother hen syndrome and they want to protect, but at the same time, being a teacher, I see both sides.

This teacher went on to say that communicating with parents did help her to feel like she had a greater impact on the students and was better supported.

Another teacher said that she saw less effect each year from parents talking to their children. She said that this year the parents were making excuses for why the students were not doing what they were supposed to. Liz mentioned that the parents were the hardest part of the job to deal with.

Many teachers mentioned that emailing was not as effective as calling the parents, as the tone is a bit different. Sometimes, some of the teachers will have the child call the parents on the phone during class to let them know, to help them communicate. This helped the teachers to feel more effective, when the parents back the teacher up. Carla, a teacher, reported,

It's easier now with email for so many. That helps... it puts things in a more positive note. The students can't try to pull one off on the parents and teacher once you are in communication. I think that last semester for me was an aberration. I feel like a better teacher when I do it [contact parents].

Sharon told a story about having a child for a few days into the semester who was acting unruly, so she contacted the parents. While she first felt out of control in terms of effectiveness in that classroom with the student's disruption, after contacting the parent, the behavior quickly cleared up. Parents can have a great impact on a teacher's sense of self-efficacy, according to these teachers.

Research Question 3: What Factors Do Teachers Identify as Influencing Their Professional Self-Efficacy in Teaching (Personality Traits, Outside Circumstances, Number of Students, or Pre-Service Teaching Experiences)?

This topic revealed similar answers with almost all 12 of the participants. When asked about factors outside of the classroom or school that helped to build their self-efficacy level, many teachers mentioned God, exercise, and the support of family and friends. The teachers almost all mentioned that some type of prayer or religion, and for some, occasional exercise, kept them energetic. In addition to those two things, the support of family and friends played a pertinent role.

Exercise and faith. The topics of faith and exercise were placed together as a theme because they so often went hand-in-hand when participants mentioned them. Most participants did not discuss either one at length, but mentioned these two things as important in keeping a strong sense of self-efficacy in the classroom. One of the teachers mentioned working out and then having a Bible study with friends. Another mentioned praying while she ran.

When asked about teaching, Frida, a science teacher, said, "God directed me into it. Thank goodness He knows better than I do." The chorus teacher, who also sings in a choir, works at a church running the music department, practices her own relationship

with Christ, and has other activities, also found time to work out by taking dance classes or fitness classes. She said that these things greatly help her to come to work renewed.

Liz, who has two children and taught with a workload of three preparations a day, said,

I run, exercise. I run, I exercise twice a week, really three times a week. I run twice and go to spin class once a week. I love it. I run, exercise. Tomorrow, I do two a day. Once a week, I do two a day, but I'll run and then do spin classes.

Yes, definitely. If I'm not exercising, I'm not happy.

Yet another teacher, who is a 6th grade earth science teacher, Frida, said, "I'm a runner. I work out almost every single day. I take one day off, usually on Fridays, because I'm so tired by Fridays."

Interestingly enough, many of the introverts, such as David, Sarah, and Carla, were too tired after work to work out, but all said that they needed to work out more. Conclusions could be drawn by the reader—which came first, the need to exercise causing low energy levels, or that those who had more energy worked out more. God was cited as a constant in keeping these teachers grounded in high self-efficacy. Carla said,

Faith. I feel like I was, like the Lord directed me into education. I was never, ever, ever going to teach school. Bottom line. Never was I going to teach school. I had lots of other things to do. Through a series of things, I felt like the Lord was saying that this is a career for you to explore. Twenty-four years later, here I am.

Many other teachers mentioned having devotionals or Bible time. One teacher said that she has a Christian faith and is involved at church. She mentioned that she and her family

try to have a Bible study in the mornings (she has two children who are in grade school).

Sharon mentioned religion in a humorous note:

When I miss church, it's funny. I know that this sounds bad. If I miss church on Sunday, I think that I'm going to have a lousy week at school and God will punish me because I slept late and didn't go in. I don't think that it works that way, but I do feel more, whole, more, the whole person.

Jennifer, who has a 10-year-old foster child and taught 6th grade math, said that she has strong ties to church and worship. Most of her friends are from her church, and she draws strength from God to help her through the day. Another was asked what types of things added to her self-efficacy: "I think that exercise, religious activities, that kind of thing. Like, if it makes you a person outside of the classroom feel better, then you probably feel better all of the time."

Supportive family and friends. Aside from exercise and faith, many participants cited family and friends as a primary factor in contributing to self-efficacy. Many teachers stated that their family renewed their energy for the next day. All teachers with children mentioned they loved to go home and take their minds off of work by playing with their children, but it also left them exhausted and having less time for school. Sarah, a teacher for 24 years, mentioned that she needed something more than teaching in her life to be a better teacher (she meant family).

Michael, the computer teacher, mentioned his wife multiple times. His wife is an art teacher at the local elementary school. They both were passionate about education and the arts:

Like Liz and my relationship, it flows into both of us being better teachers and you know, when things are going good at home, it makes it easier. Everything seems easier. That's a strong driver. . . I don't know if that's a personality trait or that's because you are happy in other parts of your life or confident in other parts of your life. . .

Healthy relationships with other men or women who may or may not be in the same profession or time of life, but that share common values, also help. Many men and women combine exercise with being around friends and family who are supportive. One woman mentioned going to the gym to be around other people after work. Another teacher, Frida, who teaches 7th grade science, gets up at 4:30 every morning:

I get up at 4:30 and I meet with a group of friends; therefore, we obviously meet every single morning. That makes us accountable to each other because it's kind of hard to call your friend and say, "I'm not coming this morning" when it's 4:30 in the morning. We start at 5, actually, and just being together, a group of like minded people. . .

David, who is the introverted math teacher, said that he unwound and refueled by talking to his sister. I asked if she was a teacher, and he said, "She was!" Just being able to vent or to blow off steam to another person seemed to help people with their self-efficacy and come back refueled. That being said, he has other thoughts about his mother. She left him with negative self-efficacy in parts of his life. He grew up with her being narcissistic, and she left a negative impact on him. In his world, being around family did not always have a positive influence. Thankfully, his sister is someone who will listen when he needs to talk.

Liz, who is the extroverted and energetic teacher, mentioned that she missed her family greatly, but that she is thankful to work with such a positive staff (as she has not in the past):

I'll tell you what sometimes does have an effect on me is the fact that my family doesn't live here. I don't have anybody around me. My parents are three hours away. It would be nice to pick up the phone and say, "Hey, Mama," and just pick up the phone, and, you know. . . I do think that being on this Connections hall (music, PE, art, etc.) has made a tremendous difference. I LOVE these people. I love it. Fred said that I am almost a different person.

Andrew, whose wife is a teacher, said that she needed to get things out and talked extensively about her day, but that he left it at school and does not talk about it at home. He has a military background and is a fairly private person. Jennifer said that she talked to her friends, many of whom are also teachers, on the commute home, which relieved her mind and helped to improve her self-efficacy:

I have always been someone who talked to people on the phone about, like I have a lot of friends who live in different places. A few of them are teachers, too, and that helps, too. Now, I do that in the car on the way home (with no child in the car). It lets out some stress and the icky things and makes you feel better about facing it the next day.

It was apparent from the data collection procedures that having family and friends, whether small children or friends who live far away, helped to improve teachers' self-efficacy and subsequently improved their teaching and confidence the next day.

Summary of the Findings

The goal of this study was to investigate the teacher's view of self-efficacy in the classroom and persistence in the teaching profession. Many of the teachers said that they would leave the profession if they felt they were not making a difference, and so the teacher's voices molded the data into factors that they believed impacted their self-efficacy and persistence in the teaching profession. The teachers tried their best to be honest and to reveal, to the best of their knowledge, a glimpse into their lives regarding this topic. Twelve teachers participated in this study, four male and eight females, who taught grades 6 through 12 and had persisted in the profession for more than 5 years.

In their survey responses, all teachers in the study implied they believed they had a generally strong sense of self-efficacy. They scored the highest on being able to motivate the students to participate in projects and also scored highly on being able to maintain a positive relationship with parents even when tensions arose. This discovery agrees with the findings from the essays, interviews, and focus groups where all the teachers revealed they try to have a generally high sense of self-efficacy. However, during further probing the teachers revealed that it takes greater effort to maintain positive relations with parents and in motivating the students to lower levels of self-efficacy. Additionally, the teachers mentioned that parents impacted their sense of self-efficacy. The teachers also divulged that their love for the students and their content knowledge helped them to feel highly efficacious and able to motivate the students. The teachers scored the lowest on the Self-Efficacy Survey on the statement regarding being able to successfully teach all relevant subject content to even the most difficult students. While the teachers averaged the rating of *moderately true* on this statement, the data

revealed the teachers had a higher sense of self-efficacy with students who were more cooperative and respectful.

Other themes quickly emerged as the participants told their stories. It became apparent from the teachers that confidence in the classroom, or self-efficacy, was a primary determinant in whether or not they made a difference and had an impact on the students. The teachers thought that an extroverted personality was also a determining factor in contributing to a successful year. Many teachers thrived on making a difference and seeing students make a connection, either an “Aha” moment in math, or bringing in an object from nature to inquire about. The teachers’ self-efficacy was built up with each visiting student, those who come back after school or years later.

The first major theme that emerged was administration and their support or lack of support for the teachers and whether or not they were visible. Another theme that reappeared numerous times was a general love of children and a love for what the teachers did. Knowledge of the content and material repeatedly surfaced as a topic that affected how successful the teachers felt. Those who taught new content felt less effective than those who taught their subject matter for years. Many teachers discussed being an introvert or an extrovert, but all of the teachers said that they were forced to be extroverted in the classroom. Whether or not they were introverts affected how they felt after being in the classroom all day. Surrounding teachers, or group efficacy, has an impact on individual teacher self-efficacy. This affected the mood of the school as a whole. Parents came up as a reoccurring theme when discussing self-efficacy. Many teachers felt less effective when working with parents while others felt more effective when in contact with parents. Still other teachers revealed that being parents themselves

impacted their self-efficacy in the classroom. Exercise and faith were two factors that helped the teachers to feel higher levels of self-efficacy in teaching. Finally, supporting family and friends helped many teachers to come to school each day with higher levels of teacher self-efficacy.

Chapter Four restated the problem and summarized the descriptions of the participants. This chapter also presented the findings according to the research questions and introduced the major themes that occurred throughout the analysis of the data. Chapter Five will present a discussion and conclusion of the major findings, further reveal the emerging themes, and align them with the appropriate previous research, as well as presenting additional recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of 12 participants on teacher self-efficacy and persistence in the teaching profession.

Discussions of lived experiences in this study presented emerging themes that describe and analyze how teachers perceive self-efficacy and persistence in the profession.

Through focus groups, interviews, a Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, and essay questions, I found firsthand how teachers perceived self-efficacy and persistence in teaching.

