

"Will I See You in September?": Exploring the Phenomenon of Early Leaving in Public and Catholic Schools

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BOSTON COLLEGE
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Program of
Curriculum and Instruction

“WILL I SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER?": EXPLORING THE PHENOMENON OF
EARLY LEAVING IN PUBLIC AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Dissertation
by

AUBREY JANICE SCHEOPNER

submitted in partial fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

“Will I See You in September?”: Exploring the Phenomenon of Early Leaving in Public and Catholic Schools

By Aubrey J. Scheopner

Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Ph.D., Chair

Teachers have a powerful impact on student achievement, yet high attrition rates hinder schools in their ability to provide quality instruction. Attrition rates are highest for schools serving low-income, minority students and among small private schools, including Catholic schools. Attrition is especially prevalent among new teachers. Very few studies have focused on the problem of early leaving or the problem of retention in Catholic schools. This study seeks to understand better why public and Catholic school teachers leave teaching early.

A mixed methods approach was used. This included 50 in-depth interviews with 15 public and 10 Catholic school teachers who left within the first 5 years. In addition, statistical analyses of public and Catholic school early leavers' responses in the *Schools and Staffing* and *Teacher Follow-Up* surveys were used to contextualize and compare the experiences of the 25 teachers interviewed to the larger population of early leavers.

This dissertation argues that, to understand why teachers leave early, an approach that examines teachers' entire experiences throughout their short time in the profession is required. A framework informed by sociocultural and commitment theories and prior research on retention and the culture of schools was developed through systematic

analysis of the interview and survey data. This analytical framework provides a complex approach for examining the phenomenon of early leaving, which included three aspects: entering commitment, teaching experience, and the decision to leave. Findings suggested that teachers' decisions to leave were influenced by multiple factors within their various contexts. These contexts and factors were constantly changing, making the decision to leave extremely complex. For Catholic school teachers, the decision was even more complicated, influenced not only by the same factors and aspects of early leaving as public school teachers, but also their changing identities as Catholics. Findings also called into question common assumptions about why teachers leave: teachers do not always leave because they are less committed to teaching, or are dissatisfied with teaching or with their salaries.

To Dad, Mutti, Erin Kate, and Mary Kate
for motivating, inspiring, and loving me

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	viii
List of Tables	ix
CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM OF EARLY LEAVING	1
Purpose of Study	8
Importance of Study	12
Organization of the Dissertation	13
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	18
Theoretical Perspective	18
<i>Sociocultural Theory</i>	18
<i>The Culture of Schools</i>	21
<i>Commitment Theory</i>	25
Empirical Research on Teacher Retention	30
<i>Retention: The Scope of the Problem</i>	32
Retention: National Perspectives	32
Retention: Regional Perspectives	37
Retention: In-Depth Perspectives	40
Retention: Summary of Research Related to the Scope of the Problem	46
<i>Retention: Research on Factors Related to Teacher Retention</i>	47
Retention Factors: Salary	47
Retention Factors: Teacher Support	51
Retention Factors: School Context	52
Retention Factors: Summary of Research	55
<i>Retention: The Problem of Teacher Retention Internationally</i>	56
International Retention: The Scope of the Problem	57
<i>Scope of international retention: National perspectives</i>	57
<i>Scope of international retention: Regional perspectives</i>	59
<i>Scope of international retention: In-depth perspectives</i>	61
<i>Scope of international retention: Summary</i>	62
International Retention: Research on Factors Related to Teacher Retention	62
<i>International retention factors: Salary</i>	63
<i>International retention factors: Teacher support</i>	64
<i>International retention factors: School context</i>	65
<i>International retention factors: Summary</i>	66

<i>Retention: The Problem of Teacher Attrition in Catholic Schools</i>	67
Catholic School Retention: The Scope of the Problem.....	68
<i>Scope of Catholic school retention: National perspectives</i>	69
<i>Scope of Catholic school retention: In-depth perspectives</i>	70
<i>Scope of Catholic school retention: Summary</i>	72
Catholic School Retention: Research on Factors Related to	
Retention	72
<i>Catholic school retention factors: Salary</i>	73
<i>Catholic school retention factors: Teacher support</i>	74
<i>Catholic school retention factors: School context</i>	75
<i>Catholic school retention factors: Summary</i>	76
Commitment to Catholic Church	76
Catholic School Teacher Retention Summary	80
Research on Teacher Retention.....	81
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN.....	82
Overview of Interpretive Qualitative Research	83
Overview of Mixed Methods Research	86
Appropriateness of Interpretive Qualitative & Concurrent	
Transformative Mixed Methods Approaches.....	88
Research Design.....	90
<i>Data Collection</i>	91
<i>Research Participants and Sampling</i>	95
<i>Data Analysis</i>	99
Interview Analysis Procedures.....	100
<i>Initial coding</i>	100
<i>Axial coding or hypothesizing</i>	103
<i>Selective coding</i>	104
<i>Theoretical coherence</i>	106
<i>Constant comparison and memos</i>	107
SASS and TFS Analysis Procedures.....	108
Integrity of the Study	110
<i>Rigor</i>	111
<i>Reflexivity</i>	112
<i>Validity</i>	113
<i>Limitations</i>	115
Research Design Summary	116
CHAPTER 4: LEAVING TEACHING EARLY.....	117
A Framework for Understanding Early Leaving	118
Entering Teaching	127
<i>Professional Commitment</i>	129

<i>Short-term Commitment</i>	135
<i>Exploratory Commitment</i>	140
Entering Catholic School Teaching.....	143
<i>Vested Commitment to Teaching in Catholic Schools</i>	145
<i>Neutral Commitment to Teaching in Catholic Schools</i>	148
Entering Commitment and Leaving Teaching Early.....	151
CHAPTER 5: TEACHING EXPERIENCES	155
Teaching Experiences	157
<i>Effective and Satisfied</i>	157
<i>Effective and Frustrated</i>	162
<i>Ineffective</i>	168
Teaching Experiences in Catholic Schools.....	174
<i>Satisfactory Experiences in Catholic Schools</i>	175
<i>Frustrating Experiences in Catholic Schools</i>	180
Teaching Experiences and Leaving Teaching Early	186
CHAPTER 6: DECISION TO LEAVE.....	189
Decision to Leave	191
<i>Goal Change</i>	191
<i>Role Change</i>	197
<i>School/Personnel Changes</i>	203
<i>Life Change</i>	209
Decision to Leave Teaching in Catholic Schools.....	214
<i>Career Change</i>	215
<i>Catholic Identity Change</i>	221
<i>Catholic School Identity Change</i>	225
What about Salary?	229
The Emotionality of Leaving.....	234
The Decision to Leave and Leaving Teaching Early	240
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS	242
The Phenomenon of Early Leaving	243
Implications.....	250
<i>Implications for Research</i>	250
<i>Implications for Policy and Practice</i>	253
<i>Implications for Catholic Schools</i>	260
Leaving Teaching Early	262
REFERENCES	265

APPENDICES	274
Appendix A: Literature Review: Empirical Studies Reviewed	274
Appendix B: Interview Protocols	283
Appendix C: Internal Review Board Application.....	289
Appendix D: Informed Consent Form	296
Appendix E: Recruitment E-mail and Correspondence.....	298
Appendix F: Code Dictionary	299
Appendix G: SASS and TFS Questions Analyzed	312

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 Data Sources	92
Figure 3.2 Data Analysis Procedures	101
Figure 4.1 Leaving Teaching Early	120
Figure 4.2 Contexts that Influenced Early Leaving	123
Figure 4.3 Leaving Catholic School Teaching Early	124
Figure 4.4 Contexts that Influenced Catholic School Early Leaving.....	126
Figure 7.1 Participant Pathways through the Framework.....	246

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	Interview Participants	97
Table 3.2	SASS and TFS Participant Characteristics	100
Table 4.1	Entering Commitment of SASS/TFS Respondents (SASS Question 68/69B)	135
Table 5.1	The Importance of Dissatisfaction with Teaching as a Career on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13J).....	161
Table 5.2	Most Important Reason for Leaving among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 14).....	162
Table 5.3	SASS/TFS Respondents' Reports on whether They Like the Way the School is Run (SASS Question 66/67C).....	167
Table 5.4	TFS Respondents Compare Opportunities to Make a Difference between their Current Position and Teaching (TFS Question 20T)...	168
Table 5.5	TFS Respondents Compare Sense of Personal Accomplishment between their Current Position and Teaching (TFS Question 20S)...	173
Table 5.6	TFS Respondents' Reports on whether Colleagues Share Beliefs and Values about School Mission (SASS Question 63/64J).....	180
Table 5.7	TFS Respondents' Reports on whether the Principal Developed Broad Agreement about the School's Mission (TFS Question 15G)...	185
Table 6.1	The Importance of Taking Courses to Improve Career Opportunities within the Field of Education on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13H)	196
Table 6.2	The Importance of Taking Courses to Improve Career Opportunities Outside the Field of Education on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13I).....	196
Table 6.3	The Importance of Pursuing a Position other than that of a K-12 Teacher to the Decision on Leave among TFS Respondents.....	203
Table 6.4	The Importance of School Staffing Action on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13E).....	208
Table 6.5	The Importance of Pregnancy or Child Rearing on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13 B).....	214
Table 6.6	The Importance of Other Family or Personal Reasons on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13L).....	214
Table 6.7	TFS Respondents' Reports on Overall Satisfaction with Current Position Compared to Teaching (TFS Question 21)	220
Table 6.8	SASS/TFS Respondents' Reports on General Satisfaction with being a Teacher at the School (SASS Question 63/64U).....	220
Table 6.9	SASS/TFS Respondents' Reports on Satisfaction with Teaching Salary (SASS Question 63/64C).....	233
Table 6.10	The Importance of Salary on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13F).....	234

CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM OF EARLY LEAVING

Teachers matter. They have a significant impact on student achievement and school quality. In fact, research indicates that “teachers are the most important education factor influencing student outcomes” (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003, p. 7). Teachers are also crucial to school improvement efforts. For example, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) stated that “improving the efficiency and equity of schooling depends, in large measure, on ensuring that competent people want to work as teachers, that their teaching is of high quality, and that all students have access to high-quality learning” (2005, p. 18). While research has long demonstrated that student achievement is affected by many different types of factors, including students’ skills and motivation; family socioeconomic background and support; and school organization, resources, and climate (Berliner, 2005; Coleman, et al., 1966), it is also clear that teacher quality, skill, and knowledge are among the most significant resources schools have in improving student achievement (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003; OECD, 2005).

In recent years, there has been increased pressure to improve student achievement through educational reform initiatives intended to ensure that all students meet high academic standards through strict accountability measures. Reform efforts have also focused on teachers, recognizing that achieving these high academic standards requires quality instruction from skilled teachers (Goldhaber, Brewer, & Anderson, 1999; Ingersoll, 2003b). A critical component of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001 is the “Highly Qualified Teacher” requirement, stipulating that every child must be taught by a fully certified and credentialed teacher. Promotional materials for NCLB proclaim “there is consistent evidence that individual teachers contribute to student achievement” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 2). Part of the impetus for the law was “recognizing the link between quality teaching and student achievement” (p. 3) to ensure that students meet the high academic standards required. Countries across the world have implemented simi-

lar reform measures. As the OECD (2005) suggests, “Teacher policy concerns have intensified in recent years due to the profound economic and social changes underway and the imperatives for schools to provide the foundations of lifelong learning” (p. 27). Ingersoll (2003b) explains that reform movements, such as NCLB, operate under the assumption that “teachers and teaching matter—that is, all hold, implicitly or explicitly, that teachers have a crucial impact on our children and youth and, hence, our society’s future” (p. 39).

Even though there is widespread consensus that teachers matter, finding and retaining quality teachers are problems many schools face. In many countries teachers are leaving the classroom to seek careers within and outside the field of education, resulting in the loss of experienced teachers who, on average, are more effective at raising student performance (Wilson, Bell, Galosy, & Shouse, 2004). In particular, schools report problems retaining new teachers. In the United States and England, for instance, between 18 and 20% of new teachers leave within the first three years (Hayes, 2004; Henke, Chen, & Geis, 2000). In the United States, 40 to 50% of teachers leave by the first 5 years in teaching (Ingersoll, 2003a). Ingersoll (2001) concluded that “teacher turnover is a significant phenomenon and a dominant factor” (p. 524) in the staffing problems many schools face. The early departure of teachers leads to what he called a “revolving door,” or a large flow of teachers “in, through, and out of schools each year” (p.11). These findings prompted the National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future (NCTAF) to declare that “teacher retention has become a national crisis” (2003, p. 22).

Most troubling is that attrition rates are highest in urban schools and schools serving low-income and minority students, arguably where quality teachers are needed most, leading to an inequitable distribution of quality and experienced teachers (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; OECD, 2005; Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005a). Studies have found that schools serving low-income, low-achieving, and non-White students report higher proportions of beginning and less-qualified teachers and lower proportions of

teachers with more than 20 years of experience (Lankford, et al., 2002). These “concentrations of under-prepared and inexperienced teachers create a drain on school finances and human resources” (NCTAF, 2003, p. 33).

This problem is not limited to public schools. In fact, private school teachers in the United States are more apt to leave teaching than their public school counterparts (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005b). This is particularly true in small private schools, or schools serving fewer than 300 students, which report the highest average turnover rates. Each year small private schools experience a loss of almost one-quarter of their faculty (Ingersoll, 2001). Catholic schools constitute the largest sector of private schools in the United States, and research confirms that many are experiencing difficulty retaining teachers (Cook & Engel, 2006; O’Keefe, 2001; Schuttloffel, 2001). For example, research on attrition of high school religion teachers indicated that almost 40% of all Catholic secondary religion teachers reported that they planned to leave teaching within 5 years (Cook & Engel, 2006). Among young teachers, or those between the ages of 20 and 29, 50% of Catholic secondary religion teachers reported they would be leaving within 5 years (Cook & Engel, 2006). Catholic schools face many of the same problems plaguing public schools that have difficulties retaining teachers but Catholic schools confront additional factors specific to them, including declining numbers of religious men and women who traditionally served these schools, which has led to increased demand for new teachers, widening gaps between Catholic and public school teachers’ salaries, and decreasing “value many Catholic families now place on their children serving the Church” (Schuttloffel, 2001, p. 29). Catholic schools are an interesting case among schools with difficulties retaining teachers. First, their teachers report higher job satisfaction than public school teachers, yet leave at higher rates (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005a). Second, while the findings are debatable, some studies indicate that Catholic schools are more effective than public schools, accomplishing this by creating a community of strong relation-

ships despite the constant turnover of teachers (Bempechat, 1998; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). We may never know definitively whether Catholic schools are more effective than public schools due to the vast number of non-school factors that affect student achievement. Nevertheless, the results of previous research are provocative, especially given the success of “at risk” students in these schools.

High attrition rates among new teachers have severe consequences for both public and Catholic schools, including their ability to improve student achievement, implement school improvement efforts, and create a sense of community and continuity within schools. First, attrition “erodes teaching quality and student achievement” (NCTAF, 2003, p. 33). When teachers leave early, they are unable to gain the needed experience and knowledge to become accomplished teachers, and “if teachers repeatedly leave a school before becoming competent in their practice, students will be taught by a string of teachers who are, on average, less effective than more experienced teachers” (S. M. Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005, p. 11). Second, schools experiencing high attrition lack the sense of cohesion required to carry out reform efforts. Researchers have found that when schools experience high turnover, they must “restart their instructional focus each year, resulting in a less comprehensive and unified instructional program” (Guin, 2004, p. 19). Rather than using their resources for improvement efforts or needed educational resources, these schools are often forced to “continually pour money into recruitment efforts and professional support for new teachers, without reaping returns in the dividends of student achievement” (NCTAF, 2003, p. 33). Estimates of the financial costs of turnover indicate that states spend up to \$2.1 billion a year in costs related to attrition (Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). These financial costs and lack of cohesion have a direct impact on student achievement.

Finally, high turnover has a detrimental impact on a school’s ability to maintain a strong community (Ingersoll, 2004; NCTAF, 2003). Educational sociologists have argued

that a sense of community is vital to school success (Lortie, 1975; Sarason, 1971; Waller, 1932). For example, Sarason (1971) declared that in order to understand what happens to beginning teachers in the first 2 years of teaching “*for good or for bad*” requires not just examining the teacher, but also the school community in which the teacher works. This suggests that the culture of schools and whether or not schools promote a positive, supportive community has a direct impact on new teachers. Researchers have found that developing a sense of community often results in increased opportunities for teachers to experience intrinsic rewards, including making a difference and achieving success with students, that are important factors in teacher satisfaction (Bryk, et al., 1993). Schools that experience high turnover “are less likely to have high levels of trust and collaboration among teachers” (Guin, 2004, p. 19). This has particular consequences for Catholic schools because of their distinct mission:

The Catholic school pursues cultural goals and the natural development of youth to the same degree as any other school. What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love. (Vatican Council II, 1965, n. 8)

The Catholic Church further stipulates that “the prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers” (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988, n. 26). Retaining teachers, therefore, becomes crucial to maintaining a sense of community that is a fundamental and indispensable characteristic of Catholic schools. Teacher retention is also critical in ensuring that Catholic schools provide students with not only a quality academic education, but religious and moral formation as well (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988; Cook & Engel, 2006).

While researchers and policy analysts have long understood that many schools have trouble staffing their classrooms with qualified teachers, they often worked from

the assumption that the problem was teacher shortages—that is, that there were simply not enough qualified teachers to meet growing demand (Ingersoll, 2001). Studies cited several factors leading to a shortage in supply of qualified teachers, including increasing student enrollments, increasing retirements as a large cohort of teachers neared retirement age, and certain policies, including mandatory decreases in class size (S. M. Johnson, 2004). The result was that policy focused on recruitment strategies and research focused on teacher supply and demand (Ingersoll, 2001). It was not until recently that researchers and policymakers came to the conclusion that recruitment was the “wrong diagnosis” (Morrow, 1999) and that efforts should focus instead on retention or finding ways to keep teachers once they entered the classroom. Early studies of retention examined individual characteristics as a function of attrition (see Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Murnane, 1987). For example, studies attributed increases in teacher attrition to teacher age: Younger teachers and older teachers leave at higher rates. Schools with a majority of younger and veteran teachers, therefore, often experienced higher attrition rates while schools with more mid-career teachers often experienced lower attrition rates (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997). More recently, research efforts, including the work of Ingersoll (2001, 2003a), Johnson (2004), and Day, Sammons, Stobard, Kington, and Gu (2007), have focused on understanding the problem of retention by examining the organization of schools in addition to individual teacher characteristics, examining how factors like collegiality and support—in addition to teacher characteristics—affect attrition.

Our understanding of the problem of teacher retention, especially among new teachers, therefore, is somewhat limited. There is little consensus about why teachers leave early or how to retain them. Some researchers argue that schools, districts, and states lack the infrastructure to recruit, prepare, and support teachers throughout the “career continuum” (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999). Without such an infrastructure, schools are unable to supply every classroom and every child with quality teachers. Re-

search indicates that lack of collegiality with other teachers, support from administration, livable wages, and a sense of autonomy are key factors in teachers' decisions to leave teaching (Day, et al., 2007; Ingersoll, 2003a; Markow & Martin, 2005; Weiss, 1999). Others disagree, arguing that people know before they enter the classroom the conditions of teaching, including the isolation, low salary, and lack of control, and therefore, these conditions are not driving teachers out of the classroom. Haberman (2005), for example, argues that researchers who accept reasons such as these as "authentic explanations make the findings of studies on why teachers quit or fail highly problematic" (p. 7). He asserts that finding a solution to teacher retention, especially in high-needs schools, should involve selecting individuals who "actually demonstrate the propensity to connect with and cause diverse children in poverty to learn" (p. 10). Still others posit that many who enter teaching have career aspirations that lead them out of the classroom (S. M. Johnson, 2004). In the past, individuals entered their professions as lifetime careers, but today it is common for individuals to pursue several different careers, even within the first 10 years out of college. Those who go into teaching as a lifelong career may now be the exception (Haberman, 2005; Olson & Anderson, 2007).