According to the results found in the survey as well as the qualitative data, the teachers in this group of 12 participants all had a fairly strong sense of self-efficacy, though they did reveal what factors contributed to and impacted their personal feelings of self-efficacy.

Through observing facial expressions, moments of hesitancy, and body language, I observed that most of the teachers interviewed appeared to be open and honest about their feelings of what influences their self-efficacy, when it has changed, how they felt about their influence on student achievement, and what could help improve their self-efficacy.

The data collected supported the findings of Bandura (1986) and Pajares (1990), who studied self-efficacy in-depth, revealing that the cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors impact one another and all together impact self-efficacy. Research in the area of self-efficacy in teaching can have a great influence on teachers. In addition, students are impacted by research in the area of teacher self-efficacy and improving that self-efficacy (Corkett et al., 2011; Grant et al., 2011; Swackhamer et al., 2009).

Limitations will be discussed in this chapter, followed by recommendations for future research with conclusions following.

Research Question 1: What Are the Perceptions of Secondary School Teachers of the Influence of Their Self-Efficacy on Student Academic Achievement?

The teachers were adamant they would not remain in the profession if they felt they were not making a difference in the students' lives. Repeatedly, the teachers discussed a love for the students and a legitimate concern for their well-being. The teachers also discussed administration, parent and staff support, support of family and friends, knowledge of the subject, exercise, and faith as things that impacted their self-efficacy. These data, found in this phenomenological research, supported the studies done by other researchers, who came to similar conclusions (Corkett et al., 2011; Grant et al., 2011; Swackhamer et al., 2009). Varying amounts of support from outside family, friends, and administration, as well as different levels of knowledge of the subject, all affect teachers' levels of self-efficacy. For example, scholars noted that "Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy have demonstrated different characteristics related to work ethic and pedagogical practice than teachers with low levels of self-efficacy" (Swackhamer et al., 2009, p. 63). In addition, teachers with high levels of self-efficacy, according to Covell et al. (2009), have students who are more respectful. To support the idea of highly efficacious teachers having students who are more respectful (Covell et al., 2009), the current research revealed that many teachers who felt less self-efficacy (mainly at their previous schools) described the students at those schools as being rude and boisterous and speaking out of turn. The teachers mentioned that at their current schools, when students were disrespectful, it impacted their self-efficacy. The idea that disrespectful students impact self-efficacy in teachers was also stated in the research done by Covell et al. (2009). They performed a study called *Rights, Respect, and*

Responsibility, a school-wide reform that took place over 3 years and taught the importance of children's rights and responsibilities. The teachers found that, in the 3rd year of implementation, where students showed "greater respect for property, greater respect for the rights of others, increased participation and improved behavior, and over time, they showed increasingly higher levels of participation and improved positive behaviors, that their teachers reported significantly lower levels of burnout" (Covell et al., 2009, p. 288). In another study relating to teacher self-efficacy, the teachers reported that their "self-efficacy is (was) significantly correlated with their perceptions of the students' self-efficacy" (Corkett, et al., 2011, p. 1), or when students felt high levels of self-efficacy, the teachers' self-efficacy was also higher.

Teachers in this research desired to feel appreciated by their administrators, colleagues, and students. Many of the teachers interviewed said that the other teachers around them as well as the administration had a great impact on their self-efficacy beliefs. This aligns with the findings of Cenkseven-Onder and Sari (2009), who noted that "it is a normal feeling that teachers want to have a magnified place in the school where they spend a big part of their time and want to feel themselves worthy by their colleagues, administrators, and students" (p. 1229). Cenkseven-Onder and Sari went on to explain that, "if the administrator is a good leader it can be said that the school climate will be satisfactory for teachers and this satisfaction may reflect on their general life satisfaction" (p. 1230). Bandura (1986) also researched the four basic sources of self-efficacy beliefs, which are (a) mastery of experiences; (b) actions of the people around the teacher; (c) influence from other people's verbal persuasions; and (d) psychological traits. The participants in the present study repeatedly said that administrators and

teachers around them influenced their self-efficacy, which follows along with research performed by Chong, Klassen, Huan, Wong, & Kates (2010), who found that a high sense of collective self-efficacy can foster creative problem solving, foster support for one another, and create higher teacher commitment. Milner (2002) also studied students, parents, and colleagues' feedback and found that the feedback from these external sources impacts self-efficacy, as does success or failure at something. Many of the teachers interviewed in the present study mentioned that they are affected by the way that the students act, the things that the students say, the teachers around them, and parent/teacher interactions.

Confidence in teaching, subject matter, and a belief that their subject area is of importance, were major factors that came up during the focus group interviews. Confidence in subject area and in teaching having an impact on self-efficacy were also supported by other research that noted, "Teachers' efficacy levels can be positively impacted by an increase in content-specific knowledge with a pedagogical emphasis" (Swackhamer et al., 2009). Teachers need specialized skills and training in their specific content area, more so than the average adult, to feel highly effective in teaching (Swackhamer et al., 2009). Many of the teachers mentioned that confidence in the classroom and knowledge of the material were factors that greatly impacted their self-confidence in the classroom and helped them to deliver instruction in a more effective manner. Many of the teachers interviewed were currently teaching a new subject area or grade level and expressed their feelings of inadequacy in teaching those subject areas. However, they felt that when they had taught that subject for a greater extent of time, they would be more confident and effective. These results support a quantitative study

done in India, where 226 secondary school teachers were surveyed on self-efficacy. The findings showed that teachers with a degree in their subject area, and therefore a greater knowledge of that subject, scored higher in self-efficacy than those who had a degree outside of their subject area (Aziz et al., 2011).

Research Question 2: What Personality Characteristics Do Teachers Feel Add to Their Positive or Negative Self-Efficacy in Teaching?

The teachers in this study were able to give their opinions on personality characteristics that they felt added to their positive or negative self-efficacy in teaching. The teachers suggested that confidence was a primary personality trait that teachers must have in the classroom. Bandura (1986) listed personality traits as one of the four main factors that impacted self-efficacy. The teachers in the present study expressed that being introverted leaves them “exhausted at the end of the day” versus those teachers who are self-professed extroverts, who seem to have energy at the end of their teaching day. Rotter (1990) performed extensive studies on internal versus external locus of control, stating that when teachers had an external locus of control, they felt controlled by the situation. Rotter’s findings were supported by the present phenomenological study, which found the participants who were more extroverted contributed to areas like student behavior, class sizes, and budget more than the teachers who described themselves as introverts. In terms of personality traits, Burns and Gundeman (2008) also found that when teachers can interpret events in their lives in a positive manner, they can turn those events into opportunities. Through the focus groups and interviews, it was obvious that being an extrovert in the classroom was a key factor in meeting the needs of the students. Many of the teachers were introverts outside of the classroom, and these teachers had to

put forth more energy to be extroverted in the classroom. The five major traits used in determining job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2002) are (a) neuroticism; (b) extroversion; (c) openness to new experience; (d) agreeableness; and (e) conscientiousness. The factors of extroversion and confidence came up multiple times in the focus groups as well as the interviews and essay questions.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) also studied external locus of control as a dimension of self-efficacy, and described it as how individuals felt toward their ability to control the situation around them. Many of the teachers interviewed for this research had an external locus of control when they first started teaching. However, scholars have noted that teacher self-efficacy can change (Garvis, 2009; Henry et al., 2011), and most of the teachers in the present study stated that though they began with feeling a low sense of self-efficacy, it evolved to a higher sense of self-efficacy in teaching.

Parents and surrounding teachers were two factors the teachers brought up during interviews about their confidence level. Many teachers felt that parents could positively influence the outcome of the student's achievement, while others felt that they were less effective when parents were involved. If teachers believed that the students were more influenced by external stimuli, such as their parents, friends, or neighbors, then the teachers did not feel they impacted the students, lowering their self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Similarly, many teachers interviewed for this study said that communicating with parents helped to improve the interactions between the teacher and the student as well as the student's behavior in class. Peers that surround a teacher can influence how effective they felt. Depending on the teacher's locus of control, some teachers were more impacted than others by their surrounding peers. Scholars note this

can cause those teachers with a low locus of control who are surrounded by negative peers to have limitations on what they can accomplish (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Many of the teachers interviewed in the present study also mentioned that teachers around them or the school that they were in had an impact on their sense of self-efficacy in the classroom. Covell et al., (2009) also found that teachers believe that a sense of community reduces teacher burnout and stress, increasing self-efficacy in teaching. Covell et al., (2009) noted that increasing children's rights and instilling values and guiding principles in the staff and administration can "reduce burnout by engendering a sense of community at the school" (p. 288).

Research Question 3: What Factors Do Teachers Identify as Influencing Their Professional Self-Efficacy in Teaching (Personality Traits, Outside Circumstances, Number of Students, or Pre-Service Teaching Experiences)?

Teachers who feel self confident and have a higher sense of self-efficacy foster actions from students and teachers around them that are more positive than do those teachers with low self-efficacy, who seem to cultivate negative behaviors from students and other teachers (Brackett et al., 2010). Brackett et al (2010) also found that teachers who regulate their emotions can "elicit positive responses from those with whom they interact, which in turn could lead to greater personal accomplishment" (p. 413). All participants of this research mentioned some form of religion in their focus groups, essays, and interviews as a way to help regulate their emotions. A majority of the teachers also mentioned exercise. The teachers who had energy in the classroom and were not exhausted at the end of the day partook in exercise at least three times per week. This was not only for physical, but also for psychological reasons. These teachers said

that exercise fueled them to perform better in the classroom. Pajares (1990) similarly found that teachers who had high levels of anxiety, stress, and fatigue had lower levels of self-efficacy. In the present study, exercise and faith helped control the anxiety, stress, and fatigue.

Almost all of the teachers mentioned faith as a primary factor in their careers. Many teachers said that God had called them into teaching. Carla, the high school social studies teacher, said that God called her into teaching and that she would have never been a teacher otherwise. Frida, who taught for 24 years, mentioned that she had different career aspirations, but that God called her into teaching. Although all the schools in this study are public schools, almost all of the teachers interviewed said that their religion supported them and gave them the strength to teach.

In addition to faith and exercise, the data revealed that the teachers needed family support at home or supportive friends that they could call. All of the teachers, with the exception of Andrew, who is former military, mentioned calling someone at night or discussing school with their family. Even Andrew mentioned listening to his wife discuss her school day. Teachers need support from outside the classroom. They need a place to resound their ideas.

Factors such as exercise, faith, and having someone to discuss issues with could help improve teachers' emotion-regulation ability (ERA), which is their ability to regulate emotions (Brackett et al., 2010). Many teachers in the present study mentioned exercise as a way to decrease their stress level and to help them regulate their emotions in the classroom. Other researchers also noted that ERA can also be influenced by training programs, students in the school and their attitudes, and people surrounding the teachers

(Chong et al., 2010; Corkett et al., 2011). Through the data collected in the current study, there was an observable continuous and reciprocal movement between the behavioral, cognitive, and environmental influences, meaning that one cannot change without affecting the others. Bandura (1978) noted this finding in his studies on reciprocal causation (or social cognitive theory). Many teachers expressed their need for religion or exercise; the support around them, including their administrators, family, friends, and other teachers; their internal psychological state; and their behavior in the classroom and how those factors were reciprocal to one another. This supported the findings of Pajares (1990), who noted that “self-efficacy beliefs and behavior changes and outcomes are highly correlated and that self-efficacy is an excellent predictor of behavior” (p. 9).

Limitations of This Study

The data in this study were triangulated, checked with multiple resources, and sorted numerous times to ensure accuracy. However, the following are delimitations and limitations to this study.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to a qualitative study, which prevented many potential participants from participating due to the substantive time commitment involved in the research. There were three teachers who dropped out at the beginning, all of whom had families and at least two children. Because the three teachers who dropped out were working mothers with two or more children attests to outside stressors affecting teaching and self-efficacy. Teachers that participated in the study were asked to volunteer, which immediately provided a group of teachers who excelled in their profession and were willing to help.

Limitations

The most noticeable limitation is that due to the nature of the study, and my familiarity with the participants, an element of bias was possible, particularly in my descriptions of the participants. For example, in my descriptions of the participants, I have used terms that might appear to be less formal in order to effectively describe the essence of the persons and how they are perceived by the school community. However, the present research strives to minimize this bias to reduce misinterpretation or misuse of the data by maintaining the following precautions: participants were given pseudonyms and were coded blindly so as not to associate any materials or data with the specific participants. I continually reflected on ways to not directly influence the participants. I made every effort to create a comfortable environment where the participants felt free to openly discuss their thoughts and ideas.

Another limitation is that this sample population of teachers is one that is standard to Northeast Georgia, being mostly Caucasian, approximately 12% minority, and middle income to low SES. Of the teachers who were interviewed, only one is African American, due to the limited number of African American teachers in the area. There is only one Asian American teacher in the school system, and she opted out before beginning the study. There are no Hispanic American teachers in the school where the research took place. In regard to the students, although the schools are considered Title I schools, where the majority of students receive free and reduced lunch, there is also a segment of the population that is affluent. Because of this, the results of the study are not completely generalizable, but the findings can be useful in improving the self-efficacy of teachers in the future.

Recommendations for Further Study

This section is reserved for possible recommendations related to this study that should be considered for future studies. Some of the factors that were mentioned but not examined in detail in this study include the relationship between religion or faith and self-efficacy in teaching, humor and self-efficacy in teaching, and gender and self-efficacy in teaching. Though this research mentioned these factors, there is not much research on the specifics of these relationships, so this would be a great area for future studies.

In the present study, I did not investigate differences according to gender, marital status, and children in the home. A different type of study would be interesting for future research involving the differences between female and male teachers and their views on self-efficacy, as well as married with families versus unmarried and without children. More studies could examine the effects, if any, on self-efficacy if a teacher has a family or not.

Other types of studies pertaining to self-efficacy in teachers could compare teachers who exercise and those who do not. It would be interesting to know more about the effects of exercise on people who teach and on their self-efficacy. While examining this relationship, it would also be interesting to know if there is a relationship between personality types and those who exercise and their self-efficacy.

This research, while confirming a relationship between administrator actions or surrounding teachers and teacher self-efficacy, could prompt a study regarding personality types that work best between teachers and administrators or lead teachers and classroom teachers. Similarly, a study of the psychological aspects of grouping teachers together by personality types is another recommendation. In much of the data, teachers

briefly mentioned not working well with teachers who had very different personality types from their own. Studying how the various personality types that are grouped together impact a teacher's sense of self-efficacy would provide for further information in helping teachers in this profession. Such a multi-faceted study could examine in more detail teachers who profess to be extroverted versus introverted in the classroom and how that affects student learning as well as interaction with colleagues.

A final recommendation would be a study regarding the age of a teacher and changes in self-efficacy. The average age of the teachers in the present study is approximately 35-40. No novice teachers were included in this research, which would have provided for an entirely different study in terms of new teachers, mentors, surrounding teachers, and self-efficacy in teaching. A study of novice teachers would provide further implications that student teaching experiences and mentors influence a teacher's sense of self-efficacy. Interviewing groups of teachers of varying ages would provide for interesting data in terms of whether or not self-efficacy improves or worsens with age. Furthermore, this study could stimulate research into the area of how self-efficacy is affected by student teaching during their first few years of teaching. Of the teachers in the current study, all of whom have been teaching for more than 5 years, they say that their student teaching experiences no longer negatively affect their self-efficacy in the classroom.

While dissecting the data in this study, I encountered some of the recurrent themes mentioned in this section. Several of these topics would make excellent focus ideas for future studies, and the results could be used in conjunction with this study to better the field of education.

Implications of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore the perception of self-efficacy in teachers who have taught for more than 5 years, in the hopes of enabling teachers, policy makers, college professors, and administrators to help foster an environment with teachers that allows for growth in this area. Specific recommendations to those who are teachers or who have an impact on teachers include the following:

Implementing a program specifically to teach students about respecting others, including the school and the teachers, as well as teaching the students about their responsibilities and rights in the school, would all contribute to the students showing higher levels of respect. When students show greater respect for others, the teachers' self-efficacy level increases (Covell et al., 2009). The participants involved in the current study on self-efficacy reported that they desired to be appreciated by their students, as well as by their administrators and surrounding teachers.

Teachers desire to be appreciated by their administrators. Many teachers reported that the administrators had a great impact on their self-efficacy beliefs. Cenkseven-Onder and Sari (2009) noted that when an administrator is a good leader, the teachers have a greater sense of satisfaction. Teachers in this study repeatedly mentioned that administrators influenced their self-efficacy. This finding implies that administrators should acknowledge teachers' desire to be heard, to be allowed to speak and have a voice, to be respected, and to be treated fairly. For example, administrators could simply send notes of encouragement, leave small tokens of appreciation in the teachers' boxes, or give the teachers small benefits, such as simply allowing them to wear jeans on special occasions. The extension of appreciation does not need to be expensive to be effective.

Confidence in teaching and in the subject matter was a great factor in determining teacher self-efficacy. Administrators and higher educators need to ensure that the teachers have a strong knowledge of their content matter. Teachers need to be specifically trained in what they teach, either with a college degree in that area, with the passing of the Praxis test, or through professional learning opportunities provided by the school or community. Teachers need to be allowed to attend their professional conferences, paid for by the school or school system.

Many teachers who were self-proclaimed introverts admitted to being exhausted at the end of the day. To these teachers, teaching leaves them feeling drained and lacking energy. Perhaps in college courses, the students could be exposed to more opportunities to teach in the classroom, such as student teaching in the first or second year for brief periods, to ensure that the student teachers do want to enter into this specific profession. Many students are sent through education programs in college only to learn that they are not comfortable in front of a large body of students.

Administrators need to be present and aware of interactions between groups of teachers in schools. Greater care needs to be placed in grouping teachers on teams. Many teachers reported that those teachers around them greatly influence their self-efficacy. While administrators are often aware of toxic groups of teachers, they are often left alone and not split up. Greater care needs to be placed in either moving teachers between grade levels as needed or in rotating teams of teachers. Teachers who are surrounded by negative peers are limited in what they can accomplish (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Administrators and teachers need to work on creating a sense of community among teachers, perhaps providing optional social interactions outside of school, making posters

and charts introducing teachers to the school, or sending out newsletters praising the accomplishments of the teachers in the school. The teachers interviewed desired a sense of community.

Physical and spiritual exercise was mentioned by teachers several times throughout the interviews, focus groups, and essay questions. A recommendation for those surrounding teachers would be to provide opportunities before or after school for teachers to improve their health, such as allowing them to use the workout facilities in the school, having someone come in from the community who could teach a yoga or exercise class for a low cost, or providing support groups for walking or running clubs. Many teachers also mentioned religion in helping them to feel more self-efficacious. The suggestions for this aspect would vary between public and private schools, allowing time for Bible study or prayer time when and where allowed.

Conclusion

Self-efficacy refers to the belief of teachers that they can teach the students regardless of external factors (such as the environment or their families) that impact their daily lives (Jennett et al., 2003). The primary purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' beliefs about self-efficacy and its impact on their persistence in the teaching profession. Teachers face challenges every day trying to meet the needs of students, academically and socially.

The present study gave the participants an opportunity to voice their opinions about the impact of teacher self-efficacy on persistence in the teaching profession as well as giving them a chance to state the factors they feel impact self-efficacy. This study investigated the perceptions and viewpoints of secondary teachers on self-efficacy and

persistence in the teaching profession by revealing the voices from 12 teachers. The present study's findings added to the understanding of how to improve teacher self-efficacy. The present study supported the literature that states that the self-efficacy of teachers affects student achievement (Corkett et al., 2011; Grant et al., 2011; Schwackhamer et al., 2009). The data gathered from these participants in the present study also supported Bandura's (1986) research regarding social-cognitive theory, which proved that environmental influences, cognitive thoughts, and behavioral actions cannot change without affecting the other.

Research suggests that when teachers are in a supervisory position or a position of leadership, they have a higher sense of self-efficacy (Lev & Koslowsky, 2008). Therefore, as a result of this study, I hope that administrators and other department heads or lead teachers will hearken to those on the frontlines, the teachers, and allow them to serve in positions where they are more likely to be heard. In addition, I believe more teachers should be placed in teacher-leadership roles within their schools to promote improved self-efficacy. Furthermore, in order to cultivate higher teacher self-efficacy, administrative staff and lead-teachers should provide a forum for positive discussions, utilize anonymous teacher surveys and student surveys on teachers, and conduct more one-on-one discussions with the teachers.

The overarching intent of my recommendations is to create a less stressful workplace for the teacher, resulting in a more productive educational environment for the students. Scholars have noted that teachers with a stronger sense of self-efficacy experience less teacher stress than those with lower levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

As Kai noted,

I believe that self-efficacy has a large impact on whether a teacher remains in the profession... Teaching can be grueling at times. There is never enough money or time or space. Those challenges can be tough to overcome. Without a feeling of self-efficacy, they could be challenges not worth fighting to overcome.

Teachers must be given the opportunity to experience success and to feel that they are supported by administration, other teachers, and friends and family in order to allow them the opportunity to feel more efficacious, thus validating their beliefs. In allowing teachers to express their voices regarding self-efficacy, teachers mentioned the areas that impact them, such as administration, outside activities, other teachers, and subject knowledge. I believe allowing the teachers to work on improving their self-efficacy will help them to persist in the teaching profession.

Finally, future research in the areas of self-efficacy and persistence in teaching, as well as the nature of the association between the two domains, could produce valuable information for those committed to understanding and improving teacher self-efficacy. Scholarly findings in these areas could subsequently impact future generations of teachers by engaging stakeholders in meaningful discourse that creates substantive change.