Whatever the cause of the problem of teacher retention, it is imperative that schools find effective ways to retain teachers, but it is neither possible nor necessarily desirable to retain *all* teachers. Some attrition is normal and even beneficial, and weeding out ineffective teachers is necessary while introducing new hires can infuse fresh ideas into the school culture. While the term retention has positive connotations, suggesting that retention is inherently "good," it is worth noting that educational researchers and policymakers are actually interested in the retention of *quality* teachers. Research has found that many schools, however, are unable to retain highly qualified, high achieving teachers, losing these teachers shortly after they enter the profession (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005). This dissertation study seeks to expand our understanding of the

problem of retention, especially among new teachers and Catholic teachers, by exploring the phenomenon of early leaving through a mixed methods approach that combines interviews with former teachers and survey analysis of the overall population of early leavers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore one aspect of the problem of teacher retention by examining the question: What is the nature of the phenomenon of leaving teaching early, that is, within the first 5 years? More particularly, this study investigates the following sub-questions:

- What are the teaching experiences of those who leave teaching early?
- What are the characteristics and career plans of teachers who leave?
- What are the characteristics and cultures of the schools that teachers left (e.g., student demographics, location, curriculum context)?
- What is the relationship among factors that lead to attrition?

To answer these research questions, two in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the 25 teachers in this study who left teaching early, including a subset of 10 former Catholic school teachers since Catholic schools experience higher attrition rates. In addition, the National Center for Education Statistics' national surveys of teachers, the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), which ask teachers about factors that influenced their career decisions, were analyzed in order to allow comparisons between the responses of interview participants and the responses of a larger sample of public and Catholic early leavers. An analytic framework was developed through systematic analysis of these 50 interviews and results from the SASS and TFS. This framework was informed by commitment theory and larger sociocultural theoretical

perspectives along with the literature on the culture of schools and Catholic schools. This framework provided a complex approach to examining the phenomenon of early leaving, exploring the multiple factors in teachers' various contexts as well as three different aspects of early leaving: their commitments upon entering the profession, their experiences of classroom teaching, and their decisions to leave teaching early.

Based on this framework for understanding the phenomenon of early leaving, my analysis suggests that the decision to leave teaching early is complicated and happens over time rather than at one point in time. Teachers make multiple decisions as contexts change throughout their time in the profession that ultimately influence their decisions to leave. Factors and circumstances interact, sometimes leading even those who are satisfied with teaching out of the classroom. For Catholic school teachers, the decision to leave is even more complicated, involving not only the same considerations as those of public school teachers, but also factors and contexts unique to Catholic schools, including commitment to the Catholic Church and their own Catholic identities.

This study found that teachers entered the profession with different expectations about how long they would stay in teaching, with some planning a long career as a classroom teacher, a career commitment that is termed "professional" in this study, while others planned to stay a few short years before pursuing other interests, which is labeled "short-term" commitment in this study. Still others were unsure about how long they would stay, which is referred to here as an "exploratory" commitment. My analyses of the data revealed that entering commitment was influenced by a dynamic interaction of factors in the personal, professional, and societal contexts in which participants lived and worked. Deciding to teach in Catholic schools also involved a complex interaction of factors within various contexts, including the context of the Catholic Church, which resulted in different types of entering commitment to teaching in Catholic schools. Catholic school teachers not only entered with different general expectations about a teaching ca-

reer (professional, short-term, exploratory commitments), but also different types of commitment to teaching in *Catholic schools* as well. For example, some participants entered teaching in Catholic schools intending to stay in the classroom long-term, yet they did not plan to stay in *Catholic schools* long-term.

Most retention studies focus on identifying aspects of teaching that teachers find dissatisfying in order to reach conclusions about why teachers leave. For example, studies have found that many teachers are dissatisfied with low teaching salaries. Rather than detailing the discrete factors that teachers found dissatisfying, this study examines how teachers characterized their overall experiences in the classroom and how various experiences and factors interacted with one another to lead to decisions to leave teaching early. This study found that, overall, teachers who left teaching early described their experiences in one of three ways: they believed that they were effective teachers and were satisfied with teaching, they believed that they were effective but were frustrated with the larger circumstances of the school or of teaching, or they believed that they were ineffective teachers. Catholic school teachers not only shared these general experiences, but were also influenced by factors and circumstances specific to Catholic schools, which had an impact on their commitment to teaching and decisions to leave. These included frustration with the mission of their schools, which affected their teaching experiences and decisions to leave. For the 25 participants in this study, multiple factors within their various personal, professional, school, district, societal, and, among Catholic school teachers, parish, diocesan, and Catholic Church contexts influenced their teaching experiences and decisions to leave. This conclusion is quite different from the simple explanations that are often used to describe the phenomenon of early leaving.

My analysis of the data suggests that leaving teaching was an emotional experience that was also influenced by one of four life and/or career decisions, including goal changes (e.g., deciding to go to graduate school), role changes (e.g., deciding to pursue

other careers), school or personnel changes (e.g., experiencing staffing action), and life changes (e.g., becoming a parent). For Catholic school teachers, the decision to leave early was also influenced by changes in Catholic identity. Some participants became disengaged from the Catholic Church, while others became frustrated with the lack of emphasis on Catholic identity in their schools. These life and career changes and the decision to leave were influenced by teachers' entering commitment, teaching experiences, and multiple factors in their various contexts.

Theories about why teachers leave are abundant. Many point to low salary and low status of teaching, while others believe dissatisfaction with teaching is the main culprit behind high attrition rates. Still others think that programs like Teach for America have changed the mentality of those who enter teaching, with many perceiving their time in the classroom as a way to “give back” to society for a few short years before pursuing other career goals. Historical research confirms that teaching has long been regarded as a temporary career—something that women do before motherhood and what men do before entering a “real” profession (Lagemann, 2000; Lortie, 1975). This study argues, however, that many previous explanations fail to capture the full picture of why teachers leave early. To the contrary, this study finds that some teachers enter with long-term commitment, and are satisfied with their teaching experiences and even their teaching salaries. Further, this study suggests that in order to understand why teachers leave the profession early requires examining their entire experiences during their short time in the profession, including not only the decision to leave teaching itself and specific factors teachers found satisfying or dissatisfying, but also their entering commitments, their teaching experiences, their decisions to leave, and the multiple factors in their various contexts.

Importance of the Study

Many studies have been conducted on teacher retention. Research has suggested that factors including salary, poor administrative support, lack of autonomy, and inadequate resources lead to teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001; Luekens, Lyter, Fox, & Changler, 2004; OECD, 2005). There is some evidence, however, that teachers do not leave due to single factors (e.g., Day, et al., 2007; S. M. Johnson, 2004; Smithers & Robinson, 2003); they leave because multiple factors in their lives and school workplaces converge. Although many retention studies explore discrete variables that lead to attrition, this study uses a different approach, based on the assumption that describing just those aspects that teachers found dissatisfying or frustrating does not provide a meaningful explanation of teachers' experiences and decisions to leave. This study provides a framework for understanding the phenomenon of early leaving, using commitment theory and sociocultural theoretical frameworks to gain an in-depth understanding of early leaving, capturing teachers' entire experiences in the profession from entrance to exit, their interpretations of these experiences, and the interrelated and multiple factors within the various contexts in which they live and work that influence the decision to leave early. This adds to the current understanding of teacher retention by providing a more nuanced explanation of why teachers leave.

Many studies of teacher retention use either quantitative or qualitative methodologies. For example, Ingersoll's (2001, 2003a) research on teacher retention used quantitative analyses of the SASS and TFS and Johnson (2004) used qualitative analyses of interview data with 50 teachers. While these studies have revealed important insight into the problem of retention, they are also limited by the inherent limitations of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This study uses a mixed methods approach, combining the strengths of each method to gain a deeper understanding of why teachers leave. This mixed methods approach allows for interesting comparisons between public and Catholic

school early leavers as well as between those interviewed for this study and the greater population of early leavers represented in the SASS and TFS. Furthermore, reports using SASS and TFS data do not report results about Catholic school leavers, since this group is lumped together with the larger group of private school teachers. This study extracts the responses of Catholic school early leavers from the SASS and TFS data, allowing further insight into the problem of retention in Catholic schools where some of the highest attrition rates are reported.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of seven chapters. Chapter 2 discusses sociocultural theoretical frameworks and commitment theory to gain a conceptual understanding of the problem of retention and also reviews the empirical research on this issue in public and Catholic schools to outline the scope of the problem and factors that influence retention. Previous studies have indicated that attrition is a problem many schools face, both in the United States and abroad, especially in specific subjects, including math and science, and specific geographic regions, including urban and rural areas where schools often serve low-income, low-achieving, and minority students. Salary, teacher support, and school context have an important influence on teachers' career decisions. Studies within the United States and across the world, however, come to sometimes contradictory conclusions about this phenomenon, revealing that the problem of retention is complex. The literature review helps to explain the multifaceted aspects of the issue, further bolstering the argument that a comprehensive and complex approach is needed to examine the phenomenon of early leaving.

Chapter 3 provides a description of the study's research design, including information about how the data were collected and analyzed and descriptive information about the 25 participants interviewed for this study and the SASS and TFS respondents. The

appropriateness of using mixed methods for this study is discussed, including the use of interpretive qualitative methods to analyze the interview data and the use of “concurrent transformative” mixed methods to integrate results from the qualitative interviews and quantitative survey data (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). In concurrent transformative designs, the qualitative and quantitative data are collected at the same time, with equal priority given to both sets of data, and methodological choices are guided by a theoretical or conceptual framework, in this case sociocultural theoretical perspectives. A discussion of the integrity and limitations of the study is also included.

The next three chapters (chapters 4, 5 and 6) present results from the data analysis by elaborating and justifying a set of assertions about the phenomenon of early leaving from public and Catholic schools. The analytic framework that was used to examine the data is introduced in chapter 4. This framework was the result of a reciprocal process: The framework emerged from analysis of the data at the same time that it was used to guide analysis of the data. Three aspects of leaving teaching early were identified in the framework: entering commitment, teaching experience, and decision to leave. In addition, analysis revealed that multiple factors in teachers’ various contexts influenced these three aspects. These contexts included personal, professional, school, district, societal, and, among Catholic school teachers, parish, diocesan, and the Catholic Church, which are also included in the framework. Following presentation of the framework, chapter 4 draws on analyses of the interview and survey data to elaborate the first aspect within the framework: participants’ experiences and commitments upon entering teaching. Three different types of entering commitment to teaching in general (professional, short-term, and exploratory) with two versions related to teaching in Catholic schools in particular (vested and neutral) are outlined along with the multiple factors within participants’ various contexts that influenced their commitment to teaching as they entered the profession. This chapter elaborates the characteristics and career plans of teachers as well as the rela-

tionship among factors that influenced participants' teaching experiences and decisions to leave teaching early.

Chapter 5 explores the second aspect of the phenomenon of early leaving: teaching experience. Here participants' overall experiences are examined, including the experiences of those who believed that they were effective and were satisfied with teaching, those who believed they were effective but were frustrated with their schools, and those who believed they were ineffective teachers. Catholic school teachers' overall characterizations are outlined as well. The ways in which public and Catholic school participants' entering commitment and factors in their various contexts influenced their teaching experiences and the decision to leave are analyzed. This analysis helps to answer the research questions about the teaching experiences of early leavers, the characteristics and cultures of the schools teachers left, and the relationship among factors that led to attrition.

Chapter 6 details results from examining the third aspect of the phenomenon of early leaving: the decision to leave teaching. This chapter outlines the goal, role, school, and life changes that had an impact on participants' decisions to leave. The Catholic identity and Catholic school identity changes that had an impact on Catholic school participants' decisions to leave are also examined. In addition, the chapter includes a section exploring how salary influenced participants, since many studies have found that salary is an important factor in teachers' career decisions. My analysis also revealed that leaving was a highly emotional experience that had a powerful impact on most of the participants. A discussion of the emotionality of leaving is included in chapter 6. This chapter details results that answer the research questions about the characteristics and career plans of teachers and the relationship among the multiple factors in teachers' various contexts that influenced their decisions to leave early. Together, these three analysis chapters provide a complex exploration of the phenomenon of early leaving and a framework for examining the complexities and multiple factors involved in the decision to leave teaching early.

The final chapter discusses how this study relates to and expands upon our understanding of the problem of teacher retention, especially among new teachers. This study adds to the research base on teacher retention by providing a new analytic framework to examine teacher experiences and career decisions. My analysis offers further insight into the problem of early leaving, suggesting that the decision to leave is complex, involving multiple decisions throughout a teachers' short time in the profession as their contexts, commitments, and identities change. Implications for research, policy, and practice are outlined. Findings revealed that leaving was an emotional experience for most teachers, indicating that more research is needed on the emotionality of leaving. For Catholic school teachers, commitment to the Catholic Church had an impact on the decision to leave teaching, suggesting that more research is needed on the influence of declining commitment to the Catholic Church on teacher retention in Catholic schools. This study argues that improving retention requires complex solutions that acknowledge and take into account the multifaceted nature of this problem. Policy and practice need to focus on preparing and supporting teachers throughout their careers, challenging teachers, recognizing their efforts, and providing opportunities to experience success. Teaching needs to be treated as a profession, which includes continual professional development opportunities as well as opportunities to engage in practices beyond the walls of the classroom, including school improvement efforts and research on teaching practice. This will require changes to the culture of schools and the job of teaching.

Leaving teaching early is a complex phenomenon and an emotional decision, involving multiple decisions throughout a teacher's time in the profession, as one early leaver, who intended to return to teaching one day, explained,

My decision had very little to do with teaching and a heck of a lot to do with the whole rest of my life and what I needed to be happy and what I needed to be sane and what I needed to be able to be a better teacher.

This study expands our understanding of the problem and phenomenon of early leaving, providing a nuanced description of the experiences of teachers interviewed for this study as well as a better understanding of what influenced public and Catholic early leavers in their decisions to leave teaching early.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the problem of teacher attrition requires both a theoretical framework, as a means for gaining a conceptual understanding of the issue, and a review of the empirical research, for illustrating the scope of the problem and the factors that affect teachers' decisions to stay or leave. Sociocultural and commitment theories provide the lenses through which the problem of teacher retention is examined. These theoretical frameworks allow for a close consideration of how the culture of schools and the contexts in which teachers live, including personal, professional, and societal contexts, influence teachers' decisions to leave classroom teaching. Research on these theoretical frameworks is presented followed by empirical studies that capture the scope of the problem of teacher retention for both public and Catholic schools in the United States and internationally from national, regional, and in-depth perspectives. Research on several of the factors that are believed to lead to attrition, including salary, teacher support, and school contexts are examined.

Theoretical Perspective

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory is a broad range theory used to explain observed uniformities of social behavior. Central to sociocultural theory is a complex definition of culture, which has been defined and articulated using several different terms. Seymour Sarason (1971), a sociologist who studied the cultures of schools, used the term “distinct structure,” referring to patterns that govern relationships, roles, and norms of interacting with others within the structure. Educational theorist Etienne Wenger (1998) employed the concept “communities of practice” in developing a social theory of learning. A community of practice consists of social structures and procedures among a group to accomplish a given task successfully. From an anthropological perspective, Clifford Geertz (1973)

described the term culture as referring to “socially established structures of meaning” (p. 12) that guide how people respond, perceive, and interpret events and interactions with others. For the purposes of this study, the term culture is used, borrowing aspects from all of these concepts, and shall be defined as shared and negotiated understandings of proper roles and behavior within a given setting or social arrangement, such as home, work, or even schools and classrooms.

A sociocultural understanding of culture proposes that as people engage with the world and within their distinct cultures, they negotiate what it means to live within these cultures. This negotiation affects how people interpret their experiences, preferences, concerns, and choices (Eisenhart, 2001). These shared understandings are contextually bound and influenced by history, tradition, power, cultural myths, and societal norms, which have also been co-constructed (Britzman, 1991; Sarason, 1971; Wenger, 1998). Since cultures are influenced by the outside world, a given culture is “not pre-existing, but neither is it simply made up. Negotiated meaning is at once both historical and dynamic, contextual and unique” (Wenger, 1998, p. 53). Culture is an essential condition for humans; without culture human behavior would be “a mere chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions” (Geertz, 1973, p. 46). Culture structures our world, giving it meaning.

Individuals within a given culture have a reciprocal impact upon one another, influencing their characteristics, ideas, practices, and values (Sarason, 1971). As individuals engage with one another and negotiate meaning, they simultaneously construct an identity (Wenger, 1998). Thus, culture has an effect on an individual’s sense of self (Eisenhart, 2001). In their interactions and roles within various cultures, individuals take on different characteristics and translate these into important features of their identities that they project to others. Identity, including its situated and core elements, is formed by these interactions, influenced by preconceived notions, and affected by how others perceive the individual. Individuals can maintain different identities particular to the setting and role

they have in different cultures (Woods, 1983). Some have termed this “situated identity” as a malleable identity that differs according to specific situations and cultures (Ball & Goodson, 1985). This contrasts and sometimes competes with an individual’s “substantive identity,” which is the “core self perception” (p.18). A sociocultural perspective understands identity as an interplay between interactions within cultures and how individuals interpret these interactions and negotiate these cultural understandings with preconceived notions of what it means to be a member of the culture. For example, individuals enter teaching with preconceived ideas of what it means to be a teacher based on their experiences as students and experiences in their teacher preparation programs (Lortie, 1975). As individuals are introduced into new school cultures, their preconceived notions about the role of the teacher and their identity as a teacher must be negotiated with the norms and expectations within the distinct school culture. Identity consists not only of the projected image an individual creates, but also how others perceive the individual (Stone, 1962; Woods, 1983). Members of the culture assess the worth of the individual against standards of what it means to operate successfully (Stone, 1962, p. 97). Teachers may be deemed competent based on their background and observed performance with students. This value becomes part of the individual’s identity. Individuals can negotiate these value perceptions by conforming, or rejecting the norms and standards of the culture. Thus, identity is formed through negotiation between adopting cultural standards and norms and embracing distinctive characteristics that set oneself apart from others (Stone, 1962).

Sociocultural theory suggests that there is much complexity involved in how beliefs, meanings, behaviors, and identities within and among individuals are formed (Eisenhart, 2001). Studies of cultures from a sociocultural perspective require researchers to converge not just on the individual, but beyond the individual as well, seeing participants “as part of a matrix of existing relationships, practices, and ideas” (Sarason, 1971, p. 171). How individuals understand what happens in schools and how individuals nego-

tiate preconceived notions of identity influences decisions to stay or leave teaching. The sociocultural theoretical perspective can capture individuals' conceptions of what it means to be a teacher along with how they interpret what happens in the school cultures in which they work. Using this lens allows an exploration into how teachers' interactions with others, including students, administrators, colleagues, parents, and their own families, influence their decisions to leave the profession. A sociocultural perspective focuses on the sense-making processes of individuals and how this affects behavior; therefore, it is an appropriate approach to investigating why teachers leave classroom teaching.

The Culture of Schools

Schools are a distinctive culture. Classically, our understanding of the culture of schools comes from sociologists, beginning with Waller (1932) and expanded upon by Sarason (1971) and Lortie (1975). Sarason suggests that schools are socially and culturally organized based on historical and traditional norms of teaching that “have given rise to roles and relationships, to interlocking ideas, practices, values, and expectations that are the ‘givens’ not requiring thought or deliberation” (p. 227). Important relationships include those between teachers and students, teachers and other teachers, teachers and administrators, and teachers and parents (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Sarason, 1971). The norms of interaction between teachers and students have been described as both authoritative (Waller, 1932), but also convivial, requiring personal connections to motivate students (Lortie, 1975). Teachers are judged by whether or not they adhere to norms of conduct as well as their performance with disciplining and instructing students (Waller, 1932). The culture of teaching may also be one of isolation, where teachers are left alone to solve problems and dilemmas that arise (Lortie, 1975; Sarason, 1971; Waller, 1932).

Current researchers have expanded these early conceptualizations of the culture of schools, reexamining and testing whether these traditional understandings remain true. In

her review of the literature, synthesizing studies on school culture, specific group and team arrangements in schools, and personal teacher interactions, Little (1990) found that “the most common configurations of teacher-to-teacher interaction may do more to bolster isolation than to diminish it” (p. 511). Little cites examples of teachers sharing ideas and mentoring that did little to advance knowledge of teaching. Researchers have also uncovered other “forms” of teacher cultures, or different ways teachers develop relationships within their schools. Hargreaves (1997), for example, identifies “collaborative cultures” where teachers work together and form professional communities; “balkanized cultures” where teachers separate themselves to work in grade-level or subject departments “which are at best indifferent and at worst actively hostile to one another;” and “contrived collegiality” where teachers are mandated to work together (p. 1305).