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APPENDIX A. IRB APPROVAL LETTER

December 6, 2012

Shana Market Norton

IRB Approval 1450.120612: A Phenomenological Investigation into the Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Teachers Who Have Persisted in the Teaching Profession

Dear Shana,

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. 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**
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APPENDIX B. INFORMED CONSENT

DISSERTATION RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

**A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE SELF-EFFICACY
BELIEFS OF TEACHERS WHO HAVE PERSISTED IN THE TEACHING
PROFESSION**

Shana Market Norton
Liberty University, College of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of teacher self-efficacy. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently teaching at Jefferson Middle School where the study takes place and you have been teaching here for more than 5 years. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Shana Market Norton, Visual Arts Instructor at Jefferson Middle School and a student at Liberty University, College of Education

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is: to see what impacts self-efficacy (how a teacher feels about what they teach and what influence they have on the students) in teachers and how it impacts the teacher staying in the teaching profession.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: sign a consent form, participate in a one-on-one interview that will be audio-recorded with Shana Market Norton before or after school for approximately one hour, rate ten statements on a scale of one to four, which will take approximately five minutes, participate in one focus group, which will be a group of teachers meeting after school for an audio-recorded interview for approximately one hour, and fill out approximately four open-ended questions via email or a typed response, which could take from 15 minutes to an hour.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

This research has minimal risks to the participant. No one is being pressured to participate. The researcher's relationship with the participant will be unchanged whether or not you choose to participate.

There are no monetary benefits for participating in this study. The benefits are that you will know that you will be contributing to the body of knowledge regarding teacher persistence and self-efficacy in teaching. This study seeks to provide insight into changes that can be made to improve experiences for other teachers. This study's findings can be

used to aid administrators, teachers, and college professors in building a staff of teachers who enjoy teaching, thereby remaining in the teaching profession.

Compensation:

Participants will not be compensated for their time or participation in this study. This is completely voluntary.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only researchers will have access to the records. The records, notes, and data from interviews, questions, or observations will be kept locked in a closet, on the researcher's flash drive under password protection, or on the computer under password protection. The confidentiality of the focus group cannot be guaranteed due to the fact that other participants will be involved. The importance of confidentiality will be stressed to each participant before they are involved in the focus group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Liberty University or Jefferson Middle School. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

You have the full right to withdraw from this study, and all information will be permanently deleted or erased. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you may contact me, Shana Norton, via email (snorton@jeffcityschools.org or georgiamrkt@yahoo.com), in person, or via telephone contact at (404) 434-8785.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Shana Market Norton. You may ask any questions that you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact them at Jefferson Middle School, 404-434-8785 (Shana Norton's cell), georgiamrkt@yahoo.com. You may also contact my supervising professor/chair, Dr. Randy Tierce, Liberty University, krtierce@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

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

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

_____ Please initial here if you agree to have your voice audio recorded during the interview and focus group components of this research.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Please place this signed form in my box or you may hand it to me personally. Thanks.

APPENDIX C. TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

(Schwarzer, Schmitz, & Daytner, 1999)

1. I am convinced that I am able to successfully teach all relevant subject content to even the most difficult students.
2. I know that I can maintain a positive relationship with parents even when tensions arise.
3. When I try really hard, I am able to reach even the most difficult students.
4. I am convinced that, as time goes by, I will continue to become more and more capable of helping to address my students' needs.
5. Even if I get disrupted while teaching, I am confident that I can maintain my composure and continue to teach well.
6. I am confident in my ability to be responsive to my students' needs even if I am having a bad day.
7. If I try hard enough, I know that I can exert a positive influence on both the personal and academic development of my students.
8. I am convinced that I can develop creative ways to cope with system constraints (such as budget cuts and other administrative problems) and continue to teach well.
9. I know that I can motivate my students to participate in innovative projects.
10. I know that I can carry out innovative projects even when I am opposed by skeptical colleagues.

Response format:

(1) not at all true, (2) barely true, (3) moderately true, (4) exactly true

APPENDIX D. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (adapted from Fisher, 2009)

1. How many years have you been a teacher? At how many schools have you taught?
2. How old are you? What is your family/marital status?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. Have you taught at other schools? Do you think that your stress level was different at each school? If yes, what is different about each school? Why do you think that one job was more or less stressful than the others?
5. Do you believe that you can make a difference in a child's life?
6. What part of the children's lives do you feel that you have the most impact on?
7. Why do you think that this is so?
8. Do you feel that other teachers around you and how they feel about teaching, affects your personal feelings of self-efficacy in the classroom? Have you ever worked somewhere where you were surrounded by people with low self-efficacy, and did this affect your level of self-efficacy?
9. When you get home from school, what do you do to decompress and relieve your mind from the stressors of the day? Do you feel that this helps you to feel efficacious in the classroom?
10. Do you think that your administration helps or do they worsen your self-efficacy level or beliefs in your ability to teach? Why? How? What can administrators do to improve you self-efficacy in teaching?
11. What makes you want to leave the profession?
12. What convinces you to stay in the profession?

13. Have you ever gone so far as to apply for other jobs?
14. Were they in or out of education?
15. Do you think that the need for a teacher in your subject area is the same as other areas? Why or why not? How are they different?
16. Do you feel effectual in helping to create high test scores with your students on Federal and State tests?
17. Does communicating with parents help you to feel as though you can achieve more with the students in terms of grades, social responsibilities, etc.?
18. Please describe your personality. Do you consider yourself an extrovert or introvert? Why so?
19. Does this (your) personality type help or hinder you in the classroom?
20. If you said that you were an introvert, does teaching leave you exhausted at the end of the day? What career path might not?
21. Do your feelings of self-efficacy keep you in the classroom? If not, what keeps you in the classroom?
22. Do you think that your level of self-efficacy, or feeling as if you really make a difference in the students' lives, really impacts student achievement?
23. What factors outside of personality add to or take away from you feeling efficacious in the classroom? (For example, whether or not you exercise, participate in religious activities, attend further schooling, have a family or do not have a family, are married or not, how the administration treats you, groups of teachers around you, etc.)
24. Is there anything else that you would want me to know in regard to how successfully you feel that you can make an impact on the students' lives?

APPENDIX E. SAMPLE INTERVIEW

Kai Raw Data.

Transcript Interview 1

January 15, 2013

S: So, how many years have you been a teacher and at how many schools have you taught?

K: I've been a teacher, this is my 6th year. I have taught at Jones Middle School and Jones High School.

S: How old are you and what is your family/marital/friend status?

K: I am 31 and I'm not married, but I guess dating. Does that count? For a long time. Almost 5 years.

S: What is your highest degree and from where?

K: I have a Masters Degree in Music with an emphasis in Vocal Pedagogy from Columbus State.

S: You had not taught at any other schools besides these two with different administration. At different schools, do you think that your administration is different at different schools and if yes, then what is different?

K: It can be. My own stress level is, has been different between, you know, Mr. Mac was here and then Ms. Corbett and then Mr. Wester. At the high school, the administration seems so far removed that I never see them, so that doesn't really affect how I feel stress wise, I guess.

S: That's less stressful having them so far removed?

K: I guess that it kind of is, but then at, you always hear that it's a positive thing that administrators drop in and they are there to support and they don't do that at all. I don't know.

S: Do you believe that you can make a dif. In a child's life?

K: I think so, most of the time. I don't think so for every single one of them, though. For some of them, yes.

S: What part of their lives do you think that you have the most impact on, personal, moral, etc.

K: At times, I think that I have more of an academic impact on them more than anything else. I don't know what other teachers do, but I ask them a lot about their grades and what they are doing and if they did their homework and that kind of thing. A lot of students act as though or respond in a way that makes me think that other teachers haven't asked them or aren't interested? So, that way for sure. I don't know any other way, really.

S: Do you feel that the other teachers around you and now, this is scary, because I'm it, do you feel that other teachers around you and their attitudes about teaching affect your personal feelings about SE in the classroom?

K: I don't think so, really. I think that sometimes actually, people that are constantly hallmark card positive kind of intimidate me a little bit, so I'm not comfortable talking to somebody if they are too happy. It's just awkward, kind of, for me, but I would much rather have somebody that I can vent to in a second, of like frustration or whatever, and then go away and they are like, okay, we're here. We're going to do it anyway, that kind of thing, versus all or nothing. I think the same thing would be true for an entirely negative person, but I really haven't had that experience.

S: Whenever you get home from school, what do you do to decompress and relieve your mind from the stressors of the day? What makes you feel more effective in the classroom the next day?

K: Um, really, I'm busy a lot. I don't stop a lot, but I don't do schoolwork at home. I just can't. I have to let it go. I have noticed the past couple of years, I don't listen to music in my car when I leave right at first, because I don't, I need a second to not hear it all day long. I do have a drive. When I go to rehearsal, even though I'm still working, kind of, it's stress relieving, because it's for me. (The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus). I sometimes do that four or five nights a week (she drives 70 miles to Atlanta after school).

S: Do you feel that makes you more effective in the classroom?

K: Yes. It helps me to stay on my toes and to know what I'm doing musically and to see music. None of my students would sing stuff that's that difficult at this level, so, yeah.

S: So, this one we kind of covered, but do you think that your administration, here, in the past, at the high school, whatever, or even at some of your outside jobs, would they help or hinder your self-efficacy level or your beliefs in your ability to teach? How much of an impact do they have on that?

K: I think that I would like to say that they don't have a lot of impact. I would LOVE to say that it's just what you believe about yourself that matters the most. I know that there are specific times when I've done the right thing, or even handled a situation, or even let things go where I just needed to separate a student or needed to make them be quiet or something and they have not seen it as I have. I have walked away from that situation not feeling supported or backed up. That makes me feel like I've done something wrong. It

was just me and the student. Control of the classroom is essential, so, I walked away feeling not supported or backed up, and also not knowing what else to do. So, not really with, oh, I should have done it differently.

S: There were no guided instructions on what that you should have done differently if they think that you should have? What makes you want to leave the profession or stay in?

K: I am leaving this school for sure. In general, education seems like it is a race to be the same to me, like, there is, you know, there are standardized test scores that matter and these benchmark things that matter, and everybody is trying to meet that, but that's not how I remember growing up learning or being educated. I was so affected or impacted by teachers in my life that were determined to reach and go higher and go farther and figure stuff out, not just from music teachers, but my English teachers in high school were just that kind of person. So, in general, not really here necessarily, it just seems like so much of what we do is making things equal, or not equal, but appearing that they are equal and not really pushing to learn. And that is boring to me.

S: Right, everyone being the same.

K: Yeah, so that makes me not love the idea of education. The act of teaching I like, making somebody figure out that they can do something that they didn't know they could is fun to me. I like that. That part of the actual, what you're doing in your classroom and seeing it work, seeing somebody learn and figure it out, that's exciting and makes me want to stay, but...

S: If you got a job in education again, that would be it, why you were drawn back into it? Have you ever gone so far as to apply for other jobs and were they in or out of education?

K: Um hm. But, I don't think that I have applied, well, I have. I have applied for other jobs in arts administration, too. Like, um, administrative type of things for a non-profit organization, like the symphony or that type of thing. I have looked at those and have definitely applied for other teaching jobs.

S: But your jobs have revolved around music, your love.

K: Um, hm.

S: Do you think that the need for a teacher in you subject area is the same as in other areas? Is there a greater need for chorus teachers versus math or whatever?

K: I think that's part of the problem that I have with education in general. It seems like certain areas are more important than others, and, I don't spend my life researching, but when I do run across something from Europe or even other areas of the world that are kind of outperforming us in terms of education, it doesn't seem like they place such, um, priority on some subjects, or maybe they do, but it's at a younger age, they are on a different track, they handle it differently. It's problematic for the teacher to know that there is a hierarchy, especially a fine arts teacher, to know that you are at the bottom of the barrel. There is a whole national push for healthy weight and fitness and that kind of thing, so, whereas maybe at one point, it was music and PE and art, were altogether. It doesn't even feel that way. It feels like EVERYTHING comes before the arts. I guess it comes down to how you're managing what education means to me. I think that it's a well-rounded kid that is going to succeed and I've done a lot of research about music and fine arts and how it impacts decision making and problem solving and that kind of thing. That's the kind of person that I want to work for me one day. I don't necessarily want a multiple choice, perfect bubbler.

S: Do you think that knowing that nowadays impacts how you are as a teacher? Has it started to beat down on you?

K: Um hm, absolutely.

S: Do you feel like you have an impact on state and federal tests?

K: I don't really. I think that the study of music can impact that, but I really think that you teach music from elementary up and it hugely impacts test scores, but when it's forgotten for six years and started at grade six, it really doesn't impact anything, I don't think.

S: When you communicate with parents, does it make you feel like you can accomplish more with grades or performance? Social responsibilities and all of that?

K: Um, personally, I am afraid of parents.

S: You're not the first to say that.

K: That's good to know. They scare me and I don't know if administration plays a role in that. I feel like the way that the culture of the school would dictate the way that you feel in talking to a parent. I think that because I'm not quite as old as some of the parents, though probably some of them, I am, I don't know. That makes me feel like I don't know enough to be correcting or saying something or whatever, but that is just a personal issue with me and I'm needing to get over that. It's hard when you see other situations or your own situation where teacher's version of whatever happens or the teachers that count or whatever student's behavior consistently in the classroom means nothing, but the parent who is not here wins. Or the kid who is here and causing destruction wins. That's difficult to overcome.

S: Does this cause you to think that...

K: I think that it comes back to administration. I really do.

S: Um, so this part has to do with being an introvert or extrovert. Please describe your personality and if you think that you're an in or an extrovert.

K: I think that I'm an introvert. I like to be social, but I'm an introvert first. I think that, I think that I have to put on a little bit of an act in the classroom, especially in the beginning of the semester or a new class that isn't hugely comfortable for me. Once it's over with, I get to know them and we, um, interact well, more on an extroverted type of level, but it's a process for me for sure.

S: Do you think that your personality type helps or hinders you in the classroom, you being an introvert?

K: Um, I think that so far, at least in my experience, it hasn't helped. I don't know that it has hindered, but it definitely hasn't helped.

S: If you are an introvert, does teaching leave you exhausted during the day?

K: Yes. Some days.

S: In looking at other jobs, what other jobs might not leave you as exhausted?

K: I don't know that I'm an expert in career paths. Sometimes I just want a career that I can do it the way that I think that it should be done without having to interact. That's not how I always am, so it's confusing. I think that my personality is so geared towards, and this is totally because of my teachers, but mostly the teachers that I can remember anyway. When you finish something that you can do better, a constant improving, I guess. That has not really felt like it was celebrated. So, sometimes I go home and just want to check out some boxes. Sent emails, contacted people, okay, I'm done and now I can go home. Cubicle type work or something? I don't know what path that is, but I feel

like there is less... why are you pressuring people to be better than they are, or some weird thing that I don't mean to be negative, that's been perceived as negative. I've experienced that kind of teaching as, you've done a really good job, but here is what can happen to make it better, and it wasn't negative for me growing up. It was helpful to me, so that's kind of how I teach, but that doesn't seem like that's the way that kids are done today.

S: Do your feelings of self-efficacy keep you in the classroom? Knowing that you make a difference? If not, what keeps you in the classroom?

K: I don't really know if I could say that my feelings of being affective have kept it. My love of music has kept me in the classroom so far, until I crumbled.

S: You still might be in education.

K: Yeah, so I don't know. I don't know that, I definitely remember as a student thinking that my teachers made a bigger difference on me than I feel that I've made on my students.

S: Do you think that your level of self-efficacy really impacts student achievement? Whether or not you feel effective?

K: I can see that as an academic teacher. I think that my love of music really affects how they are successful in my class.

S: This is the last one. What factors outside of personality add to or take away from you feeling effective in the classroom?

K: Personally, I think that exercise, religious activities, that kind of thing, like, if it makes you as a person outside of the classroom feel better, then you probably feel better all of the time. You will probably bring that to the classroom. Further schooling would make

you know more, reach more, change what you do, and, you know, be creative on the spot, so that definitely would help. Having a family, I think could, I think that it just could split your focus a lot, not that I think that there is anything wrong with that. I don't. In fact, I think that it's great to not feel like you have to donate your entire existence to your job. I do feel like that sometimes we are expected to if we don't have children. If you don't have children, then you don't have a good enough reason to leave at 3:30. Administration for me has been huge. That first year for me, I thought that it was a really nice, warm family type of environment. That changed dramatically for me and then there was a wall that was built up between me and I think that has to do with my personality, too. Because I'm an introverted person, that felt like, uncomfortable for me. It was easier for me to turn the other way, or not, do you know what I mean? Not try to fight anymore after a few years of that.

S: You stuck it out for a while.

K: Yeah.

S: Anything else that you want to add?

K: If you have more, though, call me or ask me.

END TRANSCRIPTION

APPENDIX F. OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

(ANSWERS TO BE WRITTEN BY PARTICIPANTS)

Please write your opinion(s) to the following questions. Please feel free to write as much or as little as you would like. Please also remember that answers are confidential. You may hand write them, type them, or send them via email. I also have a private email that you may send it to at georgiamrkt@yahoo.com. This will not be filtered by the school system.

5. What is your perception of how self-efficacy influences your remaining in the teaching profession? (For example, if you feel that you do have an impact on the students and that you feel confident in the classroom, does that keep you in the teaching profession?)
6. Do you feel that your self-efficacy in teaching impacts the students' achievement?
7. What personality traits do you feel add to your positive or negative self-efficacy in teaching?
8. What factors do you identify as influencing your professional self-efficacy? (outside circumstances, number of students, religion, pre-service teaching experiences, etc.)

APPENDIX G. SAMPLE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Kai

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

(ANSWERS TO BE WRITTEN BY PARTICIPANTS)

Please write your opinion(s) to the following questions. Please feel free to write as much or as little as you would like. Please also remember that answers are confidential. You may hand write them, type them, or send them via email. I also have a private email that you may send it to at georgiamrkt@yahoo.com. This will not be filtered by the school system.

1. What is your perception of how self-efficacy influences your remaining in the teaching profession? (For example, if you feel that you do have an impact on the students and that you feel confident in the classroom, does that keep you in the teaching profession?)

I believe that Self-Efficacy has a large impact on whether a teacher remains in the profession. The students are at the center of what we, as teachers, do each day. Our feelings of impact on their lives matter to us. That being said, it has been my experience that a supportive administration, or rather a non-supportive administration can completely change the feeling of effectiveness. Teaching can be a grueling experience at times. There is never enough money or time or space. Those challenges can be tough to overcome. Without a feeling of self-efficacy, they could be challenges not worth fighting to overcome.

2. Do you feel that your self-efficacy in teaching impacts the students' achievement?

Of course. Without the belief that what you are doing is effective, achievement in any field is less than likely. People want to have a reward attached to things they put forth effort in order to accomplish. In teaching, the reward may be as simple as believing that despite a rough lesson or a poorly performed test, the students will reach a point of success whatever that measure might be – a certain percentage of students who exceed expectations on a standardized test, a successful concert, 100% passing averages for

the class... etc.

3. What personality traits do you feel add to your positive or negative self-efficacy in teaching?

One personality trait that I believe can both beneficial and negative in the field of teaching is perfectionism. I have met/known many teachers who were high achieving students themselves – the kind of students who would put pressure on themselves to work harder even if the grade was already an A. The level of importance placed on being the best can help a teacher work tirelessly to achieve (and thereby help his/her students achieve) regardless of challenge along the way. This can also have a negative impact if the teacher feels disheartened if his/her goal for the students was not met.

4. What factors do you identify as influencing your professional self-efficacy? (outside circumstances, number of students, religion, pre-service teaching experiences, etc.)

My personal professional self-efficacy has been influenced by many of the listed factors.

Since I began teaching (2007) numbers of students in class has grown substantially. It has been difficult to provide students with the individual attention that I once was able to provide, and continue to believe the students need and deserve. Large class size also affects the ability to manage the classroom in terms of behavior. More students are simply more difficult to have eyes and ears on at all times.

As a teacher of a fine arts course, my passion for my subject matter has affected my self-efficacy positively and negatively. On one hand I believe in what I'm teaching – So much that I continue to participate in performances outside of school to further enhance my own performance ability and maintain personal enjoyment in my art. At the same time, it has been difficult for me to overcome what I have perceived as lack of support or respect for the arts in general, and specifically vocal music in the district I teach. Because my heart is so tied to music, I have felt like giving up to an extent to save myself from feeling like I'm fighting a losing battle.

Outside personal circumstances affect us all. Teachers are human beings, and experience the same set backs life has to offer anyone in any field. At times it feels as though we are expected to set aside our humanity and maintain a level of perfection in terms of our demeanor. This is a high expectation that admittedly may be self-inflicted.

APPENDIX H. FOCUS GROUP OUTLINE OF QUESTIONS

1. Please tell us your name, what you teach, and how many years you have been teaching.
2. Think back to when you first started teaching. Did you feel as if you were making an impact on the students' lives? Why or why not?
3. How did you feel the first few weeks of teaching?
4. Do you think that your self-efficacy, or how effective you feel that you are in the classroom, determines whether or not you remain in teaching?
5. Why do you continue to teach?
6. What personality characteristics do you feel impact a teacher's level of self-efficacy about teaching?
7. Think of a teacher who believes that they make a difference in the students' lives. Describe their personality.
8. What do you think that teachers would say impacts your self-efficacy in teaching? Having a mentor? Seeing grades improve? Students listening to you? Students coming back to visit you? Various personality traits within the teacher?
9. What makes someone's self-efficacy in teaching improve?