Sarason (1971) argued that the culture of schools influences teacher identities because

the school person reflects in some measure the fact that he is in a role that is characterized by duties and responsibilities and is defined by a complicated set of personal and professional relationships with many other people in the setting. (p. 11)

Put more succinctly, “teaching does something to those who teach” (Waller, 1932, p. 375). As teachers interact within their school settings, they construct their identities based on these interactions and how others perceive them, negotiating between these and preconceived ideas of what it means to be a teacher. Those teachers who are deemed competent by their peers have different interactions and relationships with other teachers and with students. Again, current theorists have expanded upon these early conceptualizations of school culture. Teaching involves both academic instruction (e.g., planning lessons, developing relationships, and motivating students) and bureaucratic functions (e.g.,

maintaining a sense of order, administering standardized tests, and conducting nonteaching responsibilities). These two aspects often conflict, according to sociologist Richard Ingersoll (2003b). “The task of teaching, requiring a personal orientation and professional autonomy, clashes with bureaucratic rationalization, which requires an impersonal and hierarchical orientation” (p. 34). Teacher identities are dependent on how work is organized, including whether or not schools emphasize the tasks of teaching or bureaucratic rationalization (Hargreaves, 1997).

Current researchers have also examined how educational change initiatives have altered the culture of schools (Ball & Goodson, 1985). Schools face increasing demands to educate students with different language backgrounds, students with disabilities, and students with behavioral problems effectively. Teachers and schools are expected to prepare students for the “knowledge society,” where students use expanded scientific technologies, engage in “complex ways of processing and circulating knowledge and information,” and operate in “systems, teams, and cultures that maximize the opportunities for mutual, spontaneous learning” (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 17). Countries around the world have reexamined curricula, reforming and changing educational practice to meet these increasing demands. These reforms and pressures have resulted in changes to the culture of schools, including teacher identities.

Catholic school cultures are marked by unique characteristics that distinguish them from public schools. Given that Catholic schools experience higher attrition, it is important to explore the relationship between this unique culture and teacher attrition. Unlike public schools, Catholic schools, as an institution of the Catholic Church, are called upon to instill Catholic values, morals, beliefs, traditions, practices, social teachings, and the Catholic faith. In fact, some argue that the main purpose and rationale of Catholic schools is “to keep alive and to renew the culture of the sacred in a profane and secular world” (Grace, 2002, p. 5). Rituals and religious practices of the Catholic Church, therefore, are

an important component of the Catholic school culture (Heft, 1997). One of the primary rituals for the Catholic Church is the liturgy, which “presupposes participants who have learned to listen, to read, to speak, to be silent, to sing and play musical instruments, to be and appreciate the artistic” (p. 31). A Catholic education is designed in part to foster these essential skills and understandings important to maintaining the Catholic faith. Catholic schools measure success not only on the academic outcomes of their students, but on students’ daily interactions and relationships within and outside the school and the holistic development of students (Grace, 2002; Heft, 1997; Vatican Council II, 1965).

The culture of Catholic schools is also affected by the leadership of the Catholic Church (Grace, 2002). For example, in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, bishops have “considerable symbolic power,” or status and authority, which they have used “to develop, shape and control Catholic education” (p. 30). The history of Catholic education includes a history of conflict over control between those with symbolic power within the hierarchy and those within the schools. In the past, for instance, Catholic schools were dominated by priests who decided when schools should be established, who would run them, what their mission would include, and other important school decisions (Grace, 2002). Religious orders began to open their own schools to avoid conflicts with parish priests over the mission and identity of schools. Prior to 1960, more than 90% of the teaching force in Catholic schools were religious men and women (Przygocki, 2004). Within the past 50 years the laity have increasingly been called upon to support these schools, now occupying almost 96% of teaching positions in Catholic schools (McDonald, 2008). Across the world countries are struggling with declining numbers of religious and some countries have been forced to hire non-Catholic teachers (Grace & O’Keefe, 2007). This shift from religious to lay and even non-Catholic staff has not come without a struggle (Grace, 2002). Many teaching orders are leery of giving over their schools to lay teachers who may not understand and might not maintain the charisms of their orders.

Sometimes issues over control of Catholic schools have existed between the Catholic Church and the government. In England and Wales, for example, Catholic schools are supported by government funds, which has resulted in conflict between government law as it interacts with canon law (Grace, 2002). Catholic schools in both England and the United States grapple over abiding to canon law regarding Catholic education and conforming to government-regulated educational reforms, including performance-based accountability and evaluation requirements and mandated curriculum in England. Catholic schools fight to maintain a distinctive culture in the wake of “ideological, social, educational, and political change” within society, but also within the Church itself (Grace, 2002, p. 47).

Taking a sociocultural perspective presents challenges since “one cannot *see* culture or systems the way one sees individuals” (Sarason, 1971, p. 228). A fundamental concern for researchers investigating the culture of schools is finding ways to get “inside teachers’ heads” so as to describe their knowledge, values, beliefs, and attitudes accurately (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). Compounding this challenge is the diversity that exists among teachers; they teach different grades and subjects, have different educational preparation backgrounds, and different levels of experience (Sarason, 1971). The culture of teaching is not uniform (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). Researchers must seek commonalities within this diversity to understand and define the culture of schools. This study adds to the current research base by focusing on the commonalities among teachers who have left classroom teaching. With exceptions (Dinham, 1992; Smithers & Robinson, 2003), very few studies have explicitly focused on this group of teachers.

Commitment Theory

Sociocultural theory is a broad range theory that abstracts human behavior among individuals working and living within cultures, explaining these behaviors in uniform

ways. Theories such as these are difficult to use in the daily observations and data gathering of a research project such as this, which highlights particulars that are not generalizable. For this reason, Merton (1967) suggested using what he termed “theories of the middle range,” which include abstractions, but are closer to the observed data and therefore able to incorporate data in ways that general theories cannot. By utilizing these theories, researchers can avoid conflicts between the general and particular. Merton substantiated his position on the value of middle range theories by referring to scientist Francis Bacon, who also emphasized the importance of what he termed “middle axioms” in the progression toward general theories. Bacon believed the proper evolution of general axioms was to start with the particulars, rise to lesser axioms, then middle axioms, until finally reaching the most general. Merton stipulates that theories of the middle range are comprised of confirmed hypotheses, not merely descriptive or empirical generalizations. For this study, the middle range theory of commitment is used to extrapolate from the specific interview and survey data to the more general sociocultural theory.

Commitment theory conceptualizes how individuals make choices (Becker, 1960; Kanter, 1972). Commitment theory serves as a framework for understanding individual experiences, but is not so general that it encompasses these experiences into one uniform theory. Defining commitment as socially constructed and a product of individuals’ personal and professional lives, commitment involves selecting among possible courses of action. Individuals must be willing to maintain a culture by linking self-interest with social requirements (Kanter, 1972). Choices of action are influenced by different considerations and how individuals evaluate choices. Theorists have also identified levels of commitment corresponding to several typologies of career commitment.

According to commitment theorists, choices are influenced by a variety of factors. Sociologist Howard Becker (1960) used the term “side bets” to conceptualize external factors that influence commitment. Side bets are interests that have developed over time and

are based on previous decisions and courses of action. Committed individuals are aware of investments they have made and recognize that decisions to act inconsistently will have costly ramifications. Prior actions or interests put restrictions on the choices and decisions individuals make. Becker explained, commitment is “achieved by making a *side bet*”:

The committed person has acted in such a way as to involve other interests of his, originally extraneous to the action he is engaged in, directly in that action. By his own actions prior to the final bargaining session he has staked something of value to him, something originally unrelated to his present line of action, on being consistent in his behavior. The consequences of inconsistency will be so expensive that inconsistency in his bargaining stance is no longer a feasible alternative. (p. 35)

Cultural expectations can operate as side bets in that they have an impact on courses of action. Becker provides the example of the cultural expectation that individuals should not change jobs too often because those who do are perceived as untrustworthy. An individual who is 2 months into a new position may feel constrained when a new and better job opportunity presents itself by this cultural expectation. This norm is a side bet, constraining this individual’s choice. The act of taking the position also acts as a side bet, influencing the course of action this individual will choose. Bureaucratic arrangements at times act as side bets. For example, in a study of Chicago teachers, Becker (1952) found that bureaucratic regulations stipulated that new teachers were assigned to schools that had no waiting lists of teachers wanting positions in the school. The schools without waiting lists were typically schools serving disadvantaged children. New teachers were often placed in these schools even though they wanted to teach in the more desirable schools that had long waiting lists. When finally given the option to move, teachers had adjusted their teaching to meet the needs of disadvantaged students and were not willing to make changes necessary to teach children in the more desirable schools. Thus, commitments are not always made “consciously or deliberately,” according to Becker (1960), but as a

result of circumstance and side bets.

Rosabeth Kanter (1972), a sociologist who based her theory of commitment on her study of utopian societies, argued that commitment is also dependent on how individuals “orient” themselves to the costs and rewards involved in participating in the culture, to the emotional attachment to others within the culture, and to the “moral compellingness of the norms and beliefs of the system” (p. 68). Commitment can be what Kanter termed instrumental, where individuals make a purely cognitive consideration of the costs and benefits related to participating in the culture. When the benefits outweigh the costs, this compels continued participation. Affective commitment relates to those decisions based on solidarity and social relationships within the group. Finally, moral commitment may influence an individual’s decision when evaluating demands required for upholding norms and values of the group. When these demands are deemed of high moral worth and consistent with an individual’s own values, individuals may be compelled to commit themselves. Commitments, therefore, are often based on how cultures are organized and whether they create more benefits than costs, establish positive relationships, and promote morals and values of which individuals can identify.

Commitment is also dependent on individuals’ identities, which provides an important connection to sociocultural theory with its emphasis on social construction of identity. Identity theory operates under the assumption that people develop, project, and safeguard an image of themselves (Woods, 1983). Establishing an identity consists of coming together with others, interacting within those cultures, projecting an identity, and accepting how others situate and identify the individual (Stone, 1962). Like commitment, identities develop and change over time as individuals take on new experiences, participate in new cultures, and develop new expectations about the future (Kelchtermans, 2005). Identity influences an individual’s commitment and commitment influences an individual’s identity (Kanter, 1972). Committing to a culture “requires, first, that the person

reformulate and re-evaluate his identity” (Kanter, 1972, p. 3) in terms of accepting the norms of that culture. Sometimes individuals are unwilling to reformulate their identities, which affects their ability to commit to a given culture or even career. For example, individuals can become invested in maintaining and reinforcing their role, which inhibits their ability to commit and adapt to changes within the culture (Ball & Goodson, 1985). For teachers, educational reforms and innovations of school organization can “represent a threat to identity or the possibility of humiliation associated with a spoiled identity” (p. 19). Conversely, new circumstances can also result in “re-formulated” interests, resulting in changes to an individual’s identity and new commitments as “new directions [are] envisaged” (Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1985, p. 2).

In terms of career, there are different levels of commitment from “near total through partial, to almost complete lack” (Woods, 1983, p. 155). Three main types of commitment have been identified by theorists: professional commitment, vocational commitment, and career continuance. Professional commitment was conceptualized by Colin Lacey (1977) based on his grounded theory analysis of data collected with student teachers in England and was corroborated by Jennifer Nias (1989) in her study of beginning teachers. Teachers who are committed to teaching and maintaining a long career in the classroom are defined as having “professional commitment.” Professionally committed individuals intend to stay in their positions and are not interested in other career options. This contrasts with individuals who are partially committed to the career, which Lacey termed “vocational commitment.” A similar concept was used by both Nias (1989) and Wenger (1998) in their theoretical works. Vocational commitment describes individuals who are committed to education, but not necessarily to teaching. These participants see “teaching as a means rather than an end” (Lacey, 1977, p. 121) and when teaching proves to be an ineffectual means, individuals abandon teaching, seeking more effective means within or outside education. These individuals are interested in attaining “high occupa-

tional standards” (Nias, 1989, p. 32) and yearn for promotion and status within their job structures (Wenger, 1998). “Career-continuance,” one of the lowest levels of commitment, characterizes those who continue in their position due to other responsibilities and obligations, including family, mortgages or rent, and retirement pensions (Woods, 1983). These individuals use the job to “make ends meet” and have no aspirations to advance within the profession (Wenger, 1998). It is important to note that levels of commitment can change over time and be enhanced or diminished by experiences and circumstances (Woods, 1983).

Commitment theory is suited for this study because it is closely related to sociocultural theory. One of the main components of sociocultural theory is identity and how culture influences that identity. Since commitment and identity theory are intimately linked, commitment acts as a good middle range theory that will allow a gradual progression from particular observations, to abstractions, to the larger theoretical framework of sociocultural theory. Retention involves individuals’ conceptions of what it means to be a teacher along with how they interpret what happens in the school cultures in which they work. It is important to understand how participants perceive their commitment and identity in relation to their jobs as teachers, including the side bets and orientations that may affect decisions to leave and how commitment and identity change over time.

Empirical Research on Teacher Retention

This study investigates attrition of teachers early in their careers. Research on this specific aspect of retention is limited, therefore, this review will examine not only those studies on early career exits, but also research on the problem of retention in general. Empirical research on the problem of retention includes a vast body of literature spanning decades of research. Instead of synthesizing this field of research in its entirety, a more focused approach was used. First, studies were selected that exhibited rigor and quality

in their research methodologies by appearing in peer-reviewed journals and books. Studies from various research centers were also reviewed, including studies from the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, the Urban Teacher Education Collaborative, and the National Center for Education Statistics. Efforts were made to include a wide range of theoretical, methodological, and analytical perspectives by searching databases, like the Educational Resource Information Center. Important research from around the world is also included, though most of the research on the problem of teacher retention comes out of the United States. Second, this review concentrated on contemporary studies, or those published within the last 10 years, to capture aspects of the problem of teacher retention as it is experienced by teachers today. While historical perspectives on the problem of teacher retention are valuable, focusing on contemporary research allows for greater understanding of what the participants of this study experienced in their teaching placements. Finally, much has been learned about the problem of teacher retention by exploring related aspects of teaching and schools, including teacher effectiveness, teacher quality, and even teacher training and preparation. These studies provide relevant insight into issues of teacher retention, but in an effort to concentrate solely on issues of attrition this review is limited, with a few exceptions, to only those studies with a clear focus on understanding the problem of teacher retention. Research specific to Catholic schools is limited, both in the United States and abroad (Grace & O'Keefe, 2007). Many studies do not provide specific data related to Catholic schools, even when including Catholic teachers in research samples, reporting Catholic school data with other private schools. For this reason, this review includes studies comparing public and private schools as well as those specific to Catholic schools (see Appendix A for a table of empirical studies reviewed).

The literature is divided into four parts: research on the scope of the problem of teacher retention, research on specific factors related to attrition, research on teacher

retention internationally, and research on teacher retention in Catholic schools. Each category of this review includes research from diverse disciplinary and methodological perspectives, using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to measure and analyze the problem of teacher retention.

Retention: The Scope of the Problem

Research on the scope of the problem of teacher retention has sought to quantify and qualify the extent to which teachers are staying in their teaching positions (stayers), moving to new positions in other schools (movers), or leaving the profession all together (leavers). The research on the scope of the problem of teacher retention is broken into three sections: national perspectives, regional perspectives, and in-depth perspectives (which take a closer look at issues surrounding teacher retention). Studies are roughly grouped together according to disciplinary and methodological approaches, reviewing studies with statistical methodological approaches followed by studies from economic, sociological, and practitioner perspectives.

Retention: National Perspectives

A national perspective on the problem of teacher retention examines the extent to which teachers are staying, moving, and leaving by investigating nationally representative samples. These studies also explore who stays, moves, and leaves in terms of age, years of experience, and other teacher characteristics. This section reviews six studies that use statistical methodologies to estimate the number of teachers staying, moving, and leaving the profession across the United States.

The National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) use large, randomly selected national samples of teachers to determine quantitatively the scope of teacher mobility as well as teacher per-

ceptions of their schools and reasons for their career decisions. These surveys have been conducted a total of six times beginning in the mid-1980s, with the latest complete results released in 2008 and 2009. Using Likert scales, teachers rate how important discrete factors were in their decisions to stay, move, or leave. For example, 10% of public school teachers who moved rated “did not have enough autonomy over classroom at previous school” as very or extremely important in their decision to move (Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2007, p. 12). During the 2003-2004 school year 84% of the 3,214,900 public school teachers surveyed stayed, 8% moved, and 8% left. Results from the 2000-01 TFS show that teachers leave due to low salaries, little support from administration, low job satisfaction, inadequate resources and workplace conditions, and poor student behavior and motivation (Luekens, et al., 2004). Teachers with fewer years of experience and with the most experience had higher attrition rates. Researchers postulated that retirement attributed to the high attrition rates of teachers with more experience. Looking across the last four surveys, researchers found that attrition rates have increased over the past 20 years.

While the SASS and TFS data provide a general scope of the problem, one of the limitations is that it includes in its sample teachers who leave involuntarily, or those who were fired, left for health reasons, or retired. Arguing that involuntary leaving “is very sharply distinguished empirically from the other components of school attrition,” a team of researchers from the Center for Research and Evaluation in Social Policy in Philadelphia further distinguished categories of teachers in the SASS and TFS data, looking at teachers who moved voluntarily, teachers who moved involuntarily, teachers who left voluntarily, and teachers who left involuntarily (Boe, Barkanic, & Leow, 1999, p. 5). Conducting bivariate and regression analyses across results from the 1987-88, 1990-91, and 1993-94 SASS and TFS administrations, Boe and his colleagues found that most involuntary leavers were retirees, constituting almost 75% of the group. Compared to stayers, involuntary leavers were less likely to be enrolled in degree programs, less likely to

experience an increase in the number of dependents, and more likely to have experienced a decrease in income. These findings were not surprising since most involuntary leavers were retirees who did not need further education for promotion and were not expanding their families. Involuntary movers were more likely to have fewer years of experience than stayers. Compared to stayers, voluntary movers also tended to be younger and were more likely to report a lapse in certification as the reason behind their career decisions. Voluntary leavers most often listed personal or family reasons for their departure. Unfortunately, this study did little by way of comparing involuntary movers and leavers to voluntary movers and leavers. This kind of analysis could make important distinctions between motivations that lead to attrition among these groups. For example, do involuntary leavers report the same reasons for leaving as voluntary leavers?

Ingersoll (2003a), who also investigated the SASS and TFS data, argued that the biggest challenge facing schools today is not turnover due to “a graying workforce,” but turnover as teachers move and leave their positions. Examining the 1987-1988, 1990-1991, 1993-1994, and 1999-2000 SASS and TFS administrations, Ingersoll found that the number of teachers leaving and moving has increased over time. While the number of teacher retirements has also increased, retirees account for only a small portion of total turnover. Conducting multivariate statistical analyses across the survey data to determine why teachers left, Ingersoll found that the top reasons for leaving were job dissatisfaction and the desire to pursue other career opportunities either inside or outside of education. Those dissatisfied with teaching listed low salaries, poor administrative support, student discipline problems, and lack of autonomy and influence in decision-making as major reasons for leaving or moving. Ingersoll attributed high turnover to how schools are organized, including their preoccupation with recruitment strategies and to the historical classification of teaching as “temporary” work.

A meta-analysis of 34 quantitative studies on teacher career trajectories and attri-

tion found that many quality teachers were leaving the profession, and that attrition was influenced by a number of personal and professional factors that often change during the course of a career (Borman & Dowling, 2008). This study used statistical methodologies, taking into account variables of teacher demographics and qualifications, school organizational characteristics (e.g., school location, size, and administrative support), school resources (e.g., average class size and student-teacher ratio), and student body characteristics. Findings demonstrated that while teachers without graduate degrees, who were not certified, who had fewer years of experience, and who scored lower on standardized tests scores had greater odds of leaving, there was also evidence suggesting that the talented, better trained, and more experienced teachers “tend[ed] to be lost to turnover with greater frequency” (p. 30). Results also indicated that young, White women who were married and had children exhibited higher odds of attrition. Researchers concluded that personal and professional contexts have an impact on career decisions.