APPENDIX I. SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP

1.23.13

Please speak loudly. If you'll go around and say your name, years taught, and subject.

K: Okay. I'm Kai and I teach Chorus. This is my 6th year.

D: My name is David and I have taught, I teach Mathematics for 7 years.

Liz: My name is Liz and I teach everything, math, gifted, remedial

D: Everybody

Shana: For 6 years

Sarah: I am Sarah and I have taught 6th grade for 23 years! (all- wooah!). I'm only 35, too!

David: You look great!

S: What you have to do for the sake of the notes is to say your name before the answer. Think back to when you first started teaching. As a new teacher, did you think that you made an impact on the students' lives at that time?

L: I'm Liz. Yes, I did. If I hadn't have thought that, I wouldn't have gone into teaching, so yes, very idealistic, probably, to an extent, um, I still felt that way sometimes. Um, but yes. I would not have gone into teaching if I did not feel that way.

Sarah: Sarah. Actually was Liz's teacher and I saw her in the beginning and she was very eager to please and do what needed to be done, so I think that I agree with your saying that, but yes, I did, too. I felt like that. I wanted to make a difference.

S: Abby has joined us. We have to scream! So, talk loud! ☺ And you will all have surnames on the real thing.

D: Um, this is D. I would say yes, but probably in a different way than most recently. I think that when I first started teaching, I had less of an impact on the personal side of children, being the understanding what a middle school student thinks and feels, but yeah. Yes, but differently.

Kai: I would say yes, but kind of opposite. I think in the beginning, when I was just starting, I felt like I affected them personally more than I did musically. Let's be honest. I spent the first whole year turning music right side up! They literally had it upside down.

Abby: Abby... um... I felt, I would say no. I feel like I was trying to survive when I first started teaching. It was more about me making sure that I knew what was expected of me and I was preparing them for standardized tests and doing what I needed to do as a first-year teacher as opposed to how I feel now.

Shana: Did your mentor teacher/student teaching experience have any impact on how you felt when you first started teaching?

Liz: This is Liz. Mine did. It's interesting because I'm sitting in the room with someone who I talked my first year with and someone who I kind of did my mentor teaching with, so I'm in a fun experience where this is the only place that I've ever taught. So, I was comfortable coming into this school. I felt safe, I felt like I was able to go to people. I'm not scared to ask questions, I'm not scared to ask for help, I was, I feel like, it helped me in that I felt comfortable because I knew that I could go to people for help. It was scaaaary, but that made me more comfortable if that makes sense.

Abby: This is Abby. But my experience, um, was totally different as a student. As my student teaching experience was almost a joke. The other teachers laughed that my teacher actually had someone with her for student teaching. So, um, she was a very

interesting teacher and when I came here, I worked with Jennifer McAuley and so she took me under her wings and it was a breeze making the transition (she's the TOTY from the past- science teacher).

Kai: I had an interesting student teaching experience. She was a super, super, super sweet person and very disorganized and kind of all over the place. The principal at that school in Columbus, GA would come to me at times to get things done for that program, instead of my regular teacher, which was fine, I mean, I did a whole lot of stuff on my own, so I mean, the question is if that experience had an effect on me for preparation or how you felt effective in the classroom. I guess that it was kind of all mine. It prepared me.

L: Was she upset about that?

K: No, she was just really nice all of the time.

D: The first few years of teaching here was very stressful. I didn't like it, not the school, but my student teaching experience just didn't relate, or seg-way well to what I was thrown into. I student taught with only very high level advanced kids, so I came here and, obviously that wasn't the case. So, it wasn't the best experience. I couldn't understand why when I first said something, it wouldn't be done. That wasn't what I saw at the other schools. They just did it and without being asked usually. So, I was having to get used to that and just kind of live with that. It was a stressful first few weeks.

(interruption- intercom)

Sarah: It has been a long time, but I had a great mentor and it was actually in a different situation than what I'm in now. It was very, um, special needs kids and, um, the way that she handled herself with these children was really amazing and I think that it really made me find the love of working with children who needed extra help. And, I actually saw her

last year. The mentor teacher, after 23 years and she knew who I was and she already retired, but she was still working. That was, uh, in Athens, GA.

Shana: The next part, you mostly answered this in your individual interviews, but if you will talk about what personality characteristics you feel impact the teachers' level of self-efficacy or what personality characteristics contribute to someone being a successful teacher?

David: I would say that, um, patience... you have got to have patience, which I didn't have a whole lot of in 2006, but my inclusion teacher (Liz) taught me a lot about that. She was good and I think that from Liz, I learned more than from anyone else that you have got to have patience with these kids. That's what I didn't have the first year. It just wasn't a good year. I think that a willingness to look beyond the student in front of you. If there is a willingness to understand just a little bit about where that student comes from and what he or she is dealing with outside of the 70 minutes you see them, then I think that it leads to a better understanding of the kid and, um, makes me a little more patient.

L: We set the tone, for the classroom. If I have a bad day, and I bring it in the classroom, and again, I think that being a co-teacher and having the experience of working with other people, and, you know, seeing myself and seeing other people and what works and what doesn't work, I've tried to put all of this in my bag or whatnot, and reflect upon it. We do affect the classroom and set the tone. Like D said, they bring so much from home and who they are and culture is not just a skin color. It's not just a whatever. It's who they are at home, what they are expected to do... and I have learned that over the years. And you know, it's, I try to mold my classroom around them instead of them to me now.

And so, definitely I feel like I do have an impact on them and my teaching. And goodness gracious, I'm such an extrovert it's not funny which is bad sometimes!

Abby: This is Abby and I feel similar to what D and L said. Um, at how important it is to recognize someone's background. What I've noticed about myself is being an extrovert, I have found that if I'm honest and I communicate with students, how I feel and what I expect, umm, if I'm having a bad day or whatever, they will do the same for me and so they will come in and let me know if they are having a bad day so that I don't misinterpret it as being rude or disrespectful, or if you have something going on at home the night before, um, those types of things, and I feel that as I, um, grow as a teacher, I have begun to recognize difficulty maybe that I didn't necessarily address starting out. It was kind of, you come to my class, you do my work, the end. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it, and now, I feel like I've opened up. Communication somewhat, so get to know me, come to talk to me, let's figure out how can we accomplish so that everyone is happy.

K: My major professor at graduate school said something all the time that was really obvious, but she always said that in her teaching, and in her supervising of student teachers and that kind of thing, she saw teachers get so wrapped up in their lesson or their delivery or their rules or their boxes that they have to check off and all of that stuff that they kind of lost the fact that there is a room full of people, not tests or scores, or grades, or whatever. I think that I'm, just that basic understanding that you're a person and they are people and those are kind of similar in that respect. Communicate in that way. Um, can help. And none of us are perfect, the students or the teachers.

Shana: Do you guys think that whether or not you are effective impacts student achievement impacts the student achievement? You kind of covered that. If you feel it that day or not?

L: Definitely.

Shana: This can be a big conversation, what do you think makes someone's self-efficacy in teaching improve? We've talked individually, but what are some things that we can bring into the classroom that would make ourselves more effective?

Sarah: This is Sarah. I've taught at 7 different schools, ranging from kindergarten through middle school and also private school as well. I really think that the only time that I was truly unhappy with teaching, not my teaching, but with teaching, was the year that I did not feel the, uh, administrators had my back. And that was actually at the private school, but I think that at other private schools it would have been okay. I think that at this particular one, it was not. They allowed parents too much control as far as even changing grades. They let them... That was really a scary situation. That was the only year out of my 24 that I have not enjoyed teaching. I think that it has to start with administration. Now, all of the rest of that could factor in, but I really think that you have to be respectful of your administrators and if you aren't, then you are in the wrong place, or they are, but chances are that you'd better go before they do.

A: This is Abby. I was going to say that number of students as well as the diversity of students. When I first started teaching, I don't know, maybe 22 was a large class and you had students who would do what you, what you asked them to do. And just because you said do it, and I remember, maybe like, a year or two later, I would do the same thing and students wouldn't respond and I can remember, you know, going home pondering, how

do I reach these students, because I'm doing the same thing that has worked for me and now it's not working, I'm not seeing the same results and so I remember, you know, trying to... change... a little of who I was to relate more to students and so, letting them know, okay, well, maybe we do listen to the same type of music or we do like going to the same places, kind of making a connection to them to motivate them internally because they didn't have it, you know, as opposed to the students that I first started teaching with who just did it because you asked. (silence...)

D: This is David. I would say that I agree with Sarah. That's the first thing that I thought. For me to be effective, I like administrators that I know are there somewhere. I really don't like them around me necessarily, but, with respect to... (someone was called over announcements). I would not appreciate somebody that micromanaged me and always having to, you know, make my own decisions, but if something happened, I like to feel comfortable going to them and knowing that, you know, I can get a resolution that will be...

Sarah: It may not be the resolution that you want, but knowing that they tried, that they listened to your side of it, you might be wrong, I've not been right all of the time... most of the time.

D: I would say, exercise, religion, I just thought about your home life. If your home life is in order, and you don't have crises there, I think that you're going to be more effective in the classroom and I think that I've seen that here and certainly everywhere else. A teacher will come in and something has happened, a situation has arisen, and "I don't want to be here. This is going to be a bad day." Somewhere this is going to come out, in your lesson,

in your interaction with the kids, and sometimes you can't control what happens, but doing your best to keep an even keel at home to me is important in being effective here.

L: I'm such a, exercise is such an important part of my life, as is religion, and if I'm not right with God, if I'm not right with my running, if I'm not exercising, I am NOT happy. I am not happy at all. And, maybe that...

D: It comes out.

L: It does come out. And so, you know, I do bring it into the classroom and it's... I'm a much happier person exercising and, and again, it's just the whole deal.

S: You mentioned religion. Interestingly enough, though, the school that I hated the most that I really felt insignificant in, was a religious school.

L: Really?

S: Yes... as religious as I think that I am, I clashed with the, some of the... the belief systems that they had. Even though, it was my same belief system, but that pretty much clashed, so it, I felt it interesting that religion be in this part of it, because, you know, I think that I'm, I feel like I'm religious, but, um, you think that if you went to a school that focused on that, that you would be even happier, but that was NOT the case.

L: Talking about the administration thing, and, I feel like some of us in this school get put in positions because they know that we won't put up a fight, or there are certain people that will say yes or certain people that won't say no and there are certain... I get to the point where, like you said, you have to respect your admin or whatnot, but I feel like they also need to respect us and... it's tough sometimes to continually come in and feel like and feel like you are placated and it's manipulative and it's um, well, what do you want to do, what do you see coming, what do you see planned, well that's all good, but this is

what you are going to do. I'm almost like tell me what to do. I'm fine. I'm a team player.

I don't know. I think that a lot of stuff, maybe I'm a forced self-efficable or self-efficacy... is that it? I made that word up! I think that it's, but, I feel like that I'm...

S: Do you feel talked into things that you...? Sit back and say wait a minute?

L: I talk myself into feeling self-efficable because, I'm like, okay Liz, it is what it is...

S: To make it work.

L: I got math certified because of this... because I was..

S: A pleaser.

L: I don't have to get certified. No one can make me get math certified or gifted certified, right? I don't have to, right? You can't tell me to do that, but, I do it, and they knew that I would do it. They can put me in that position and so, I don't know. I think that if I scratched the surface, I am angry about it. You can see me getting angry about it!

K: You as a person in your daily life don't want to exist as an angry person, so you let it go, you deal with it, you make it work, but if you really analyze it, you feel, a little accused.

L: I mean, you of all people (looks around- major underlying topic with Kai), seriously, but, I would never bring that to the kids. It's not the kids' fault. I think that's why they put the people in the positions that we put them in because they know that those people will continue to do it.

D: Yes.

S: You're right.

Shana: I did ELL k-12 my first year and 7th and 8th grade art!

K: The yes people are the people that they can't say no because they will get rid of them, an art or chorus teacher, or someone who teaches at two schools for one year, but it's been five, or, there is just, and aside from any personal experience that I've had, I think that it's a commonality between a school or a business or any kind of model where you have an upper echelon of somebody in charge and then a middle tier of people who are really down there fighting the battles on a daily basis who serve another level of the population... it has to come from the top. Success is going to come from the top and success, really to me, I am talking about if it was a perfect world, for Kai, to be the people at the top want all of their people that are fighting the battle on a daily basis to feel good about themselves, to feel supported, feel backed up, feel like we care. This customer base over here, this might come in everyday and they might not on a daily basis. If I have a bad day, they might struggle, they might not care, whatever reason, but we at the top care what you in the classroom do. I can't say that is how I felt, not every day. Not every year.

L: I agree!

Abby: I do, too. Going along with what L was saying, being made to feel that you are able to do something, I don't, and maybe it's a little like bullying from the top? Maybe that was very... that was point blank. Um, because I remember the same thing in saying to administration, I cannot do this, almost in tears. I can't teach and do what all you want me to do and be a Mom and all of these other things. And it was "Yes you can! You can do it!" I'm telling you, I can't! I can't do it. In my, you know, my experience, I cannot do what you are asking me to do. Please get someone else, and it was kind of... "You can do it. You're a good Mom and you will be alright. You can do it." And so, I don't know, in

terms of, I don't feel that my self-efficacy improved. And so, I feel like administration, they can play double roles. Either they can help with it or they can hurt it because you feel that the burden is too great and you are not going to be successful and I feel like last year, I wasn't the best teacher that I could be because I had a lot on my plate and you gave me something more when I asked please give it to someone else and you said "no, like, no, you can do it. You are strong. You can handle this." And I'm telling you, "No I can't." If I'm going crazy, believe me when I'm telling you that I'm on the brink.

S: Do you mean with a co-teacher or too much work in the classroom with students?

A: In the classroom and things that, take, outside of the classroom.

Sarah: Above and beyond the call of duty.

S: Um, so, I guess changing the subject, why do we continue to teach? Why??

Sarah: It's the money, that's it! Oh, I'm sorry. Did I mean that in a funny way?

D: What money are you talking about?

S: I raise my entire family on this...

Sarah: Honestly, after 24 years, this is all that I know. It's pretty much all that I know... children are what I love, and I enjoy spending time with them, and, you know, I am closer to retirement than everyone in here, so it's what I know and what I like and I don't want to go somewhere, um, in an office and work... where you have little or no interaction, and you don't have happy faces. Bottom line, even in middle school, these kids are happy to be here most of them are happy to be here. There are a few, but, you know, you can make them happy. Give them a piece of candy and they are the happiest kid in the world, even the worst kids you've got. They are happy, and that feeds your ego. My child is in the 8th grade and she is happy to get up and go to school.

D: I would believe that, that she is.

Sarah: I know that there are children that are not, but there are children where this is the only place that they have. Some of them come here just for lunch.

L: I do, too. I agree. I love it, I enjoy it. If I didn't, I wouldn't come back. I don't teach for the adults. The adults are the hardest part of my job, dealing with adults is the hardest part. Parents, but not just parents, but I love it... I chose to leave another profession to do this. I chose to not be a stay at home mom to do this and...

(anger from everyone else in the room)

I enjoy it. I'm a working Mama and I like to teach... are you going to punch me? I wouldn't be... I would for a little bit, but Rob would kill me (her husband).

Abby: I feel that there are several... no, because I think that my situation is a little different. I don't live here, so I commute, and so, when I factor all of that in, sometimes I ask myself what are you doing? Why are you teaching, why are you giving so much of your time to other people's kids when your kid is in childcare, you know, longer than you work. Um, I think that it has changed from when I first started teaching. I remember walking into a school and saying, "This is where I am supposed to be. This is where I make a difference." As the years have progressed, I guess my self-efficacy has, I don't know if I was stupid, coming into it and thinking that I was in control of my classroom? And getting older and realizing that, okay, not so much, because someone can come in and say, "No, you're going to do this" or maybe, just experience and things... should we keep the student back? Well, they didn't do their work, so yes. Maybe I'm being undermined by those higher up and if that's, you know, coupled with lowering pay to do more than you did last year with less resources, I don't know if all of that coupled

together on top of the commute have just, I don't know, but impacted me more negatively than if I lived here and I had more time to, I don't know, maybe be a part of the community.

Shana: It adds an hour onto our day. That's it, too. The daycare is away, too.

K: With kids, you get protective of your time, your family, your friends, whereas, who knows, we don't live here, so maybe it would be the same way. I sometimes have felt, like, pulled, like I wish that I could go, I wish that I felt like I wanted to go to every meet or every game or every whatever thing, but I just don't feel that way. I really want to go home, go do whatever I am supposed to do.

L: I don't feel that way and I live in Jones, so don't feel bad about that.

Sarah: With you two being in different stages of lives, you will enjoy going to school when your children are older... teaching. Sue is about to graduate, Abby is in the 8th grade... they want you less and less in their lives. You need to be there that much. That said, your attention is on your children first. The younger they are, the more attention that you want to spend with them. I took one year off when we moved into Hilton Head and Abby was in 8th grade and that was probably the best year of my life with my children. I went back to school with that feeling of... I've gotta leave... I have to go take... It's an awful feeling for parents or moms especially to leave, but as they get older and you get to enjoy, like, my children have gone through middle schools that I have taught at, so I get to see them all of the time, whereas the normal mom is at a normal job or at home and they don't get to experience the school life part of it that you guys will be lucky enough to do. So, I mean, if you wait until they get to the middle school, some of the self-efficacy

will change a little bit. It will come around a little bit... you're torn! You are torn right now.

Shana: I've gotten two speeding tickets!

Sarah: It will break your heart.

L: I don't know how... Denton is in 2nd and Jack is in 4th...

Sarah: Wouldn't you rather sit and read a book to Denton...but you've got to let her go, too.

L: I continue to teach, too, because I like the intellectual stimulation. I do enjoy, and especially now with the math, the 8th grade math and having to relearn this new curriculum, this year has been a bear for me and, you know, and I've got this group of gifted kids, too, who constantly surprise me with the things that come out of their minds and mouths...

Sarah: You have to challenge them

L: It's funny to say that I'm intellectually stimulated by middle schoolers, but I am. You know, being in Athens, I don't know that I would drive that far, but y'all are lucky that you don't have to go to the grocery store with kids that you teach...

Sarah: I don't like teaching in my community. I don't. I never taught in my community until we moved back here. I always taught in the outside and you got away from that...

Shana: As the kids get older, I'll have to...

L: And you will. As the kids get older, they are in my classroom right now. Jack will be here in two years...

Shana: The last kind of... What do you say that teachers think that impacts your self-efficacy in the classroom? Things that would impact you feeling more effective in the classroom?

D: I would say that students coming back to visit you. I would say that. I don't know why, but they come back to tell me how difficult the math is, but they will come back and say hello. I've seen many kids come back that were, uh, this is on tape... so.... That they may have not been the best students

L: Misunderstood...

D: Misunderstood. However, they come back as a freshman, or sophomore in high school and they have matured so much. Um, they look me in the eye and shake my hand, like a young adult. And then, they will ride off. Once in a while, they will say thank you.

Sarah: Very nice.

D: For what I learned from you because it helped me in blah blah blah and I think that what you learned from me, and I pause for a moment and think, well, I didn't think, I wasn't necessarily sure that you learned anything. But,

L: I saw Rufus the other day and he said that. Santos drives... I saw him at Kroger the other day. Yes!

Abby: Um, students listening and you seeing them making connections to what you have been trying to teach them for, you know, 50 minutes, and then it finally clicks and they say "Oh!!!" and I say, okay, like I was able to reach you. Good! All is not lost and definitely students coming back to visit. Even, and it surprises me because quite a few will come back to visit and I was like, "You failed my class!" Oh, but you were this and you were that... and it's not even science. They don't come back for science, although

some will, and say I kept this, and this helped me, but sometimes, because I'm very, very much an extrovert, and I say what I feel needs to be said and I don't think a lot of them have experienced a teacher who was sometimes brutally honest with you.. and they respect it.

L: They need it.

Abby: And for me it works. I don't know if someone else would do it. I think... some of my coworkers would say, "Okay, you can do that," and it works. They respect it, and we can form a relationship and to me, it's not even about my content. I could care less about the content, did you learn something, that is going to make you a better person in general? And that makes me come back. Who can I touch today, can I say something to turn you around to make you turn into the person that I know you can be. Even though you don't see it, I see what you're capable of. Let's see if we can see what you are capable of. Then, it's not even about the content, like I said. It's the pushing them to a limit that they don't even know they can reach. And that brings me back.

D: Do you get students that you never expect to see come visit you?

Abby: I do.

D: And that's strange. It's strange, but it's nice to reflect on and see, well, obviously that whole year together, I thought that at the end of May, this kid would turn out the other road if he sees me in a car... but they are back in your room...

Shana: I've had them come back to say that I'm sorry that I acted that way in your class.

D: It's nice to know... even though I didn't think that we got along, I didn't think that you learned much, but apparently you did.

L: To me, I equate that with coaching because coaching is such a big part of what I do... and it's easy to coach the ones who are excellent runners and who don't even really need coaching...they can get out and hammer it out. I love seeing a little sixth grader that shows up for the first day at summer practice for cross country and they are shy and nervous and they can't even run around the front of the school and then by the time that they graduate from 8th grade at the school, their shoulders are held back, they are running, you know, five miles non-stop and they have turned into this incredible self-confident person. I don't know, for me, that is just a reason and that helps me. I don't know... to feel efficacious... (ha ha!)