It is difficult to determine whether these reported numbers represent high attrition rates without comparing these rates to those of other occupations. For example, are the attrition rates of engineers, nurses, and other professionals similar to those of teachers? Analyzing data from the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study, which surveys a national representative sample of graduates with bachelor’s degrees, Henke, Zahn, and Carroll (2001) compared new teachers to nonteachers, exploring whether teacher graduates were leaving their careers at a faster rate than other graduates. Looking at results from 9,300 graduates’ reported major activities in 1994 and 1997, researchers conducted multivariate regression analyses to compare attrition rates controlling for factors like gender, GPA, and perceived professional status of occupation. Results indicated that compared to other occupations, including engineering, science, and computer technology, those working as full- or part-time K-12 teachers were just as likely to remain in the same profession as their peers in other fields. Further analysis of the group of K-12 teachers

revealed that those who majored in engineering, math, or the natural sciences and entered teaching had higher attrition rates than those who majored in education. The researchers warned against generalizing their results, as their findings were limited: The research accounted for only two points in time and the sample did not include all new teachers. Still, they concluded that teachers were similar to many of their peers when choosing to remain in their profession.

Another study, which compared teacher turnover to attrition in nursing, social work, and accounting, also found that attrition rates in teaching were similar to comparable professions that require similar levels of education (Harris & Adams, 2007). Similar to the Henke, et al. study, this research project focused on college graduates who entered teaching in both public and private schools. Using results from the past 10 years the Current Population Survey that surveys a nationally representative sample of households, this study provides a more focused comparison of teaching to professions that are similar to teaching (nursing, social work, and accounting). Harris and Adams looked at a sample of 18,700 cases and found that teaching experienced a 7.73% turnover rate, corroborating findings from the SASS and TFS. Comparably, nursing experienced a lower turnover rate of 6.09%, social work experienced a higher turnover rate of 14.94%, and accounting also experienced a higher turnover rate of 8.01%. The researchers concluded that teacher turnover is similar to these other professions, but that teacher retention rates were relatively high among older workers. This suggests that teachers retire earlier than their counterparts in nursing, social work, and accounting. These findings challenge Ingersoll's research that the high rate of teacher turnover is not due to teacher retirements. The authors wrote, "while the absolute number of retirees and leavers found by Ingersoll appear accurate, our results suggest...that retirements play a much larger role than his comparisons would suggest" (p. 326).

These statistical studies reveal that attrition rates have increased over the past 20

years, that beginning teachers are more likely to leave and move, and that low salary, inadequate support, job dissatisfaction, and lack of autonomy are the most cited reasons for moving and leaving. These data are particularly relevant for this study, indicating reasons why teachers leave the profession. But these studies provide a limited understanding of why teachers stay, move, or leave, as they rely solely on surveys. Teachers are limited in the information they can report by the format of these questionnaires. Factors are also treated as discrete variables in these analyses, with little consideration of how these factors relate and interact with one another. With the exception of Ingersoll, who brings a sociological organizational theoretical framework to his work, the research outlining the scope of the problem of teacher retention nationally is limited in terms of methodological and theoretical perspectives.

Retention: Regional Perspectives

While national perspectives on teacher retention can highlight important trends in teacher turnover, studies based on regional data provide important insight into the problem of retention, as they analyze data from multiple sources. The regional studies included in this review look into specific school systems, including schools within a given city or even statewide. All three studies were conducted from an economic perspective, taking into consideration labor forces, supply and demand, and salary.

Two of the studies in this section come out of the Teacher Pathways Project, which is a multiyear study of teachers in New York City schools examining a broad range of issues, including teacher preparation, pathways into teaching, and teacher characteristics that impact student performance. The database included administrative datasets from across the state, surveys of teachers, and other information on school districts, schools, communities, and locales. Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2005) explored teacher transfers and attrition among New York City elementary school teachers during their

first 5 years of teaching. Researchers examined each teacher employed in New York City public schools annually from the 1995-96 school year through the 2003-04 school year, tracking teachers who moved to other districts or left the New York State school system. Using statistical models to measure how job satisfaction, teacher attributes, and school characteristics influenced decisions to move or leave, researchers found “teachers—especially highly qualified teachers—are more likely to transfer or quit when teaching lower-achieving students, even after accounting for student and teacher race” (p. 9). Geography was also an important factor. Teachers who lived farther away from the schools where they taught were more likely to move or leave. New York City teachers who lived about three miles from the school were twice as likely to stay. Conversely, nonresident New York City teachers were five times more likely to move to districts outside the city.

Using data from the Teacher Pathways Project, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2002) closely examined a cohort of new teachers for 5 years, starting in 1993, examining differences between teacher salaries to determine whether this had an impact on teacher attrition and teacher qualifications in schools. Teachers who began their careers in New York’s urban schools were more likely than those who started in suburban schools to leave teaching. Those who transferred out of urban districts were more qualified than those who remained. These trends in mobility had an impact on the teacher qualifications of urban schools and schools serving disadvantaged students. To measure average teacher quality within schools, multiple measures were considered, including the percentages of teachers without prior teaching experience, percentages with bachelor’s degrees, percentages of certified and non-fully certified teachers, percentages of those who failed the New York teacher’s exam, and the percentages of teachers who attended competitive colleges. Creating a composite of these measures for each school and looking across time, results indicated striking differences in teacher qualifications among schools. The least qualified teachers were concentrated in schools located in urban areas and schools serving minor-

ity students, students from low-income families, and students with limited English proficiency. Low performing students were more likely to attend schools with lesser qualified teachers. The authors concluded that “teachers who transfer arguably leave those students most in need of strong teachers, compounding the inequities in teacher qualifications across schools” (p. 51). In their analysis on why teachers were leaving urban schools, researchers found that teachers who transferred from schools serving disadvantaged students to schools serving wealthier families experienced anywhere from a 4% to 15% salary increase. These salary differences were relatively small, but nevertheless researchers argued that salary appeared to be influencing teacher sorting.

Another group of researchers used longitudinal, state-based datasets, analyzing how the labor market influenced teachers’ decisions to stay or leave teaching (Podgursky, Monroe, & Watson, 2002). Specifically, they examined teachers with high “academic quality” as measured by ACT scores, making the assumption that these teachers had more job opportunities than those who had entered teaching with low academic quality. Information on recent graduates was gathered from the Missouri Department of Higher Education. Data on the characteristics of the K-12 schools were obtained from the administrative files of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Using a variety of statistical models to analyze the data, findings revealed that, overall, teacher graduates had lower average ACT scores than nonteaching graduates, with elementary school teachers having significantly lower test scores. Graduates with higher ACT scores were less likely to go into teaching as a career. Women with higher scores were less likely than men with higher scores to enter teaching. The high-achieving graduates and graduates from selective colleges and universities who went into teaching were more likely to leave, corroborating Boyd and his colleagues’ findings. Researchers found little evidence that high-achieving teachers left for increased salary opportunities, contradicting Lankford, et al.’s findings.

Clearly, results from this body of research reveal that the problem of retaining high quality teachers is concentrated in urban schools and schools serving disadvantaged students. The two groups of researchers found contradictory evidence that teachers leave these schools to obtain better salaries. This has particular relevance for this study, as it highlights the complex relationship of salary and retention. These quantitative, statistical research methods provide a general scope of issues facing schools, using multiple data sources to provide a view of retention as it is experienced at the school level. These regional studies, however, do not offer a broad range of methodological and theoretical approaches. They are not able to capture in rich and descriptive ways teacher perspectives or the complex interrelationships between factors that lead to attrition.

Retention: In-Depth Perspectives

Teacher retention has also been examined by looking closely at smaller samples, particular programs, or specific subsets of teachers. These studies do not seek to provide a broad perspective of the problem, but an in-depth and descriptive analysis of teachers' decisions to stay, move, or leave. The four studies reviewed here include sociological and practitioner perspectives and present both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Providing the broadest perspective among this group of studies, researchers from the New Teacher Project collected data from four urban districts in four regions of the United States (Southwest, West, Eastern, and Midwest) and investigated the relationship between district hiring practices, attrition, and teacher quality in schools serving a majority of minority students and/or a majority of students from low-income homes (Levin & Quinn, 2003). Researchers for the New Teacher Project used a mixed methods approach, analyzing multiple data sources, including applicant data, surveys of applicants who left for other districts, and focus groups. The study calculated the length of the hiring process and applicant attrition percentages, investigating how these factors influenced schools.

For each of these districts, recruitment of teachers was not the problem: Each received more applications than there were positions to fill. One district had 4,000 applicants for fewer than 200 positions, another had 5.6 times as many applicants as openings. Many of these prospective teachers applied to teach in high-need areas, including math, science, special education, and bilingual education. Late hiring, however, was a problem throughout all four districts. In the Eastern District even though 600 applicants had successfully passed the initial screening process by the end of May, no teachers were hired until mid-August. Researchers argued that these late hiring practices left “applicants in limbo for months, not knowing if or where they would teach” (p. 11). Meanwhile, surrounding districts made offers much sooner, with the bulk of their hiring completed by early summer. Many who had applied to these urban districts left the hiring process to take positions in districts that hired earlier. For example, in the Eastern District almost 3 out of 5 of the screened applicants withdrew before the end of the summer, blaming the late timeline as the reason for withdrawing their application. Surveys of these applicants revealed that salary was rarely cited as the reason for withdrawing, and close to half of those who took jobs in other districts reported they “definitely” or “probably” would have accepted an offer from the urban district. These late hiring practices had a detrimental effect on the schools in these urban districts because those who withdrew their applications were stronger candidates, often with a degree in their teaching field and higher undergraduate GPAs (Levin & Quinn, 2003).

Another study examined beginning teachers in the state of Massachusetts, investigating their experiences from hiring through the first 4 years of teaching. Harvard University’s Project on the Next Generation of Teachers conducted a multiyear research project providing an in-depth perspective on attracting, supporting, and retaining quality teachers (S. M. Johnson, 2004). Fifty first- and second-year teachers in Massachusetts were interviewed in 1999. Over the next 3 years a brief survey was distributed annually to track these

participants and determine whether they had stayed, moved, or left their teaching placements. Teachers from traditional teacher preparation programs in undergraduate and graduate programs were included in the study as well as teachers who participated in alternative preparation programs and teachers with no teaching credentials. In-depth interviews were conducted twice with each of the participants, once during the 1999-2000 school year and another after the 2000-2001 school year. The interviews asked teachers about their decisions to teach, preparation, early experiences in the classroom, and career plans. Using a sociological organizational perspective, analysis focused on understanding the needs of participants “and then drawing implications for how best to organize schools so that teachers such as these can succeed and thrive in their work” (p. 16).

Johnson (2004) argued that the demand for teachers is increasing, due to retirements, expanding enrollments, and class size reductions, but the solution is more complex than simply recruiting more teachers since today’s teachers are less likely to stay in one career for a lifetime. Compared to the cohort of teachers nearing retirement, the “next generation of teachers” has more career options that offer higher salaries, better benefits, more respect, and superior working conditions. Those who do enter teaching face unprecedented demands, and many leave early in their careers. This attrition exacerbates the teacher shortage. Johnson also found that salary “plays a complicated role” in new teachers’ career decisions (p. 49). Teachers did not expect to make much money as a teacher. At the same time, however, salary was a disincentive, especially when compounded by long hours, poor working conditions, and out-of-pocket expenditures for supplies and professional development requirements. Many interviewees were frustrated with their inability to gain financial independence; they “never expected to get rich, but they did not expect to struggle financially” (p. 58). Results also indicated that hiring, induction, and professional development practices in schools were often poorly implemented, leading to limited support of teachers, which in turn led to increased attrition. The organizational

structure of schools “promote[s] isolated rather than interdependent work” (p. 16), which “compromises” a teacher’s ability to achieve success with students, an important factor in retaining teachers.

Researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles’ Center X gathered longitudinal data following their graduates for up to 9 years, conducting interviews and 1,000 surveys to evaluate their program, which prepares teachers for urban schools (Quartz, et al., 2008). This research not only provided valuable information on the Center X program, but also a close examination of the problem of teacher retention in urban settings. Participants, who had been teaching between 2 and 9 years, were asked about their career paths and what influenced their career decisions. Graduates indicated whether they were still working in the education field and, if so, in what capacity (e.g., as a full- or part-time teacher, administrator, substitute teacher, or working in education but not in a school). Those who remained in education were asked a series of questions about their reasons for staying. In addition, qualitative data were collected from 15 graduates working in four purposively selected urban elementary schools in Los Angeles to explore teachers’ early career decisions (Olson & Anderson, 2007). The 15 participants were randomly selected from the chosen schools to ensure the sample was representative of the Center X graduates. Three semi-structured, 60 minute interviews were conducted with each of the participants during the 2003-2004 school year, asking teachers about their background, life experiences, careers, and life goals. Ninety-minute observations of each of the teachers were also completed. Analysis closely examined the “interdependencies” among the preparation experiences of these teachers, their workplace conditions, and the structures that influenced their career decisions and future plans.

Results from this mixed methods approach demonstrated that while there was movement away from full-time classroom teaching, work within the field of education remained stable (Olson & Anderson, 2007; Quartz, et al., 2008). For example, of the sample

of teachers who had been in education for 8 years, less than half reported working as full-time classroom teachers, but more than 80% were still working in education as either part-time or substitute teachers, administrators, or in other education roles within and outside K-12 classrooms. Nine of the 15 participants in the qualitative study planned to stay in education, though 3 did not plan to stay in the classroom. Researchers labeled these teachers “role changers” and argued for “expanding the typical stay/leave dichotomous variable” to include those who change their roles within the field of education (Quartz, et al., 2008, p. 235). They question whether those teachers who move into education positions outside the classroom should be categorized as leavers and make the case that role changing “needs to be explained in both negative and positive terms” (p. 226): Teachers are not only pushed out of the classroom due to dissatisfaction, but are also pulled out of the classroom by opportunities to change roles within the field of education. Olson and Anderson (2007) suggested that while there are some teachers who are career teachers, this may not be the norm, corroborating Johnson’s findings about the next generation of teachers.

One researcher sought to examine reasons why excellent teachers stay in teaching, with an interest in revealing what it is that keeps these quality teachers motivated and committed to their profession (Nieto, 2003). Like the work from Center X and Levin and Quinn, this study focused on those teachers in urban settings. Rather than trying to explain why it is that teachers are leaving and how to “fix” the problem, Nieto used a practitioner perspective, examining the strengths of teachers and capturing “what is worth cherishing in public school education” (p. 8). Relying on qualitative research methods, Nieto identified 7 “master teachers” and conducted a series of interviews and inquiry group meetings. Analysis revealed broad concepts of hope, love, intellectual work, and anger expressed by teachers. Many of these teachers began their careers with enthusiastic expectations to change student lives dramatically “through hard work and dedication,” valuing education as the “great equalizer” (p.14). While this optimism gradually

gave way to the “sobering realities” of what these teachers could actually accomplish, these talented professionals maintained a “fundamental belief” in the learning ability and capacity of students. Participants were motivated by a sense of mission and were hopeful that they could change lives, even if they could not live up to their initial unrealistic visions of heroism. This sense of hope, as well as a deep commitment to have a positive impact on the injustices of poverty and racism their students experienced, sustained these teachers. Working in collegial atmospheres where teachers could garner inspiration from colleagues also kept these teachers committed to teaching. Nieto concluded that “teachers who keep going in spite of everything know that teaching is more than a job” (p.128).

The four studies reviewed here offer thick descriptions of the scope and factors that lead to attrition, unlike previous studies in this review. In many ways, these four studies challenge conventional wisdom. Johnson argues that attrition of teachers is influenced by a shift in societal norms, where changing careers before retirement is more typical than in the past. Center X researchers support this finding and make the case that typical categorizations of stayer, mover, and leaver fail to capture the career paths of many teachers who may leave classroom teaching, but stay in the field or even return to teaching later in their lives. Finally, Nieto challenges typical investigation techniques that focus on “fixing” the problem, and fail to capture what it is that keeps teachers in classrooms. These challenges have direct implications for this study, suggesting new questions and approaches for examining the problem of teacher retention. For example, asking participants not only why they left, but what their initial plans were when they entered teaching is important in understanding whether participants in this study went into the profession with the expectation that they would stay until retirement. Those who entered the classroom knowing they would leave might have different reasons for leaving than those who expected to stay in the classroom for the duration of their career. The studies reviewed in this section are limited in their generalizability, particularly the Center X research and Ni-

eto's study that focus on specific groups of teachers who may not be representative of all teachers. In addition, three of the studies concentrated on urban teachers who are a subset of the greater teaching population.

Retention: Summary of Research Related to the Scope of the Problem

Research on the scope of the problem of teacher retention reveals several key findings: Attrition rates are increasing, though attrition rates may not be higher than other professions; it is harder to retain quality teachers in schools serving low-achieving, low-income, and minority students; and attrition rates are higher for those early in their careers. These studies also indicate several problems in the organization of schools, leading to late hiring practices, isolation of teachers rather than collegial atmospheres, and an emphasis on recruitment rather than supporting and retaining teachers. It seems clear that researchers must rethink how to conceptualize attrition, which has both negative and positive aspects: Teachers are not just pushed out of classrooms, but are pulled out, serving schools in roles outside the classroom.

Sarason (1971) argues that teachers, from the moment they enter the classroom, experience personal and professional dilemmas. The professional dilemma "stems from the knowledge that the teacher is unable to do justice to teach children in the classroom," which feeds into the personal dilemma of needing to "adjust in some non-disabling or disorganizing way to the personal consequence of the professional dilemma" (p. 155) and the unsettling realization that it is due in part to one's inadequacies. For teachers in urban schools and under-resourced schools, where attrition rates are the highest, teachers might struggle with these dilemmas even more and may not have the support needed to adjust and meet the needs of their students, leading to increased attrition. If these high-needs schools have a concentration of less qualified teachers, than teachers may not work within a strong collegial community within their schools that support their work, leading

to diminished levels of commitment. Many who enter may not be guided by professional commitment to classroom teaching. Many enter the profession for altruistic reasons and may not consider teaching a lifelong career (S. M. Johnson, 2004; Lortie, 1975). If teachers find that teaching is an ineffectual means to achieving their goals of positively impacting others, then they may leave.

The research reviewed here represents a broad range of theoretical, methodological, and analytical approaches. This variety provides a solid understanding of the scope of teacher retention. Surveys, interviews, focus groups, and statistical evaluations of data sources have captured the different aspects of this problem. Most studies included stayers, movers, and leavers in their analyses. Only one study took an in-depth approach of including only those who have stayed in teaching. None of these studies focused specifically on leavers in their quest to understand why teachers are leaving the classroom. This study, therefore, offers a new approach to researching this issue.

Retention: Research on Factors Related to Teacher Retention

Research on the scope of the problem of teacher retention reveal that several factors have a significant impact on teachers' decisions to stay or leave the profession, including salary, teacher support, and school context. This section of the review presents studies that explore the relationship between these three factors and retention, first reviewing studies on salary, then teacher support, and finally school context.

Retention Factors: Salary

As previous research has demonstrated, salary and economic factors play a complex role in teachers' decisions to stay or leave teaching. Many teachers acknowledge that salary is a factor in their career decisions but report that salary was not the only reason for leaving teaching. Teachers, however, may underplay the role of salary and benefits due

to societal norms and pressures: “Teachers are not supposed to consider money, prestige, and security as major inducements” (Lortie, 1975, p. 30). This section presents results from three quantitative analyses focused on the issue of salary as it relates to teacher retention. Not surprisingly, given the complex nature of this factor, the studies come to differing and sometimes contradictory conclusions.

Using the National Longitudinal Study of the Class of 1972 data, which tracks the careers of participants as they migrate and move out of career paths, Stinebrickner (1998) investigated whether salary had an impact on teachers’ early career decisions. Results from 341 of the participants who had become certified to teach were analyzed. Statistical models were used to calculate the time that teachers spent in classrooms before leaving the profession and what influenced the decision to leave. These models took into consideration several factors, including wage, gender, subject area, and school characteristics. Results indicated that participants with math and science degrees and those with high SAT scores had opportunities to receive higher salaries in nonteaching positions and were more likely to leave. In addition, Stinebrickner found that higher wages had a significant impact on teacher retention: Teachers earning salaries over the mean were more likely to stay in teaching for at least 5 years. Stinebrickner concluded that increasing wages, especially for science, math, and high-achieving teachers, would have a significant impact on teacher retention.