Shana: On that note, thank you very much for joining us!

APPENDIX J: SAMPLE INITIAL CODING AND MEMOING

First Cycle Initial Descriptive Codes

*To start the coding process I decided to randomly select an interview and begin some descriptive coding. These were some of the codes that emerged.

Interview 1- Sharon

| Numbered/Descriptive Code | Comments/Quotes |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 GROUP SELF-EFFICACY | <p>Sharon discussed being at a school where the teachers had horrible attitudes.... “It was antagonistic. Nobody tried to help me.” She felt resentment at her next school where teachers were supported as they began teaching.</p> <p>Later mentioned teachers with bad attitudes at new school, how she stays away from them.</p> <p>Again in the interview, “you lose your self-efficacy in a place like that because everybody is negative. Everybody is bad.”</p> <p>Many other teachers mentioned the teachers around them affecting them, at certain schools or even on the different hallways that they have taught within their current schools. Most said that it did affect them, though they tried to isolate themselves. A few said that it did not.</p> |
| 2 NOVICE TEACHER | Even in her 20 th year of teaching at a new school |

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>(novice for her school), she didn't receive support. She never did... resents that. Many teachers discussed mentors, not having them, having a major impact on them, etc.</p> |
| <p>3 LOVE THE STUDENTS</p> | <p>Loves teachers, helping them, helping students... "I love the students." She truly wants to help other teachers, support other teachers, loves the students... She mentioned other careers, but kept coming back to teaching.</p> <p>Mentioned being "comfortable around the students" (versus teacher and staff), also having an impact on students.</p> <p>Mentioned it later, when discussing administration.</p> <p>Most teachers, when asked about self-efficacy in teaching said that they loved the students and that was what kept them in the classroom. Most also mentioned that if they didn't love the students and feel that they had an impact, that they could not and would not remain in the profession. They also mentioned the pay...</p> |
| <p>4 EXERCISE</p> | <p>Treadmill, "have got to make time," "I need to work out an hour a day...," "I love yoga..."</p> <p>The teachers who did not exercise seemed to say that</p> |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>they had less energy at the end of the day. This could be because they don't exercise, or it could be their personality types... introverted versus extroverted.</p> <p>The self-proclaimed extroverts are also those who said that they exercised to keep their sanity in the classroom and with their family or friends at home.</p> |
| <p>5 ADMINISTRATION</p> | <p>At other school, they shot everybody down. "Threw me under the proverbial bus"... I needed pats on the back. She also mentions the TOTY many times (her dissertation was on this) and how only a handful of teachers get "pats on the back." Being asked to do things by administration is important to her.</p> <p>The teachers all mentioned the administration at their previous schools or at their current school. Many teachers said that administration truly asking them about how things are going or coming into the classroom helped them to feel more effective in the classroom. Those who were at schools where they weren't supported in teaching nor in discipline said that it greatly impacted their self-efficacy.</p> |
| <p>6 COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS</p> | <p>Gave an example of a student whose mother she just contacted and he straightened up immediately. Also mentioned parents wanting their children to be in her</p> |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>class, makes her feel more effective.</p> <p>Most teachers said that contacting parents, especially over the phone versus email, truly helps with how the student is acting. Few said that they are seeing less and less impact from contacting the parents. This parental support also is important in the teacher's sense of self-efficacy, whether or not parents support the teacher.</p> |
| <p>7 INTROVERT OR EXTROVERT</p> | <p>Discussed how different teachers have different personalities and that's good for different students.</p> <p>She gets stressed (introverted) around adults, but comes alive in the classroom (extroverted). She is exhausted at the end of the day.</p> <p>Many teachers discussed putting on an act in the classroom, whether or not they were introverted outside of the classroom or not. Some mentioned that they are extroverts all of the time. Those who are self-proclaimed introverts truly feel more exhausted at the end of the day (this also tied into exercise).</p> |
| <p>8 SELF EFFICACY IMPACTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT</p> | <p>"I would probably drag them down a bit if I didn't think that I had an impact." Kids can smell fear... they will eat you alive if you don't feel that you are making an impact with them."</p> |

APPENDIX K. EMERGENT THEMES

Emergent Themes

- I. External Impacts
 - A. Administration
 - 1. Backing up with discipline
 - 2. Having a presence in the classroom/supporting teacher
 - B. Surrounding Teachers
 - 1. Positive or negative impacts of personality types
 - 2. Supporting each other with curriculum/ideas
 - C. Parents of Students
 - 1. Emailing/phone calls with discipline
 - 2. Support and love by parents of teacher helps with confidence
- II. Personality Traits
 - A. Extroverts versus Introverts
 - 1. Introverts in the classroom (making teaching an “act”)
 - 2. Extroverts and energy level
 - B. Confidence
 - 1. Knowledge of content
 - 2. Confidence with students and behavior
 - C. Loving the Students
 - 1. Persistence in the profession despite it all
 - 2. Loving the students makes it reciprocal/discipline and effort from students improves

III. Stress Relief

A. Support of Family and Friends

1. Venting/stress relief by discussing with family and friends
2. Support with ideas on how to improve teaching
3. Helps to divert attention from teaching

B. Exercise and Faith

1. Exercise versus not exercising and energy/confidence level
2. Faith--to support confidence level and why to remain in the profession

APPENDIX L. SURVEY RESULTS

Self-Efficacy Scale Answers

| | Question | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Participant | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 4 | 2.5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 4 | 3 | 2.5 | 2.5 |
| 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| 6 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| 7 | 3 | 2 | 2.5 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 8 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 9 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| 10 | 3 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 4 | 3.5 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| 11 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| 12 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Average | 3.125 | 3.54 | 3.33 | 3.25 | 3.5 | 3.29 | 3.92 | 3.17 | 3.21 | 3.34 |

Scale: 1 – not at all true, 2 – barely true, 3 – moderately true, 4 – exactly true

Note: Adapted from Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory

APPENDIX M. PERMISSION TO USE FIGURES

Shana,

You have my permission to use the figure you have requested depicting the cyclical nature of self-efficacy beliefs.

All the best,

Megan Tschannen-Moran

The College of William and Mary
School of Education
PO Box 8795
Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795
Telephone: 757-221-2187
<http://wmpeople.wm.edu/site/page/mxtsch>

From: shana market norton [mailto:georgiamrkt@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, June 06, 2013 10:12 AM
To: mxtsch@wm.edu
Subject: permission to use table

Dr. Tschannen-Moran,

My name is Shana Norton and I teach middle school at Jones Middle School in Jones, GA. I am currently working on my dissertation through Liberty University. May I please have permission to use the first chart in the article by Silverman and Davis (2006) below about teachers' self-efficacy judgements:

<http://www.education.com/reference/article/teacher-efficacy/>

I have attached my dissertation, should you need to review it.

Many thanks,

Shana Norton

From: Brian Miller <brian@learningmind.com>
To: Shana Norton <georgiamrkt@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, June 10, 2013 8:34 PM
Subject: Re: permission to use table

Yes Shana,

You have my permission to use the chart. When citing the theory, be sure and cite Bandura but I suspect you already know that.

Thanks,
Brian Miller

On Jun 6, 2013, at 9:53 AM, Shana Norton wrote:

> From: Shana Norton <georgiamrkt@yahoo.com>

> Subject: permission to use table

>

> Message Body:

> Mr. Miller,

> My name is Shana Norton and I am a middle school teacher at Jones Middle School in Jones, GA. I am working on my EdD in Teaching and Learning through Liberty University. I am nearing defending my dissertation and they realized that I need permission from you to use the table showing triadic reciprocal determinism. I have cited you as a reference, of course.

>

> I can send you a copy of my paper should you like to look over it. I tried your email that was provided on the article, but it bounced back.

>

> Thanks again,

> Shana Norton

**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION

Proposal Defense Rubric and Decision Form

Date: [Click here to enter a date.](#)

Doctoral Candidate: Shana Market Norton

Dissertation Proposal Title: A Phenomenological Investigation into the Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Teachers
who have Persisted in the Teaching Profession.

Committee Decision:

- Approved with no further or few revisions
- Provisionally approved with major revisions
- Not approved with recommendation to revise proposal or rewrite a new proposal

Explain decision (as applicable):

List revisions needed:

- Student included the LU IRB application and other necessary IRB applications in the written proposal.

| | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Shana Market Norton | |
| Student | Date |
| Dr. Randy Tierce | |
| Dissertation Chair | Date |
| Dr. Cristie McClendon | |
| Dissertation Committee Member | Date |
| Dr. Kristy Park | |
| Dissertation Committee Member | Date |

2015 Ed.D. Written Dissertation Rubric EDUC 989

| | 3 Points- Advanced | 2 Points- Proficient | 1 Point- Developing |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Introduction <i>Learning Outcome A.1</i> <i>Learning Outcome B.4, B.5</i> | Conveyed project within context of literature. Moderately-strong rationale. Purpose was clear and focused. | Project moderately conveyed in context of literature. Moderately clear rationale. Purpose was somewhat focused and clear. | Vaguely conveyed project in context of literature. Weak rationale. Purpose was poorly focused and not sufficiently clear. |
| 2 Review of Literature <i>Learning Outcome A.1, B.7</i> | Comprehensive review of literature relevant to the study. Well organized, with nuanced critique regarding the relatedness of the research and scholarship reviewed. Includes specific criteria for inclusion/exclusion of various theoretical perspectives/ empirical studies. Clearly describes research samples, methodologies, & findings. | Comprehensive review of literature relevant to the study. Moderately well organized. Some mention of the relatedness of scholarship. Moderately clear rationale for choice of theoretical perspectives/ empirical studies. Somewhat focused description of research samples, methodologies, & findings. | Inadequate review of literature relevant to the study. Poorly organized. Weak rationale for choice of theoretical perspectives/empirical studies. Insufficient description of research samples, methodologies, & findings. |
| 3 Methods/ Approach <i>Learning Outcome B.6, B.9</i> | Appropriate detail in description of (if applicable): subjects, design/approach, methods/procedures, and statistical analyses. | Moderate or excessive description of (if applicable): subjects, design/approach, methods/procedures, and statistical analyses. | Inadequate description of (if applicable): subjects, design/approach, methods/procedures, and statistical analyses. |
| 4 Writing Quality <i>Learning Outcome B.4</i> | The dissertation is written with great clarity and precision. Each sentence is understandable. Word choice, grammar, punctuation, and spelling are excellent. The narrative is logical and coherent. Correct use of 6 th edition APA. | The dissertation is moderately clear. Several errors in word choice, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. The narrative lacks focus. Uneven application of 5th edition APA conventions. | The dissertation is unclear throughout. Frequent errors in word choice, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. The narrative discussion lacks focus and coherence. Frequent errors in use of 5th edition APA conventions. |
| Comments : <i>[This rubric was adapted from the San Diego State University Student Research Symposium rubric.]</i> | | | |
| | | | Total: |