Future earning potential must also be taken into consideration when exploring the effect of salary on retention. Collecting data on expected earnings and work conditions of teachers from a large urban school district between 1990 and 2000, researchers examined how salary influenced 6,400 secondary teachers’ decisions to stay or leave classroom teaching using regression analysis and the Annualized Cost of Leaving (ACOL) statistical model developed by the United States military (Hansen, Lien, Cavalluzzo, & Wenger, 2004). The ACOL model operates under the theory that an individual will choose to stay

in an occupation for a given number of years depending on whether the costs of leaving the profession are greater than relative earnings in other opportunities. Thus, this model takes into consideration the potential earning power of teachers relative to employment opportunities outside teaching. Results revealed that teacher salaries were lower than estimated earnings of nonteachers with the same level of experience, though teacher salaries increased dramatically by year 13, coming closer to income potentials outside the field of education. Similar to other retention studies, results indicated that attrition rates were highest for teachers with fewer years of experience and teachers serving minority and low-income student populations. Corroborating Stinebrickner's findings, Hansen and his colleagues discovered that the earning potential of math and science teachers led to increased attrition among these teachers. Math teachers had a 5% higher attrition rate and science teachers had a 36% higher attrition rate compared to all other secondary teachers. Statistical analysis estimating the effect of salary increases for all teachers found that salary increases would only slightly improve teacher retention. Researchers suggested a more cost-effective approach of increasing salaries of those teachers who are more "at risk" for leaving, including science, math, and beginning teachers.

Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2001) asserted that working conditions and student characteristics result in higher attrition. Nevertheless, they also recommended targeted salary increases directed toward teachers who work in schools serving disadvantaged students. Researchers used the Texas Education Agency's databases, which included demographic information of race, ethnicity, and gender of elementary school teachers and students. Data on the years of experience, level of education, and salary of each teacher was collected annually, along with information on the class size and student characteristics taught each year. Conducting both descriptive and regression analyses, statistical models took into account factors such as working conditions, school characteristics, personnel policies, and alternative earning potential to determine which factors had the strongest

impact on retention. Results indicated that even though higher salaries had a positive impact on retention, movement between schools was related more to the characteristics of the schools and the students they served than to salary. Districts that offered higher salaries experienced lower attrition rates. Predominantly, however, teachers who moved left schools serving disadvantaged students to enter schools serving students with higher average achievement and lower percentages of minority students, a recurring theme throughout this review. Researchers concluded that student characteristics had a stronger impact on teachers' decisions to move than salary. Hanushek and his colleagues argued that targeted pay increases for teachers in schools serving disadvantaged students were needed to improve teacher retention in these schools.

While research has revealed that salary and economic considerations have an impact on teachers' decisions to leave, for the most part it has failed to explain the complex nature of how salary influences whether a teacher will continue to teach. In part this is because it is extremely difficult to capture teachers' perspectives on this complicated issue. "Merely asking teachers to tell what they know or find rewarding cannot guarantee that self-reports will capture the insider's perspective" (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p. 506). This body of research did not ask teachers about how salary played a role in their decisions to stay or leave. Instead, these studies tracked teachers and gathered data on their salaries, characteristics, and workplace conditions using statistical methodologies to estimate the effect of compensation on their career choices. This highlights important broad trends and in many ways reveals the true impact of salary on teacher decisions, as teachers spoke with their actions rather than their words, uninhibited by social norms to downplay the role of salary. But this also limits the findings of these studies since they fail to include teacher perspectives. Salaries do have an impact on teacher retention; when salaries increase, teacher retention rates increase. Overall, however, this effect is relatively small. Some teachers are more responsive to pay increases than others, and economic

opportunities outside the field of education also influence teachers' career decisions.

Retention Factors: Teacher Support

Support from administrators and other teachers are important considerations in teachers' decisions to stay or leave the classroom. Strong collegial school communities can create an "intellectual community in which [teachers] could look forward to growth and change" (Sarason, 1971, p. 164), and since a teacher "is required to give of himself intellectually and emotionally" (p. 167) teachers need a source of "getting" in order to sustain their commitment. Colleagues and administrators can provide this. This section reviews two studies investigating the impact of teacher support on teacher retention.

Statistical analysis with a subsample of 5,088 first-year teachers who participated in the 1987-88 and 1993-94 SASS and TFS revealed that when new teachers perceived their workplace cultures to be collaborative they were more likely to stay (Weiss, 1999). Findings demonstrated that new teachers' perceptions of their schools' leadership and culture were the strongest variables related to commitment to teaching. New teachers were more likely to report that they planned to stay in teaching when they felt they worked in supportive environments that encouraged teacher participation in decision-making. Based on these findings, mentoring and induction programs for first-year teachers were recommended as ways to improve retention of teachers by providing the resources, tools, feedback, and support needed by new teachers.

According to a MetLife telephone survey on the transition into teaching, relationships with members of the school community were extremely important for new teachers, but this kind of support was not always available (Markow & Martin, 2005). The survey was administered to a representative sample of 800 K-12 public school teachers with fewer than 5 years of experience. Teachers who reported that they were likely to leave teaching within the next 5 years were more often dissatisfied with their relationships with

other teachers, their principals, and their students. Results from the survey indicated that improvements are needed in providing quality support: More than 60% of teachers felt that their principal did not create an environment that helped them be effective teachers, almost 20% of participants were not assigned a mentor, and 12% of participants reported that they did not have anyone to go to for advice about the curriculum. This means that almost one-third of new teachers in this sample did not feel they had a mentor or someone to go to for help. Teachers in schools serving disadvantaged students were less likely to report having collegial support in their schools. MetLife researchers concluded that improving support systems available to beginning teachers is an important component for increasing teacher retention.

Collegial atmospheres do not fit the traditional culture of schools where teachers are isolated from one another. Results from the MetLife study show that for many beginning teachers these supports are unavailable to them. It is difficult to discern whether or not the teachers included in the studies reviewed here were representative of other teachers throughout schools in the United States, but it seems clear that collegial relationships among faculty need to be supported in schools to improve retention. This is especially important for beginning teachers, an important implication for this study. The studies reviewed indicate that asking teachers to elaborate on the types of relationships they had with other teachers and with their principals are important research questions.

Retention Factors: School Context

Many teachers are influenced by the school contexts in which they work, including the amount of work that is expected of them. The “idealization of the teacher” is that of the “self-sacrificing, gentle, kindly, self-effacing creature, overworked, underpaid, but never out of patience and always ready to ‘give more freely of her time and money’” (Waller, 1932, p. 419). This stereotype, along with personal pressure on what it means to

be a “good teacher,” often leaves teachers dissatisfied with their workload. This section reviews two studies that examined the impact of workload and workplace conditions on teacher retention.

Educational reform efforts to professionalize teaching have expanded teacher roles, often requiring teachers to take on leadership tasks aimed at increasing school quality and student performance. Qualitative ethnographic case studies, based on observations, interviews, and time diaries of 26 teachers in two California high schools were analyzed to examine the impact of expanded teacher roles (Bartlett, 2004). These data were originally collected to analyze teachers’ experience of school reform, but when patterns of expanded conceptions of professionalism emerged, researchers were drawn to an analysis of teachers’ role perceptions and workloads. In both schools, teachers took on leadership roles, working collaboratively in various committees to develop curricula, school assessments, and scheduling. In “South High School” teachers received some compensation for taking on these extra responsibilities, either financial or an adjustment to their workload. Results from the time diaries demonstrated that these supports led to an average work day of 8.5 hours, whereas teachers in “East High School,” who did not receive such supports, worked an expanded day of 11.5 hours. East High School experienced higher teacher attrition, and while this could be due to other factors not included in the study, the researchers concluded that the differences in work hours and support “suggest a plausible relationship” (p. 573). Teachers at East High School felt “torn between living up to their work conceptions and having a life outside the school—yet feeling dissatisfied with both” (p. 573). They felt pressured to live up to these expectations, both by a sense of commitment to their understanding of what it meant to be a good teacher and collegial expectations. Bartlett cautions reformers to consider expanded teacher roles carefully, examining not only what teachers are doing, but why they are doing it. Removing tasks to alleviate an extended work day will not lead to increased retention “unless [teachers] feel students

are still being served well and that, as teachers, they are fulfilling notions of good teaching” (p. 579). This point is closely related to other studies that have shown the importance of teachers’ self-efficacy on retention (S. M. Johnson, 2004; Nieto, 2003).

One group of researchers focused on a very literal definition of school context: school facilities (Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005). With an average age of 40, many school buildings in the United States are older than the teachers who work in them. A 2002 survey of K-12 teachers in Washington, D.C., asked respondents, among other questions, to grade their school facility. Creating a statistical model to control for other variables related to retention, researchers found a statistically significant impact of the quality of school facilities on teachers’ decisions to stay in their job placements. When teacher perceptions of school facilities were high, probability of retention increased. Many teachers were dissatisfied with their work conditions; two-thirds of teachers cited poor indoor air quality in their schools and over a fifth of participants were frustrated with inadequate lighting. Other factors demonstrated a stronger impact on retention, including teacher age, number of years teaching in the school, and satisfaction with community involvement. However, school facilities had a larger effect than dissatisfaction with pay. Researchers concluded that “the benefits of facility improvement for retention can be equal to or even greater than those from pay increases” (p. 1118-1119) and offered this as a more cost-effective approach to increasing teacher retention. Again, this study suggests how working conditions influence teacher effectiveness, thereby influencing retention.

These studies indicate that school context, defined as workload and facilities, influence teachers’ sense of success with their students. This in turn has an impact on teachers’ decisions to stay, move, or leave. The school facilities study used statistical analyses to measure the effect of this factor on retention. The study on workload, however, did not provide a clear link to teacher retention. Still, this body of research provides relevant information for this study. These studies indicate that it is important to explore issues of

workload, discussing with participants their different roles in addition to classroom teaching and how they felt these influenced the quality of their instruction.

Retention Factors: Summary of Research

Research on how salary, support, and context bear upon teacher career decisions seem to articulate a common theme: Simple solutions will not suffice. Teachers need to feel supported, in compensation that acknowledges the work they do, from colleagues and principals who encourage and assist them, and in realistic expectations of what they can accomplish. The research presented here indicates that simply increasing teacher salaries is unlikely to result in improved retention rates. “Economic considerations do not solely determine the power of an occupation to attract desirable individuals” (Waller, 1932, p. 377). Many who go into teaching know salaries for teachers are not high. But as the empirical research reveals and Waller’s theoretical work confirms, salary does indicate and impact how individuals view the “social standing of the occupation” (p. 377) and whether the work is valued. While some teachers see the occupation as a “‘calling’ they chose early and have given unwavering commitment, others talk about their choices as a compromise with realities’ demands” (Lortie, 1975, p. 39). A deliberate approach is needed that considers the complex nature of salary and how it influences teachers’ considerations to stay in teaching.

Teachers value supportive relationships with their colleagues, but these relationships must consist of more than just gossip and vent sessions during lunch hour. Structures are needed to encourage teachers to work together, taking advantage of one another’s feedback, expertise, and knowledge. Teachers yearn for an intellectually stimulating community in which to “experience a sense of learning, changing, [and] growing” (Sarason, 1971, p. 164). It is not that teachers want to be told “good job,” though recognition certainly is needed, but the need for critical, constructive feedback to stimulate new

ideas and intellectual growth is often missing.

Though many teachers want more decision-making opportunities and welcome leadership roles to improve their schools, these opportunities could increase pressures and raise unrealistic expectations. Reducing teacher responsibilities without a careful consideration of how that will impact teacher effectiveness with students will not lead to desired results of improving retention. Schools must maintain structures that encourage and support teacher effectiveness not only for the benefit of increased student achievement, but increased teacher self-efficacy and positive identity.

This study seeks to explore further how teachers weigh the factors of salary, support, and context in their career decisions by examining how these factors interact in decisions to leave teaching. This study offers a new approach to understanding the relationships between these factors and retention by taking a close look, capturing teacher perspectives through interviews and survey data. As in the previous section, the studies on retention factors do not concentrate on leavers. Leavers are often included in studies, but often as subsample of a larger group of teachers that includes stayers and movers. This study offers a unique approach that deepens our understanding of attrition.

Retention: The Problem of Teacher Retention Internationally

Internationally, teacher retention is a problem many countries face, though issues in teacher supply vary with some countries experiencing or anticipating a shortage of teachers while others have a surplus. Most industrialized countries experience problems in particular geographic areas (e.g., rural, inner-city) and subjects (e.g., science, math), while developing countries struggle to retain teachers amidst “poor working conditions, lack of access to education, high demographic growth, and even loss of teachers to HIV/AIDS” (Rinke, 2008). This section reviews research on the problem of teacher attrition and retention in countries across the world, first outlining the scope of the problem, fol-

lowed by research on specific factors related to attrition.

International Retention: The Scope of the Problem

Studies on the scope of retention in countries across the world reveal many similarities and differences with the United States. For example, the status of teaching, which is low in the United States, is high in Finland and Ireland (OECD, 2005). Examining the problem of teacher retention in other countries provides alternative perspectives and a deeper understanding of the problem of teacher retention. This section of the review examines research on the scope of international retention from national, regional, and in-depth perspectives.

Scope of international retention: National perspectives. This section presents research on the scope of teacher retention based on a comprehensive report from the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), which conducted an international review of 25 countries. The project combined literature reviews, commissioned papers, detailed reports about each country's school system, and case studies of nine countries where external review teams investigated issues of attracting, developing, and retaining teachers, providing national perspectives on the problem of teacher retention in countries across the world.

About half of participating countries expressed concerns in retaining quality teachers. Comparing across 13 countries with sufficient data, several countries experienced attrition rates of at least 6%, including the Flemish Country in Belgium, England and Wales, Israel, Sweden, and the United States (OECD, 2005). Several trends emerged in these countries similar to the United States: Attrition rates were often higher in schools serving disadvantaged students, even in some countries reporting a surplus of teachers. In Hungary, for example, schools serving a majority of Romani students often had problems

attracting and retaining teachers despite the country having a surplus of qualified teachers. Younger teachers and teachers with stronger academic credentials were more likely to leave. Attrition rates were often higher in specific subject areas, including computer science, mathematics, technology, foreign languages, and the sciences. But where Denmark and Ireland had difficulties retaining math teachers, Belgium and Switzerland reported problems recruiting and retaining computer science teachers. France, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Portugal, and Spain all had a large pool of qualified teachers for these positions. Though the majority of countries had an aging workforce during the 1990s, the proportion of those leaving for retirement fell between 1995 and 2001 in two-thirds of the countries with broadly comparable data. This corroborates Ingersoll's (2003a) work in the United States indicating increasing attrition rates are not necessarily attributed to retirement.

Teacher retention problems were not universal across all countries included in the OECD (2005) report. Italy, Japan, and Korea all reported attrition rates less than 3% in 2001. Italy and Scotland experienced a decline in attrition between 1995 and 2001. Korea and Greece reported a "saturated" teacher workforce, which created problems as qualified candidates experienced difficulty finding jobs after investing in graduate coursework to become certified. In Greece teachers could remain on the candidate list for more than 10 years before they were offered teaching positions, leading officials to start hiring based on competitive examinations. There is growing concern among these countries that the competitiveness of securing teaching positions is discouraging many talented individuals from pursuing careers in teaching and that qualified, motivated individuals may be lost to the profession.

Across the countries included in the report, main factors related to retention included salary relative to potential income outside teaching; work conditions that provide appropriate support, reward, and challenge for teachers; status and respect for teachers; and other career opportunities (OECD, 2005). It is important to note that these factors,

however, were not the same across all countries. Taking salary as an example, in Korea teachers with more than 15 years of experience earned 2.7 times the national average income. In the Slovak Republic, however, teachers with at least 15 years of experience only earned 0.5 times more than the national average income. Thus, salary has a different effect on teachers' career decisions in these two countries. Teacher salaries and salary scales differ dramatically between countries, making it difficult to draw comparisons. Nevertheless, salary was an area of teacher dissatisfaction in many countries.

The OECD (2005) report reveals interesting similarities and differences between the United States and other countries. Like the United States, many countries have problems retaining younger teachers, teachers with strong academic backgrounds, and teachers in schools serving disadvantaged students. The OECD reports' findings further underscore the complexities of main factors leading to attrition in these countries. For example, surpluses in teachers, which may occur regionally in the United States, could also lead to attrition of teachers if they cannot secure teaching positions. The OECD report used mixed methods, which included both quantitative and qualitative data sources. Throughout the report, however, the voices of teachers themselves were missing. Any study including such a broad range of data sacrifices detailed accounts to provide general information across cases. The OECD report presents an overview of the problem of teacher retention as it is experienced throughout countries across the world. It does not give detailed information on how specific countries experience these issues.

Scope of international retention: Regional perspectives. Two studies were found that examined the problem of teacher retention in England and Finland using regional perspectives or studies that explored specific regions and combined multiple data sources to explore retention. The Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives, and their Effects on Pupils (VITAE) research project explored teacher effectiveness over time using interviews,

surveys of teachers and pupils, and teacher case studies, along with pupil assessment data across 100 schools and 300 teachers in England (Day, et al., 2007). While this study was not specifically focused on issues of teacher retention, the investigation of teachers' professional lives included important aspects of identity and commitment that influenced teachers' career decisions.

Day and his colleagues defined three types of factors that influenced teachers' identities, self-efficacy, and commitment to teaching: "situated factors," including collegiality among teachers, strength of school leadership, and characteristics of students served; "professional factors," including educational policies and initiatives, teacher roles and responsibilities; and "personal factors," including family support and life circumstances. These factors had a different impact on teachers depending upon their career phase. For example, for beginning teachers the impact of collegiality and support from school administration was "significant in helping to build their confidence and self-efficacy and deciding the direction of their next professional life path" (p. 72). For those teachers with 16 to 23 years of experience, however, "events in personal lives, coupled with additional duties, had a stronger impact" (p. 87). Part of the reason for this variation in impact, according to the authors, is that "identity itself is a composite consisting of competing interactions between personal, professional, and situational factors" (p. 106). Teachers' identities are influenced by their capacities to manage different situations. This in turn affects teachers' sustained commitment, which consists of "the dynamic interplay between teacher identity, agency and context as they affect teachers' perceived effectiveness" (p. 224). Maintaining an appropriate work-life balance, gaining support and collegiality from faculty, and working with quality leadership all played "a major role in teachers' sustained commitment and their motivation to remain in or leave a school" (p. 141). Day and his colleagues concluded that in order to increase retention, we must come to a "better understanding of what enables teachers to remain and sustain their com-

mitment, resilience, and therefore, effectiveness over the whole of their careers” (p. 234). This presents a much more complex dynamic between factors and confirms commitment theorists’ assertions that levels of commitment can change over time. It also corroborates studies reviewed earlier on the importance of experiencing success on retention (S. M. Johnson, 2004; Nieto 2003).

Results from a regional study in Finland, based on case studies from a 2-week visit investigating issues of attracting, developing, and retaining teachers, found that in contrast to many other countries experiencing issues of teacher attrition, Finnish teachers were encouraged to stay in their teaching placements due to a system that supported teachers and where stark differences in resources and work conditions that typically exist between urban and suburban schools did not occur (Grubb, 2007). Teachers worked in small schools, creating a strong community, and taught a class size of often 16 to 18 students. Each school was well resourced with a team of professionals, including special needs teachers, teaching assistants, and counselors to help meet student needs. This allowed teachers to provide individual attention to students’ progress, increasing teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. As the VITAE study found and commitment and identity theories posit, this type of self-efficacy and identity influenced teacher commitment and professional career decisions.

Scope of international retention: In-depth perspectives. One study was found that provided an in-depth perspective on the problem of teacher retention. This study looked into graduate programs in Taiwan, specifically newly established science teacher education programs, conducting both interviews and surveys to understand better the motivations for teaching among graduates (Wang, 2004). Over 100 surveys from students were collected from nine of the 23 teacher education programs that prepare science teachers and 33 graduate-level science students were interviewed. Survey results suggested that

many studying to become teachers believed that teaching offered a good income, better job security, and relatively high social status and respect compared to corporate jobs. Participants were also attracted to the high social status specific to science teachers. Taiwanese culture holds these teachers in high esteem. Though many did not believe teaching was easy or trouble free, participants reported they believed teaching to be less stressful than career options in the business sector.

Scope of international retention: Summary. The cultural and contextual differences that exist between countries provide great insight into the problem of teacher retention. Looking at the different sociocultural contexts across nations it becomes clear that teachers' decisions are influenced by the interactions they have within the school context, their personal lives, and with greater society. As Day and his colleagues (2007) found in their study, teachers progress through their careers and negotiate the contexts in which they find themselves, changing their identities and commitments. In countries like Taiwan and Finland where teaching maintains a relatively high social status and offers good job stability, or in countries like Korea, Greece, and Hungary where there is a surplus of teachers, those who enter the profession may have a greater sense of commitment and may identify more strongly with being a teacher than in countries like the United States where teaching has a lower status and accessibility into teaching is relatively easy (Lortie, 1975).

International Retention: Research on Factors Related to Teacher Retention

Research on the scope of the problem of teacher retention as it is experienced in countries around the world indicated several factors that impact teachers' career decisions. Studies show that the effect of these factors varies from country to country, dependent upon the different societal, cultural, and organizational contexts that exist. This section of the review provides a glimpse into the research on the impact of salary, teacher

support, and school context on teacher retention in countries across the world in order to provide a comparison to studies presented earlier in the review with the important caveat that these factors are not universal across all nations.

International retention factors: Salary. Research presented earlier found that increasing teacher salaries had a positive influence on retention, but researchers posited that salary increases should be targeted to science, math, beginning, highly qualified, and urban school teachers, as these tended to have higher attrition rates (Hansen, et al., 2004; Hanushek, et al., 2001; Stinebrickner, 1998). Smithers and Robinson (2003), however, found that while salary was an important factor for teachers in London, workload was a more significant factor. Collecting surveys of more than 1,066 leavers and conducting interviews with a subsample of 306 leavers, this approach sharply contrasts with the studies on salary presented earlier that relied on statistical manipulation of information provided by state and district databases. Smithers and Robinson found that the main factors that influenced teachers' decisions to leave classroom teaching were workload, education reforms, school context, salary, and personal circumstances. Factoring out retirement and maternity as reasons for leaving, salary was the least important factor. Among leavers, only 25% said better salary might have induced them to stay in teaching while 43% suggested a reduction in workload would increase retention. Smithers and Robinson categorize workload as a push factor, where teachers leave to avoid these circumstances, whereas salary is a pull factor where teachers are enticed by positions with higher salary. One teacher reported that salary was a major factor because it failed to compensate teachers properly, indicating low worth and status, and made it impossible to become financially stable to begin a family. This presents a more complex understanding of how salary influences teachers' decisions, suggesting that salary also impacts teachers' sense of self-worth.

Reports commissioned by the OECD (2005) report found that when teachers' salaries fall relative to opportunities outside the classroom, attrition rates increase, especially among male teachers and highly qualified teachers. Higher salaries in other professions "increase the tendency among teachers to switch careers," but decisions to leave for family reasons or to leave the workforce "tended to be more affected by teacher salary levels themselves, rather than teachers' salaries relative to other salaries" (p. 180). Looking at salary scales across countries with comparable data revealed that in 70% of countries it took an average of 20 years for teachers to move from the bottom of the salary scale to the top; thus teachers did not experience rapid pay increases. In countries like Hungary and Spain it took almost 40 years to reach the top of the salary scale, but teachers at the top of the scale did not earn substantially more than those at the bottom. New Zealand and Scotland had the shortest salary scale where it took teachers just 7 years to reach the top salary level where the ratio between the top and the bottom salary was relatively high. How this influences retention is still unclear, but findings suggest that some countries are moving away from these traditional salary scales to allow more targeted salary increases to attract and retain teachers better. Australia, Denmark, England, and Norway all adopted strategies of targeting salary increases to beginning teachers in order to retain this group of teachers that typically has higher attrition rates. Hungary, in an effort to retain more experienced teachers, has targeted faster raises for more experienced teachers (OECD, 2005).

International retention factors: Teacher support. As detailed earlier, teacher support, including collegiality and administrative support, has an important influence on teachers' experiences. Two studies are reviewed here. Day and his colleagues (2007) found that leadership and relationships with colleagues were the most frequently mentioned influences on teachers' work and "play[ed] a major role in teachers' sustained

commitment and their motivation to remain in or leave a school” (p. 141). Primary teachers were more likely to perceive that leadership had an impact on their work compared to secondary teachers. Teachers identified good, supportive leadership as those leaders who communicated with faculty and staff, were approachable and respected by parents, staff, and students, promoted and demonstrated a commitment to the school, rewarded and supported staff contributions, and presented a visible presence in the school. Both secondary and primary teachers emphasized the importance of colleagues for seeking advice and discussing concerns and issues. “Teachers stressed the importance of having someone to talk to when things went wrong and having the time and space to discuss problems and ways of dealing with them” (p. 141). Day and his colleagues concluded that support from leadership and colleagues were important factors in determining the resilience and commitment of teachers throughout their careers.

A quantitative survey of 230 secondary teachers in China found that “secondary school teachers tend to be generally dissatisfied with all aspects of their work” (Wriqi, 2008, p. 24). Of the 10 factors measured in the study, collegial relationships was the least important factor leading to dissatisfaction. Instead, teachers were most concerned with social status, student quality, work stress, social acknowledgment, and the education system and social environment than with leadership (Wriqi, 2008). This contrasts sharply with results from nations like the United States and Europe, where studies have found that collegiality and administrative support are key factors in retaining teachers.

International retention factors: School context. Studies reviewed earlier indicated that education reforms that require teachers to take on more leadership had a particular influence on teachers’ perceptions of workload (Bartlett, 2004). Education reforms had an impact on teacher workloads in Australia as well (Dinham & Scott, 1996). A survey of a representative sample of 892 teachers in the Metropolitan West Region of Australia re-

vealed that teachers were dissatisfied with workload and the impact of change. Throughout closed- and open-ended survey responses, teachers reported that their workloads had increased. Most teachers attributed this increase to imposed reform and many were dissatisfied with the support structures to cope with these changes. Overall, only 29% of teachers were satisfied with their workload. Many believed that nonteaching responsibilities were putting pressure on their ability to plan and teach their students as well as on their personal lives. Morale and confidence among teachers plummeted as they tried to implement changes with little direction or support. These findings further attest to the importance of achieving success for teachers. When teachers perceive that circumstances inhibit their ability to provide quality instruction, satisfaction decreases.

Results from the OECD (2005) report indicated that while the particular reasons teachers report for leaving and the importance of these factors may vary from country to country, “poor working conditions are often the reason teachers give for leaving the profession” (p. 199). Workload, resources, support, student behavior, and parental support were oft-reported factors across countries studied. In Australia, more resources and a lower workload were identified most by teachers as suggestions for retaining teachers. In England, workload was the number one factor identified by teachers, corroborating Smithers and Robinson’s findings. Reports from Finland found that 88% of teachers cited increased pressure and time constraints as problematic. Workload was especially problematic in countries like Mexico and the Slovak Republic where salaries were low and many teachers are forced to work second jobs. “The need to devote time to earning extra income makes it difficult for such teachers to become extensively involved in developing their school or working closely with their colleagues” (p. 201).

International retention factors: Summary. This section reveals important insight into the problem of retention. Salary was a source of dissatisfaction for many teachers,

but broad comparisons between countries are difficult given differences in salary structures. For many teachers, workload is a major factor that influences not only their ability to plan and implement lessons successfully, but their personal lives and self-efficacy as well. This is similar to those findings on workload in the United States. Collegiality and administrative support, two factors that influenced teacher decisions in the United States and in England, were not major factors for teachers in China. More research is needed that details the school contexts in which the research projects were conducted in order to provide better comparisons. Are teachers in China experiencing greater collegiality and administrative support, or does the culture of schools and societal expectations make these factors a moot point? In order to determine this, detailed information is needed on the environments and school structures that exist within these different countries. Studies like the OECD report are getting closer to helping countries learn from one another, but more research is needed, especially cross-national studies that purposefully examine comparisons between different cultural contexts.

Retention: The Problem of Teacher Attrition in Catholic Schools

As noted previously, Catholic school retention presents an interesting case. Attrition among private and Catholic school teachers is higher than in public schools, yet private and Catholic school teachers report higher levels of job satisfaction. There are several plausible explanations for increased attrition among Catholic school teachers, including issues of job security and even overall commitment to the Catholic Church. In addition to experiencing similar factors as public school teachers, many Catholic school teachers face issues of job security as many Catholic schools struggle to stay open. Between 2000 and 2008, 1,267 Catholic elementary and secondary schools have closed in the United States (McDonald, 2008). These school closures may have an impact on teachers' career decisions. Catholic schools are an institution of the Catholic Church, but

participation in the Church has been declining steadily since the 1950s. Teachers may be less inclined to teach in Catholic schools and more likely to leave if they do not feel strong ties to the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, research specific to Catholic schools is limited (Grace & O’Keefe, 2007). Thus, the relationship between Catholic school culture and retention is unclear. Many studies do not provide specific data related to Catholic schools even when including Catholic teachers in research samples, instead reporting Catholic school data with other private schools. For this reason, this section of the review includes studies examining retention in private schools as well as those specific to Catholic schools. First, studies examining the scope of the problem of teacher retention in private and Catholic schools are reviewed followed by research on factors related to teacher retention. Finally, studies exploring declining commitment to the Catholic Church are discussed.

Catholic School Retention: The Scope of the Problem

In the past, retention of Catholic school teachers was not a problem. Catholic schools relied on religious men and women to provide instruction, who often served the same Catholic school throughout their entire careers. As the teaching force in Catholic schools has shifted within the past 50 years to a majority of lay teachers, who are not bound to serve Catholic schools as members of religious communities are, attrition has become an increasing concern among Catholic school leaders. O’Keefe (2001) suggests that the retention issue is “problematic” for public schools, but “for private schools, it is potentially disastrous” (p. 111). For Catholic schools in particular, attrition threatens the strong community that characterizes these schools and enables their ability to instill Catholic values and social teaching (Grace, 2002). Research on the scope of Catholic school retention includes national and in-depth perspectives of the problem. No regional studies were found. While the studies do represent qualitative and quantitative approaches to un-

derstanding the scope of retention among private schools, there is a lack of range in terms of theoretical perspectives.

Scope of Catholic school retention: National perspectives. The two studies included in this section both examine findings from the Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS). Reports on the 2000–2001 TFS results, which include responses of Catholic teachers among those of all private school teachers, revealed that attrition rates in private schools were higher than public schools (Luekens, et al., 2004), a trend that continued in the 2004-05 TFS data (Marvel, et al., 2007). Similar to public school teachers, beginning private school teachers with fewer than 3 years of experience were more likely to leave (Luekens, et al., 2004). Retirement among private school teachers, however, was lower than in public schools. Private school teachers were more likely to report dissatisfaction with salary. Since TFS results do not disaggregate Catholic schools from private schools, it is impossible to compare between Catholic and other private schools or even between Catholic schools and public schools. These types of comparisons could be especially useful for Catholic school leaders trying to determine how to improve retention.

Ingersoll's (2001) statistical analysis of the TFS data included some interesting comparisons between public and private school teachers longitudinally, by examining TFS results across administrations. For example, Ingersoll found that while large private schools experienced some of the lowest average turnover rates, small private schools had the highest. Since small private schools, or those with fewer than 300 students, comprise almost 81% of all private schools, this means most private schools experience retention problems. Private schools reported twice as many openings due to staffing action as public schools. Looking across the TFS administrations, dissatisfaction with salary and administrative support were the most commonly cited reasons for leaving and moving among private school teachers. Using a sociological organizational theoretical perspec-

tive, Ingersoll hypothesized that the strength of these small private schools is their “coherent mission, clearly defined values, and tight-knit sense of community” (p. 527) but this, “paradoxically” may be the reason behind their high attrition rates. Small schools lack diversity of viewpoints, thus it is harder for teachers to find like-minded colleagues. Larger schools can also offer more job opportunities within the school, which might explain lower attrition rates of larger schools. Ingersoll concluded that small, faith-based private schools do not have the structures and mechanisms for teachers to voice concerns and complaints, resulting in higher attrition. In his hypothesis, Ingersoll challenged commonly held notions on the strengths of private schools, i.e., their sense of community. This warrants further investigation that captures the perspectives of teachers, especially those who have left, to determine whether these characteristics of private schools have a negative impact on retention. Exploring this hypothesis could shed light on the relationship between the distinctive culture of Catholic schools and retention.

Scope of Catholic school retention: In-depth perspectives. Three studies took a more in-depth approach to understanding the scope of retention in Catholic schools. One closely examined why teachers chose to teach in Catholic schools, another looked closely at issues of retention in inner-city Catholic schools, and the third provided an international perspective exploring Catholic school teacher retention in Chile.

A qualitative survey asked 200 Catholic school teachers in the United States the open-ended question: Why did you choose to teach in Catholic schools? (Schuttloffel, 2001). Participants fell into two groups: those who entered Catholic schools with an expressed interest to “share the faith” and those who entered because they needed a job. Almost 25% of participants admitted that the Catholic school was the only one to offer them a position. Within this group, some developed a commitment to the Catholic mission of the school after their teaching experience and chose to stay. Almost 9% of this group,

however, remained “fundamentally aloof to the Catholic nature of their teaching assignment” (p. 30). Surprisingly, only 12% of the sample identified the strong sense of community, collegiality, and support of Catholic schools as a major factor in their decision to stay. This finding sheds light on Ingersoll’s hypothesis, further questioning the notion that the community in Catholic schools positively affects retention. The findings also suggest that many who enter Catholic schools may not necessarily be committed to teaching in Catholic schools.

A quantitative survey analysis of 300 inner-city Catholic schools in the United States was conducted to explore the structure, staff, and students of these schools (O’Keefe, et al., 2004). While this study was not specifically focused on issues of retention, it was a major topic in the overall research design. The survey was conducted in 1995 and again in 2000 with the same sample of schools, allowing comparisons between schools and across time. Among those teachers who moved or left these inner-city Catholic schools, only 20% left the profession. The majority of turnover in these participating schools was due to teachers moving to new school placements. Over half of those who exited from these schools went on to teach in public and charter schools. Only 25% of exiting teachers moved to other Catholic schools. Given the previous study’s findings that many teachers enter Catholic schools due to circumstance rather than a commitment to teaching in Catholic schools, it seems plausible that Catholic schools are serving as training grounds for beginning teachers who leave once they find positions in public schools.

Researchers in Chile interviewed 46 Catholic school teachers who worked in Catholic schools serving a majority of children from medium and low socioeconomic sectors and maintained a strong commitment to teaching in these schools. Results demonstrated that many of these teachers were satisfied with their positions because their own moral values were coherent with that of the school, because teachers from other schools respected them for working with the poor, and because children and families

valued their service (Martinic & Anaya, 2007). However, teachers also reported issues of being overworked, experiencing emotional tension from trying to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties, and incorporating educational reforms. Interviews revealed that teachers “knew the difficulties they would face when they applied for [teaching] jobs” (p. 201). These teachers chose to work in low-level, sociocultural environments out of a sense of vocation, even though they could have worked in more prestigious educational establishments.

Scope of Catholic school retention: Summary. The literature related to the scope of retention in Catholic schools reveals that these schools are losing valuable teachers who move to work in public schools or leave the profession altogether. Schuttloffel’s work points to a possible explanation: Many who enter Catholic schools do not choose to teach in these settings, but lack other options. These teachers may be satisfied with teaching, but leave Catholic schools as soon as they are able to find positions in public schools. Ingersoll’s hypothesis that the small nature of these schools prevents teachers from staying when they disagree with school policies and philosophies is intriguing. More research on Catholic schools is needed to understand how attrition is affecting these schools and why so many leave despite high job satisfaction. Among the research on private and Catholic schools, Schuttloffel’s study stands out as using a qualitative approach. More research of this kind is needed if we are to capture Catholic school teachers’ perspectives.

Catholic School Retention: Research on Factors Related to Retention

In the body of research on Catholic school retention there are no studies that focus specifically on discrete factors related to retention. Unlike research on public school teachers, there are no studies that examine how salary influences retention of Catholic school teachers, or even how salary affects decisions of private school teachers. Rather,

findings on these factors can be found in studies that offer national perspectives, use broad approaches for exploring what factors affect private and Catholic school teachers, and compare public and private school teacher responses to questions about these factors. This section, therefore, reviews three studies that include findings on the factors of salary, teacher support, and school context. Two of the studies focus on Catholic schools, while the third presents findings comparing private and public schools with Catholic schools included in reports on private schools.

Catholic school retention factors: Salary. Catholic school teachers in the United States consistently report low satisfaction with salaries. Considering that private school teachers earn less than public school teachers, this is not surprising. Schaub (2000), analyzing the 1993-1994 SASS and TFS data to compare Catholic and public school teachers who participated in the survey, found that the average Catholic elementary school teacher earned \$18,000 a year while the average public elementary school teacher earned more than \$33,000 per year. Liu and Meyer (2005) analyzed the 1994-1995 TFS results, conducting regression and multivariate analyses to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their jobs and retention. Results suggested that private school teachers continued to report higher levels of dissatisfaction with salary in 1994-95. The starting teacher salaries in private schools were lower than in public schools. Another study, analyzing results from the 1984 High School and Beyond survey, found that not only were starting salaries lower, but the most experienced teachers in private schools were paid considerably less than public school teachers (Bryk, et al., 1993). Bryk and his colleagues conducted a mixed methods study on Catholic schools, combining findings from qualitative research in seven Catholic secondary schools with analysis of the High School and Beyond survey, which collects data from a nationally representative sample of public and private schools in the United States to investigate the organization of schools and

teachers' perceptions of their schools. The study included field visits to each of the seven Catholic schools, interviews and questionnaires of staff, students, and parents, and observations of classrooms. Researchers found that the greatest differences in salaries were between public and Catholic school teachers with the most experience.

Like public school teachers, Catholic and private school teachers were not satisfied with how they are compensated. It seems, however, that the lower levels of satisfaction with salary found among private and Catholic school teachers may have been due to lower salaries. Catholic and private school teachers may move to public and charter schools in search of increased salaries and benefits. Given the complex role that salary plays in career decisions, it is not clear whether lower salaries lead to the higher attrition rates experienced in private schools.

Catholic school retention factors: Teacher support. Research on private and Catholic school teachers' perceptions of administrative and collegial support revealed that these teachers reported higher levels of satisfaction than public school teachers. Catholic school teachers were more satisfied with their jobs and felt a stronger sense of collegiality among their peers, even when comparing teachers working in similar school settings (e.g., urban public schools with urban Catholic schools) (Schaub, 2000). Liu and Meyer's (2005) study also found that private school teachers perceived professional support more favorably than their public school peers. Bryk and his colleagues (1993) uncovered a strong sense of community among faculty and students in all seven of the Catholic schools included in their qualitative study, which was also reflected in findings from the High School and Beyond survey. Principals in the seven Catholic schools revealed that they were selective during hiring to ensure that new teachers fit with the school community. Collegial relationships between teachers played a vital role in building and maintaining a strong sense of community. Teachers respected their peers and their interactions in-

cluded not only “academic collegial activities” where teachers consulted with one another on planning and problem solving, but also “social collegial activities” outside school-related responsibilities (p. 278). What is missing from this body of research is a clear understanding of how leavers perceive teacher support. In Schaub’s and Liu and Meyer’s studies, leavers’ perspectives are lost among reports from stayers and movers. Bryk and his colleagues’ study did not include leavers. Given Ingersoll’s hypothesis on how this strong sense of community could lead to attrition, it seems especially important to understand teacher support from a leaver’s perspective.

Catholic school retention factors: School context. Catholic and private school teachers reported higher satisfaction with job conditions than public school teachers (Liu & Meyer, 2005; Schaub, 2000). Research reviewed earlier found that for public school teachers, increased workload and dilapidated buildings were major concerns that led to increased attrition (Bartlett, 2004; Buckley, et al., 2005). Catholic schools in the United States are not subject to the same government requirements as public schools, though individual schools and even dioceses may mandate education reforms. Many teachers may be drawn to private and Catholic schools because these schools are not subject to these same measures and teachers report high levels of decision-making authority and influence over curriculum, professional development, and discipline policies (O’Keefe, 2001). Bryk and his colleagues (1993) found that among Catholic school teachers the workload was considerable, even without reform initiatives that expanded teacher responsibilities. Limited financial resources of these schools resulted in teachers feeling obligated to take on additional roles, including coaching, mentoring, and leadership positions.

While there were no specific inquiries on how Catholic and private school teachers perceived their facilities, given the lack of resources among Catholic schools it seems likely that these teachers face similar if not worse conditions than public school teach-

ers. Many Catholic schools cannot afford general maintenance of their buildings, most of which were constructed in the mid-1900s at the height of Catholic school attendance, making them more than 50 years old.

Catholic school retention factors: Summary. Research on factors related to Catholic school retention confirms that Catholic school teachers report higher job satisfaction and higher levels of satisfaction with teacher support and school context. This could lead to improved school cultures and greater commitment as teachers form emotional attachments and reformulate their interests to that of the Catholic school culture. Despite greater satisfaction with colleagues, these teachers leave at higher rates. Given the research findings on why teachers choose to teach in Catholic schools it is possible that many may not come to these schools with a strong desire to teach in them. These teachers may be satisfied with teaching, but leave Catholic schools as soon as they are able to find positions in public schools. Salary is a major source of dissatisfaction among Catholic school teachers and may be a reason for higher attrition rates in Catholic schools.

While this body of research does reveal some basic trends, it does not provide focused analysis of how these factors are influencing teachers' decisions to stay or leave Catholic schools. Several of the studies are also becoming dated; more recent analyses and research are needed. This study seeks to bridge this gap by providing current research that captures an important perspective that has not been highlighted in research on Catholic school retention: those who leave Catholic schools.

Commitment to Catholic Church

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of the Catholic school culture is its connection with the Catholic Church. During the twentieth century, the American Catholic Church went from struggling to establish itself amid racism and prejudice to becom-

ing one of the largest denominations in the United States. As Catholics assimilated to American culture, the social, political, and religious pluralism of the United States had an impact on the American Catholic Church (Dolan, 2002). The Second Vatican Council in 1965 brought substantial changes to Church practice and social teachings: Masses were conducted in the vernacular instead of Latin, and laity were encouraged to participate in liturgies. In the wake of these changes, many Catholics have struggled and even changed their level of commitment to the Church. Today, lack of change may be leading to declining commitment, with the Church's stance against birth control, ordaining women, and allowing priests to marry firmly entrenched despite growing support among Catholics to change these practices (Dolan, 2002; Gibson, 2003). The sexual abuse scandal involving priests has also left many Catholics doubting their commitment to the Church (Gibson, 2003). Since Catholic schools are a vital institution of the greater Catholic Church, these changes in commitment may have an impact on retention among Catholic school teachers. The studies in this section do not measure commitment as related to teacher retention in Catholic schools; rather, they focus on describing how the level of commitment to the Church has steadily declined. Given the theoretical framework guiding this proposed study and its focus on culture and commitment, these findings are relevant for understanding the culture of Catholic schools.

Measuring commitment to the Church requires complex constructs. Researchers in one study created an overall index of commitment to the Church, based on questions rating the importance of the Catholic Church to participants' lives, whether participants considered leaving the Catholic Church, and how often participants attended Mass (D'Antonio, Davidson, Hoge, & Meyer, 2001). "High" committed Catholics believed that the Church was among the most important aspects of life, were clear they would never leave the Church, and attended Mass weekly or more often. "Low" committed Catholics agreed that the Church was important, but not among the most important aspects of their

lives, were uncertain if they would stay with the Church, and attended Mass seldom or never. Gallup telephone surveys were conducted with a representative sample of more than 800 randomly selected American Catholics in 1987, 1995, and 1999. Survey questions probed respondents about their behaviors and attitudes toward Church teachings, like birth control, divorce, and donating to the Church. Questions also asked participants about where they sought guidance on moral issues, be it Church leaders, the individual, or both. Participants reported how often they participated in Mass and other sacraments. Results demonstrated declining levels of religious practice, including Mass attendance, receiving Holy Communion, and private confessions. Instead of strict adherence to Church teachings, many Catholics were “making up their own minds about how often they will participate in these practices” (p. 66). Over time researchers observed a steady decline in the number of participants who agreed that they “would never leave the Church” from 64% in 1987 to just 57% in 1999. Given that Catholic school teachers are expected to model what it means to be a good Catholic and teach students about the Catholic faith, those who are creating their own definitions of what it means to be Catholic may shy away from taking teaching positions in Catholic schools.

Young adult Catholics, or those between 20 and 29 years old, comprise almost 40% of the entire Catholic population. They represent the future of Catholic faith in the United States and are the group Catholic schools draw upon for new teachers. A study of young adult Catholics also found decreasing participation in Catholic Church practices (Hoge, Dinges, Johnson, & Gonzales, 2001). Short interview surveys and a series of in-depth interviews were conducted in 1997 with a sample of 848 young Catholics from 44 different parishes across the United States. Surveys and interviews asked participants about their backgrounds, attitudes toward various Catholic teachings, participation in Mass and sacraments, and reasons for their level of activity in the Church. Like the previous study, many participants had stronger commitments to their own understanding of

Catholic faith and practice than that recommended by the Church. Many in this generation were “consumer” or “cafeteria Catholics,” picking and choosing among institutional practices rather than embracing Church doctrine and tradition. “As a consequence, young adult Catholics have a difficult time articulating a coherent sense of Catholic identity and expressing Catholicism’s distinctiveness” (p. 16). Researchers identified two types of spirituality among participants, representing varying levels of commitment: “Church-as-Choice Catholics,” who favored spiritual individualism and did not identify strongly with denominational Church teachings, and “Core Catholics,” who were committed to a more traditional view of Catholicism as the one true Church. Core Catholics comprised only 10% of the entire sample. Even though many participants reported low participation in Church life, almost 75% of participants agreed that being Catholic was special and important and reported that they would not leave the Catholic Church. Researchers concluded that young adult Catholics may be less religious in terms of institutional attachment to the Church, but there was no evidence that they were less spiritual. This provides a more positive outlook on faith among Catholics. Perhaps young adult Catholics are drawn to teaching in Catholic schools to pass on the faith and spirituality.

Research on the commitment of younger Catholics needs to be considered with some caveats. It is typical for young adults to experience lower levels of commitment to the Church as they leave their homes, enter college, and begin independent lives (Hoge, et al., 2001). Many of those who cease attending Mass and other Church practices often return as they begin to settle down and start their careers and families. The low commitment of younger Catholics, therefore, may be due to this phenomenon. Given the longitudinal data, however, it seems clear that commitment to traditional Church practices and social teachings is declining as Catholics embrace individualistic spirituality. This is relevant to this study, as lower levels of commitment among Catholics to the Church may have an impact on retention among Catholic school teachers who are expected to teach

Church doctrine. Both of these studies come from sociological perspectives, and while Hoge and his colleagues utilize in-depth interviews, it appears that survey data were the primary methodological approach used in both studies. These studies highlight important and revealing trends, but surveys do not provide the best method for capturing the perspectives of individuals and understanding how participants make meaning of what it means to be Catholic. These studies did not explore the consequences of these findings, including the impact on Catholic schools.

Catholic School Teacher Retention Summary

Research on Catholic schools presents an interesting hypothesis on the relationship between Catholic school culture and high attrition rates of Catholic school teachers. While some studies attributed the high job satisfaction reported by Catholic school teachers to the strong sense of community in Catholic schools, other studies reviewed here challenge this commonly held assumption. The strong sense of community that characterizes Catholic schools might have both a positive and negative influence on retention. Declining commitment to the Catholic Church may also have an impact on Catholic teachers who may be unwilling to teach strict adherence to Church doctrine when they do not model it themselves. On the other hand, lower salaries among private and Catholic school teachers could explain higher attrition rates. Given the research findings on why teachers choose to teach in Catholic schools it is possible that many may not come to these schools with a strong desire to teach in them. The nature of these relationships is unclear due to a lack of research. These studies present plausible hypotheses that need to be tested further. Qualitative approaches are particularly lacking in this field. Most of the research on Catholic schools utilizes survey methodologies that do not capture the perspectives of Catholic school teachers in rich, detailed ways that allow for a greater understanding of why these teachers are leaving and how factors influenced that choice. Current research

is especially needed if we are to understand what is currently happening in these schools and how this has an impact on teachers' career decisions.

Research on Teacher Retention

Most retention studies focus on quantifying individual decisions rather than utilizing a more nuanced approach that takes into consideration the cultures and commitments in which teachers operate and how changes in the culture of schools can impact decisions to stay or leave a profession throughout a career. This review reveals that the problem of teacher retention is extremely complex and multifaceted. Informed by the research, this study seeks to add to the current research base by providing an in-depth investigation on how teachers make meaning of different factors related to attrition and the relationships between these factors. Additional data collection from the SASS and TFS, disaggregating Catholic school leaver responses, provides information on trends in public and Catholic school teacher attrition. Interviews with participants illuminates how these influences effect teachers' decisions in ways that surveys fall short, by probing participants and gaining richer and thicker descriptions of how these individuals came into teaching and what led them out. While many studies included leavers in research samples, this study focuses on leavers exclusively, which has rarely been done.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study is to examine the phenomenon of leaving teaching early, that is, within the first 5 years of teaching. A mixed methods approach was used, including 50 interviews with a group of 25 former teachers who left teaching within 5 years and an analysis of how public and Catholic school early leavers responded to questions on the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). As the literature review suggested, this approach of focusing on early leavers has rarely been used in research studies on teacher retention. By using both qualitative and quantitative methods, this study offers empirical research combining the strengths of both research methodologies to reveal new insights on the problem of early leaving (Creswell, et al., 2003; R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Interviews explored how these teachers perceived their classroom and school experiences, what factors led these teachers to leave and the relationship between these factors, and how leavers made meaning of their decisions to leave. Participants included public as well as Catholic school teachers, since Catholic schools experience higher attrition rates and few studies have been conducted to capture Catholic school teachers' experiences. Using a sociocultural theoretical perspective along with theories of commitment and identity, the focus of this study is to interpret how the culture of schools, personal contexts, and societal pressures and norms influenced participants' career decisions and how changes in commitment and identity affected career choices. Consistent with sociocultural theory, this study uses an interpretive approach, working under the assumption that "particular actors, in particular places, at particular times, fashion meaning out of events and phenomena through prolonged, complex processes of social interaction involving history, language and action" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). Understanding these participants' experiences, values, and beliefs entails interpreting their reconstructions of those experiences. Given that this study is grounded in sociocultural and commitment theory, techniques developed by sociologists and anthropologists were

used to analyze the data, including methods of interpretive qualitative research.

This chapter first reviews interpretive qualitative methodologies, mixed methodologies, and the appropriateness of these approaches for this study. Next, the research design is outlined, including descriptive information on the participants and details about data collection and analysis procedures. Finally, considerations for maintaining the integrity of the study, including rigor, reflexivity, and validity are discussed.

Overview of Interpretive Qualitative Research

For this study, 50 interviews were conducted with 25 teachers, drawing upon techniques of interpretive qualitative research to analyze the data. Qualitative research does not have a distinct set of methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Instead, qualitative research draws upon approaches, methods, and techniques of ethnography, interviews, phenomenology, hermeneutics, feminism, cultural studies, survey research, and other research methodologies. Qualitative research methods are not simply focused on methods of gathering data, but interpreting the data to create meaningful explanations of behaviors or cultures under study. Erickson (1986) described interpretive qualitative research as more inclusive than ethnography, case study, and other forms of qualitative research with a “central research interest in human meaning in social life and in its elucidation and exposition by the researcher” (p.119). Interpretive qualitative research operates under the assumption that classrooms and schools are socially and culturally organized. This approach concentrates on understanding this social and cultural organization by making “the familiar strange and interesting again” (p. 121) with an explicit emphasis on how interpretations of culture influence human behaviors, decisions, and meaning. Similar to sociocultural theory, interpretive research understands culture as shared “learned systems for defining meaning” (p. 126) where individuals within a culture create similar interpretations. Interpretive qualitative research is an important approach as it captures the mean-

ing-perspectives that are often held subconsciously by individuals. This approach searches for “concrete universals arrived at by studying a specific case in great detail and then comparing it with other cases studied in equally great detail” (p. 130). While each setting and individual is its own unique system, these “nonetheless display universal properties” (p. 130) that are generic and apply to other situations.

Interpretive qualitative research includes such research methodologies as ethnography and grounded theory. Typical methodologies for ethnographic research include interviews and close observations of participants. This study relies on interview and survey data and does not include observations. This study, therefore, draws upon ethnographic analytical approaches without adopting ethnographic methodologies in their entirety. Ethnographic research uses a holistic approach to describe the shared beliefs, practices, knowledge, and behaviors of a given culture (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The goal of ethnographic research is to “construct descriptions of total phenomena within their various contexts and to generate from these descriptions the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences that affect human behavior toward, and belief about, the phenomena” (p.3). For this study the phenomenon is leaving teaching early in one’s career. To arrive at the descriptions of phenomena requires examining how cultural processes both within and outside a given setting impact individuals, their beliefs, and their decisions (Eisenhart, 2001). Ethnographic research also seeks to discover the meaning-perspectives of many different participants, who may share similar beliefs, values, and experiences as others within the culture (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). Comprehending these similarities within and between cultures results in deeper understanding of the phenomena (Denzin, 1997). Like other ethnographic research, this study approaches the research with preconceived ideas and constructs. For example, Holland and Eisenhart (1990) conducted an ethnographic case study of female college students with two hypotheses about the culture of student life on college campuses. These hypotheses were based on a review of the

literature and their own observations as college faculty. This study also approaches the research with preconceived constructs and theories: sociocultural theory and commitment theory. Ethnographic analytical methods and assumptions are similar to those of sociocultural theory, making the analytical techniques of ethnographic methods particularly relevant to this study.

Grounded theory is an analytical approach for reconstructing data to develop theory based on the data itself, which has been systematically collected and analyzed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Analytic interpretations are developed throughout the data collection process and are used to guide further data collection and ultimately to inform theory generated from the data. Grounded theory relies on systematic coding processes and constant comparisons. Emerging theories are closely related to the data, enabling an understanding of daily situations. Given that grounded theory offers a general methodology towards analyzing data, its flexibility has allowed for greater use outside sociology, resulting in a wide variety of studies that have been conducted using grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). This diffusion has resulted in criticisms of grounded theory. For example, Charmaz (2000) argues that Glaser and Strauss “endorse a realist ontology and positivist epistemology” (p.513). They treat data as objective rather than reconstructions of experiences, and assume that reality is “apprehendable,” rather than specific constructions of reality. As an alternative, Charmaz outlines the processes for constructivist grounded theory, which prioritizes participants’ meanings and actions to understand how participants interpret and construct their realities. Rather than finding generalizable truth, constructivist grounded theory presents hypotheses and concepts that can be used to better understand similar research problems. Constructivist grounded theory acknowledges that analytical concepts, categories, and hypotheses derived through grounded theory “emerge from the researcher’s interactions within the field and questions about the data” (p. 522). Thus, the “story reflects the viewer as well as the viewed” (p.522). Given its focus on

meaning-making of participants, this approach is consistent with sociocultural theory; therefore, analytical techniques from both grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory are used in this study on the phenomenon of leaving teaching early.

Overview of Mixed Methods Research

This research study utilizes mixed methods, combining results from the interpretive qualitative analysis of the interview data with statistical analyses of a government survey. Mixed methods research involves using or combining both qualitative and quantitative research techniques, methods, approaches, or concepts in a single study, gathering qualitative and quantitative data either concurrently or sequentially and integrating the data during the research process (Creswell, et al., 2003; R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed methods research, multiple methods, or methodological eclecticism is relatively new in educational research and taking this approach “is to enter contested territory” (M. L. Smith, 2006, p. 457). Mixed methods research is in direct conflict with paradigm rigidity. Quantitative research uses positivist approaches emphasizing quantification and prediction and historically has been deemed “scientific” by “pioneer scholars” seeking the status and respect of other disciplines (Lagemann, 2000, p. 21). Qualitative approaches, conversely, are aligned with phenomenological and constructivist paradigms, and seek to capture complexity from naturalistic and interpretive perspectives utilizing ethnography to better understand the social constructions of schools and to generate education theory (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). These two methodologies represent radically different approaches in epistemology. There are those that argue, therefore, that qualitative and quantitative methods are incompatible and ignoring their paradigmatic, theoretical, and epistemological differences in mixed methods approaches reduces these methodologies to techniques (R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; J. K. Smith & Heshusius, 1986). Proponents of mixed methods, however, maintain that this type of research com-

biner the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, limiting the weaknesses inherent within each to result in stronger inferences (Creswell, et al., 2003; Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002). Mixed methods can advance the field away from “one-size-fits all approaches to research and evaluation” (Yanchar & Williams, 2006, p. 3). Mixed methods research does not seek to replace qualitative or quantitative approaches, but recognizes that both methodologies are important and useful (R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Indeed, mixed methods research is an important research methodology in advancing the field, but the concern among critics about the compatibility of qualitative and quantitative approaches is also valid. Methods are theoretically based; they carry “underlying assumptions about the nature of reality,” which privileges certain data, while concealing others, thus shaping research results (Yanchar & Williams, 2006, p. 4). Therefore, all researchers must examine these assumptive frameworks and make them explicit in their reports, placing equal value to the qualitative and quantitative methods that are used, otherwise “integration” could result in a collapse of the methodologies into the dominant, prevailing method (Yanchar & Williams, 2006). Special considerations were made in this study when integrating the qualitative interview findings and quantitative results from the SASS and TFS data analyses. For example, when these findings were combined, both the qualitative and quantitative data were used to inform the other; neither one was deemed unimportant in cases of incongruent findings. Rather, analyzing both led to deeper questions and greater understanding of the results.

Different types of mixed methods designs and approaches have been identified and defined. These categories are based on the order in which the quantitative and qualitative data are collected and the emphasis each method is given (Creswell, et al., 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). This study uses what has been termed “concurrent transformative mixed methods design” (Creswell, et al., 2003). In concurrent or parallel mixed

analyses, both forms of data are collected at the same time with the researcher comparing both sets of data and having the option “of interpreting and writing up the two sets of findings separately or in some integrated manner” (Creswell, et al., 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). Equal priority is given to both the qualitative and quantitative data and methodologies. These data are integrated during the interpretation phase, where convergence of findings between the qualitative and quantitative data are identified and lack of convergence in data is explained (Creswell, et al., 2003). Transformative mixed methods research is guided by a theoretical perspective, including conceptual or theoretical frameworks. “This perspective is reflected in the purpose or research questions of the study. It is the driving force behind all methodological choices” (Creswell, et al., 2003, p. 230). Thus, in concurrent transformative mixed methods the qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analyzed at the same time, are given equal weight, and analysis is informed by a theoretical framework. The advantages of concurrent transformative mixed methods designs is that data sets can be used to “confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within a single study” (Creswell, et al., 2003, p. 229) and “expand” understandings of the problem or concept studied (R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 19). Limitations of this approach include the expertise needed to study a concept or phenomenon with two methodological approaches. It can also be difficult compare results and resolve any lack of convergence in the data (Creswell, et al., 2003).

Appropriateness of Interpretive Qualitative & Concurrent Transformative Mixed Methods Approaches

As the literature review indicated, more qualitative research is needed on the problem of teacher retention, especially concerning the early exits of teachers. This is particularly important in the case of Catholic school teachers who have been the subject of very few qualitative studies on retention. In their review of the literature on teacher

retention, Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson (2005) made the case for more qualitative studies in teacher retention to generate hypotheses which can be further tested by quantitative research using larger, randomly selected representative samples of teachers. More qualitative studies would serve the dual purpose of coming to a deeper understanding of the complex nature of how factors leading to retention interact and strengthening quantitative studies by indicating which “factors, subgroups, and contexts warrant analysis in larger populations” (p. 103). Qualitative analyses could also aid in developing survey questions that are meaningful to participants and capture their perspectives. This study adds to the research base on teacher retention by conducting interpretive qualitative analyses of interview data with teachers who have left teaching, generating hypotheses to be further tested and suggesting areas for further research.

Erickson (1986) called for more interpretive qualitative research in education in order to capture the “nature (and content) of the meaning perspectives of individuals in schools” (p.120). These theoretical conceptions were lacking in standard forms of education research. This study is guided by sociocultural theory, which like interpretive qualitative research, concentrates on understanding the shared, negotiated interpretations among individuals of proper roles and behavior within a given context. Interpretive qualitative techniques for analyzing data incorporate the assumption that individuals “have perspectives on and interpretations of their own and other actors’ actions,” and tries to capture and further understand these perspectives and interpretations (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 280). Thus, interpretive qualitative analysis techniques are particularly appropriate for this study because they provide needed qualitative approaches to understanding the nature of leaving teaching and these analytical techniques are consistent with the sociocultural theoretical perspective and commitment theory that guides this study.

Many studies have been conducted researching why teachers stay and leave their teaching placements, including Richard Ingersoll’s (2001, 2003a, 2003b) quantitative

analysis of the SASS and TFS and Susan Moore Johnson's (2004) qualitative interview-based study of 50 Massachusetts teachers. These studies provide great insight, but are limited by the inherent limitations of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. This study seeks a deeper understanding of leaving teaching early by using mixed methods, combining results from 50 qualitative interviews with quantitative results extracting public and Catholic school early leavers' responses on the SASS and TFS. Reports of the SASS and TFS do not completely disaggregate the responses of Catholic school teachers, therefore, the 2003-2004 SASS and the 2004-2005 TFS are disaggregated to reveal how public and Catholic school early leavers responded to selected survey questions pertaining to factors related to attrition. This not only allows for comparisons between public and Catholic early career leavers, but between public and Catholic school early leavers who participated in the interviews with a larger, nationally representative sample of public and Catholic school early leavers, corroborating between methods. Comparing results from the interviews to the surveys provides greater clarification and expansion of survey results and visa-versa, a strength of mixed methods research (Creswell, et al., 2003; R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Specifically, concurrent transformative mixed methods designs are guided by theoretical frameworks. Since this study is guided by sociocultural and commitment theories, this specific mixed methods design is particularly well suited for this study.

Research Design

This study seeks to answer the research question: What is the nature of the phenomenon of leaving teaching early, that is, within the first 5 years? In particular, the study explores the following sub-questions:

- What are the teaching experiences of those who leave teaching early?

- What are the characteristics and career plans of teachers who leave?
- What are the characteristics and cultures of the schools that teachers left (e.g., student demographics, location, curriculum context)?
- What is the relationship among factors that lead to attrition?

These research questions are answered through systematic analysis of interview data with 25 teachers who left teaching early and analysis of the SASS and TFS. Each of the 25 participants in this study were asked direct questions about their teaching experiences, their career plans and goals, their background, and characteristics of the schools in which they taught. In addition, teachers were asked about the factors that influenced their decisions to leave with probing questions to get at a deeper understanding of the relationships between factors. In other words, participants were not simply asked what influenced their decisions to leave, but how factors influenced their decision and why these factors were important considerations. Interpretive qualitative analysis techniques revealed similarities and differences among interview participants, which were then compared to results from the SASS and TFS to identify similarities and differences between the qualitative and quantitative findings. The resulting analysis generated an analytic framework for understanding the phenomenon of leaving teaching early.

Data Collection

Data collection included two types of data: interview data and survey data. (Figure 3.1 presents a summary of data sources and analysis.) Consistent with the theoretical framework, this study utilized interviews to explore why teachers left early. Since “interviewing provides access to the context of people’s behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior” (Seidman, 2006, p. 10), this qualitative approach is best suited to explain how various factors interacted and in-

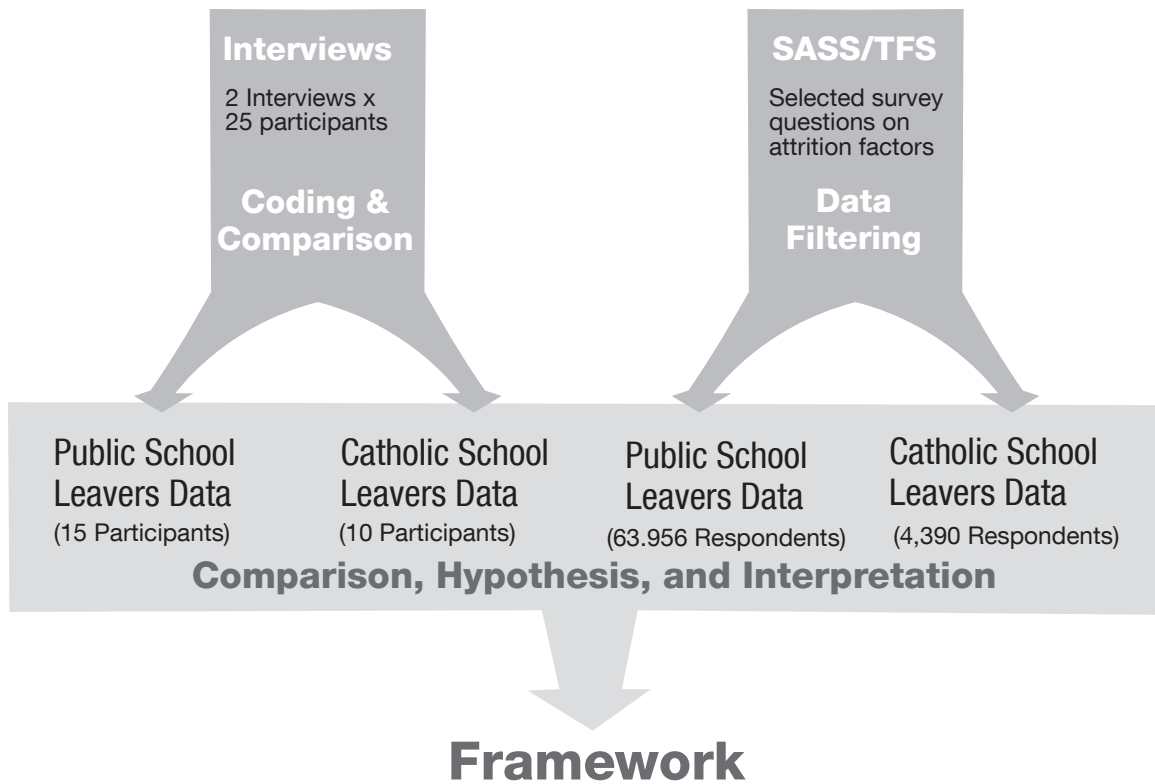


Figure 3.1. Data sources.

influenced teachers’ decisions to leave the classroom. Two semi-structured interviews were audio recorded with each of the 25 participants, for a total of 50 interviews. On average, interviews lasted 60-90 minutes. The first interview explored the background characteristics of participants, including their education and teacher preparation backgrounds, their career plans, how they came to teaching, and information about their teaching experiences and schools. The second interview probed into the details about why participants left teaching, including what influenced their decisions, their activities after they left, and their future career plans (see Appendix B for interview protocols). Consistent with both sociocultural theory and interpretive qualitative approaches, interview questions sought to understand “tacit meanings” of participants’ experiences to explore beyond “surface or presumed meanings” and get at the values, beliefs, and lived experiences of participants (Charmaz, 2000, p. 525).

The interview protocols were informed by research findings, protocols from similar qualitative, interview-based studies exploring the experiences of teachers, and data collection from the SASS and TFS. Some interview questions were based on research findings indicating which factors are particularly important to teachers in their decision to leave teaching. Interview questions were also informed by the interview protocols used in Johnson's (2004) study interviewing 50 teachers, which included a specific protocol for participants who left teaching. The Teachers for a New Era project at Boston College includes a qualitative case studies project interested in understanding how it is that teachers learn how to teach. The study includes nine interviews over the course of 2 years as participants proceed through their graduate work and first year of teaching. While not specifically related to issues of retention, many questions in these protocols are useful for capturing the background characteristics of teachers and were used in this study. A pilot study interviewing a small group of teachers who started their careers in urban schools after graduating from the same training program was consulted to identify interview questions for this study as well.

Two interviews with each of the 25 participants were collected throughout the spring and summer of 2008. Following Seidman's (2006) recommendations on spacing interviews, the first and second interviews were conducted within a span of 3 to 7 days (as participant schedules allowed). This allows researchers to "establish a substantial relationship with participants" (p. 21). Interviews were conducted in a variety of settings based on the needs and preferences of the participants and included cafes, restaurants, and other public areas, as well as private offices and even the homes of the participants. One interview was conducted via video-conference. To ensure that participants were protected from any harm, an application was sent to the Institutional Review Board at Boston College, which approved the study (see Appendix C). Informed consent forms were gathered from the participants prior to the interviews (see Appendix D).

The second component of data collection was gaining access and extrapolating public and Catholic school early leaver responses from the SASS and TFS. The SASS and TFS are designed and administered by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and is the most extensive and largest survey of elementary and secondary schools in the United States. The SASS includes five different surveys of school districts, schools, teachers, administrators, and library and media centers. This study uses the SASS Public and Private School Teacher Questionnaires, which ask participants details about their general teaching assignment, their education, certification, training, and professional development background, and their work conditions and attitudes. The TFS is administered to a subset of SASS participants 1 year following the administration of the SASS teacher questionnaires in order to measure teacher attrition and mobility. There are two TFS surveys: the Current Teacher Questionnaire and the Former Teacher Questionnaire. This study analyzed responses from the Former Teacher Questionnaire, which asks participants about their employment status, information on leaving the teaching profession (including reasons why they left), impressions of teaching and of their current job (where participants who have accepted new jobs compare aspects of their new working environment relative to teaching), and future plans. This study focuses on the 2003-2004 SASS Public and Private School Questionnaires and the 2004-2005 TFS Former Teacher Questionnaire.

In order to gain access to survey results, proper procedures and forms were completed to come in compliance with license regulations for use of restricted data from the SASS and TFS. Restricted-use data includes identifiable information on participants that allows researchers to link participant responses in the SASS and TFS. The SASS collects information on the schools in which participants worked, background characteristics (e.g., age, teacher certification), and various opinions about their workplace conditions. These same questions are not asked in the TFS; thus, it is necessary to link responses

from participants in the two surveys in order to identify public early leavers and Catholic early leavers. Therefore, as part of the data collection procedures, the 2004-2005 TFS data were merged with the 2003-2004 SASS data to reveal how public and Catholic school early leavers responded to selected survey questions pertaining to factors related to attrition. Details on this process are provided in data analysis.

Research Participants and Sampling

Teachers who left classroom teaching within the first 5 years (for reasons unrelated to retirement) were recruited to participate in two in-depth interviews about their experiences and decision to leave. To capture the current context and culture of teaching, which has been influenced by increased accountability measures, only those who taught within the last 15 years qualified to participate. This study included two groups of teachers: 15 public school early leavers and 10 Catholic school early leavers. Interviewing 25 teachers provided a broad range of perspectives to allow meaningful comparisons between participants and among public and Catholic school teachers. Including both groups in this study was one measure used to capture the diverse range of experiences needed in developing conceptualizations and deeper understanding of phenomena. The comparisons among public and Catholic school early leavers resulted in specific, needed information about teacher retention in Catholic schools, and also produced interesting findings and insights about teacher retention in general.

This group of interview participants is not intended to be broadly representative of teachers. Rather recruitment of participants was based on an ongoing effort to locate teachers who were willing to participate and who offered diverse perspectives in terms of school context (i.e., urban, suburban, rural, high-needs, affluent), geographic location (i.e., West Coast, East Coast, Midwest, and South), ethnic and cultural backgrounds, teacher preparation (i.e., alternative, traditional, no teacher preparation), grade taught,

and reasons for leaving (i.e., staffing action, to seek other positions within the field of education, to seek positions outside the field of education, to return to school). Contacts with various colleges, including Jesuit colleges and universities, were used to help recruit participants. In addition, current classroom teachers and principals were contacted to help identify potential participants (see Appendix E for recruitment correspondence).

The resulting sample of participants interviewed for this study included 8 early leavers who taught on the West Coast, 12 who taught on the East Coast, 2 who taught in the Midwest, and 1 who taught in the South to provide some geographic breadth. In addition, 1 participant worked in both the Midwest and on the East Coast and 1 participant worked in the South and on the East Coast. The mean age of participants was 32. While this sample of participants does not show great cultural and ethnic diversity, 2 participants were second generation South African, 1 was born in the West Indies, and another was African American. Twelve female and 13 male participants were interviewed. There were more secondary than elementary and middle school teachers interviewed for this study, with 7 teachers who taught elementary, 1 teacher who taught elementary, middle, and secondary, 2 teachers who taught elementary and secondary, 1 teacher who taught middle school, and 13 teachers who taught secondary (see Table 3.1).

Results from 2004-05 TFS analysis reveal that 8.4% of leavers go back to school directly after leaving teaching (Marvel, et al., 2007). Accordingly, this study included 3 participants who left teaching and were attending graduate programs. Additionally, 3 participants initially left teaching to attend graduate programs and had since accepted positions outside the classroom. Six participants left due to staffing action, 7 left to pursue positions within the field of education, 7 left to pursue positions outside the field of education, and 2 participants left to raise their children. In terms of teacher preparation, 6 participants entered teaching with alternative teacher preparation, 9 initially entered with no or very little preparation (2 of these participants left to get a master's in teaching

Table 3.1

Interview Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	School Type	Undergraduate Degree	Teacher Training and Certification	Grade	Subject(s)	Years Taught
Aaron	Male	40	Public	Psychology and Music	Post Baccalaureate Licensure Program	1st and 4th	Elementary	4 years
Addy	Female	26	Public	Economics	Teach for America and Certification	7th	Life science, Sex Ed	2 years
Amanda	Female	36	Public	English	Elementary Cert. and Master's in Special Education	4th and K2 Learning Center	Elementary, Special Needs	2+ years
Asher	Male	26	Catholic	Theology	No training/Certification	Secondary	Religion	2 years
Brenna	Female	31	Catholic	Psychology	No training/Certification, later Master's in Teaching	Secondary	Psychology, History	2 years
Brett	Male	38	Catholic	English Literature	Master's in Teaching	Secondary	English	3+ years
Clara	Female	34	Public	Math	Post Baccalaureate Licensure Program	Secondary	Math	2 years
Colin	Male	38	Public	English	Master's in Teaching	Secondary	Social Studies	2 years
Colleen	Female	29	Public	Music	Master's in Teaching	Secondary	French	1 year
Connor	Male	34	Catholic	Theology	No training, Certification (while teaching)	Secondary	Religion	3 years
Daniel	Male	35	Private & Public	Biology	Minor Elementary Ed, Elementary Certification	6th and 5th	Science, Social Studies	3 years
Emily	Female	29	Public	Biology	Master's in Teaching	K-1	Elementary	1 year
Erika	Female	25	Public	American Studies	Teach for America	8th and 9th	Social Studies	1 year
Izel	Male	29	Private & Catholic	English	None, later Master's in Curriculum and Instruction	Secondary	English	4 years
Julien	Male	32	Public	Biology	Education Minor, Secondary Certification	Secondary	Science	4+ years
Kaylie	Female	27	Public	Biology	Education Minor, Secondary Certification	Secondary	Science	3 years
Lindsey	Female	28	Catholic	Sociology	Master's in Teaching (while teaching)	2nd	Elementary	3 years
Nick	Male	29	Catholic	Physics	Certification (while teaching)	Secondary	Physics	5 years
Nicole	Female	34	Catholic	Business	Some coursework, no Certification	4th	Elementary	3+ years
Olivia	Female	40	Public	English	Education Minor, later Master's in Teaching	4th	Elementary	.25 years
Peter	Male	29	Public	History	Master's in Teaching (while teaching)	3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th	Elementary, Math/Science	3+ years
Reid	Female	28	Catholic	History	No training/Certification	Secondary	History	3 years
Thomas	Male	36	Public	History	Certification	Secondary	Social Studies	1+ years
Trevor	Male	49	Public	Law	No training/Certification	Secondary	History, Test Strategies	3 years
Victor	Male	31	Catholic	English Literature	Certification (while teaching)	5th, 6th, 7th and Secondary	Elementary, Science, English	5 years

and returned to teaching), and 10 entered with traditional preparation. The definition of alternative certification programs used in this study included programs where participants earned certification while teaching. This range of diverse backgrounds and experiences was important for analysis as it allowed for rich comparisons and testing emerging hypotheses with discrepant cases. This ensured that theoretical explanations included the diverse range of experiences among early leavers.

In the SASS and TFS, schools are selected to participate using the Common Core of Data (a dataset that includes the population of schools in the United States) to sample public, private (including Catholic) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools. This allows for detailed analysis of the characteristics of a nationally representative sample of school administrators, teachers, policies, and libraries (Tourkin, et al., 2007). From this, a stratified sample of schools across the United States is drawn, taking into account representation in each of the states. Within each school, a sample of teachers are asked to complete the Public or Private Teacher Questionnaire (Tourkin, et al., 2007). The SASS is administered and 1 year later the TFS is conducted with a subsample of those who participated in the SASS. Thus, not all those who participate in the SASS teacher questionnaires are included in the TFS. Rather, a complex sampling design is used, sampling teachers at different rates according to sector (public, private, BIA), teacher status (stayers, movers, leavers), experience (new or experienced), and teaching level (elementary or secondary) in order to ensure that each sector is represented in the TFS sample. For example, leavers and minorities, who are smaller samples within the population of teachers, are over-sampled to ensure they are represented in the sample (Cox, Parmer, Tourkin, Warner, & Lyter, 2007).

In this study, a subsample of SASS and TFS respondents was used in data analysis. In the 2003-2004 SASS, 10,200 public schools and 3,620 private schools were sampled in which 52,480 public school teachers and 9,950 private school teachers were surveyed. Data analysis in this study, however, focused on early leavers. In addition, this

study focused on public and Catholic school survey respondents who taught full-time for fewer than 6 years, and left for reasons other than retirement. Focusing on these respondents allowed for a close comparison between those interviewed for this study and survey respondents. This filtering of the data yielded a weighted sample of 63,956 public school early leavers (76.0% of all early leaver respondents who taught full-time for fewer than 6 years) and 4,390 Catholic school early career leavers (5.2% of all early leaver respondents who taught full-time for fewer than 6 years).¹ In one group of questions on the TFS (Question 20) participants were asked to rate different aspects of their current positions relative to teaching. Since some participants left teaching and were not working at the time of the survey, the sample size for these questions is smaller with 28,743 public school early leavers and 1,933 Catholic school early leavers. The mean age of respondents was 32. Table 3.2 provides some descriptive information on the sample of survey respondents used in this study, including information on educational attainment and teacher preparation.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, techniques from interpretive qualitative research were used to develop a framework on the phenomenon of early leaving. Specifically, analysis was drawn from methods and assumptions common to many forms of interpretive qualitative research, including grounded theory and ethnographic study. For example, in both grounded theory and ethnographic techniques data analysis is an ongoing, systematic process that occurs both during and after data collection (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). By conducting analysis as the data is collected, researchers can redefine research questions and strategies, testing emerging hypotheses and descriptive models. This ap-

¹ SASS and TFS use weighted samples to take into account complex sampling techniques used, which will be further explained in Data Analysis Procedures. These weights are adjusted to represent the population of teachers in the United States.

Table 3.2

SASS and TFS Survey Participant Characteristics

	Public Early Leavers	Catholic Early Leavers
Attained Bachelors		
Major:		
Education*	35.0	35.5
Arts and Music	3.5	3.8
English and Language Arts	16.5	8.5
Math & Computer Science	5.2	0.0
Natural Sciences	4.9	7.9
Social Sciences	23.3	16.7
Teacher Training		
Alternative	11.6	8.5
Traditional	67.6	51.2
No Training / Coursework	11.6	36.3
Other	9.2	4.0

Note. *Education includes elementary education, secondary education, special education, administration, educational psychology, and bilingual education. Alternative teacher preparation is defined in the survey as a program “designed to expedite the transition of non-teachers to a teaching career.”

proach was adopted for this study along with the analysis procedures of coding, hypothesizing, and theoretical coherence. Analysis procedures also included constant comparisons and memo writing, which were conducted throughout data gathering and analysis. For the SASS and TFS, statistical analyses were conducted to determine how public and Catholic school early leavers responded to selected questions related to retention. The following sections provide a detailed explanation of interview and survey analysis procedures used. (See Figure 3.2 for graphic representation of data analysis procedures.)

Interview Analysis Procedures

Initial coding. Half of the interviews were transcribed by myself; the other half by a transcriptionist. Those interviews transcribed by the transcriptionist were “cleaned,” a process that included listening to the interview while simultaneously reading the transcript and making needed corrections for accuracy. Once transcripts are completed and cleaned, the process of open coding began. Coding includes several layers, starting

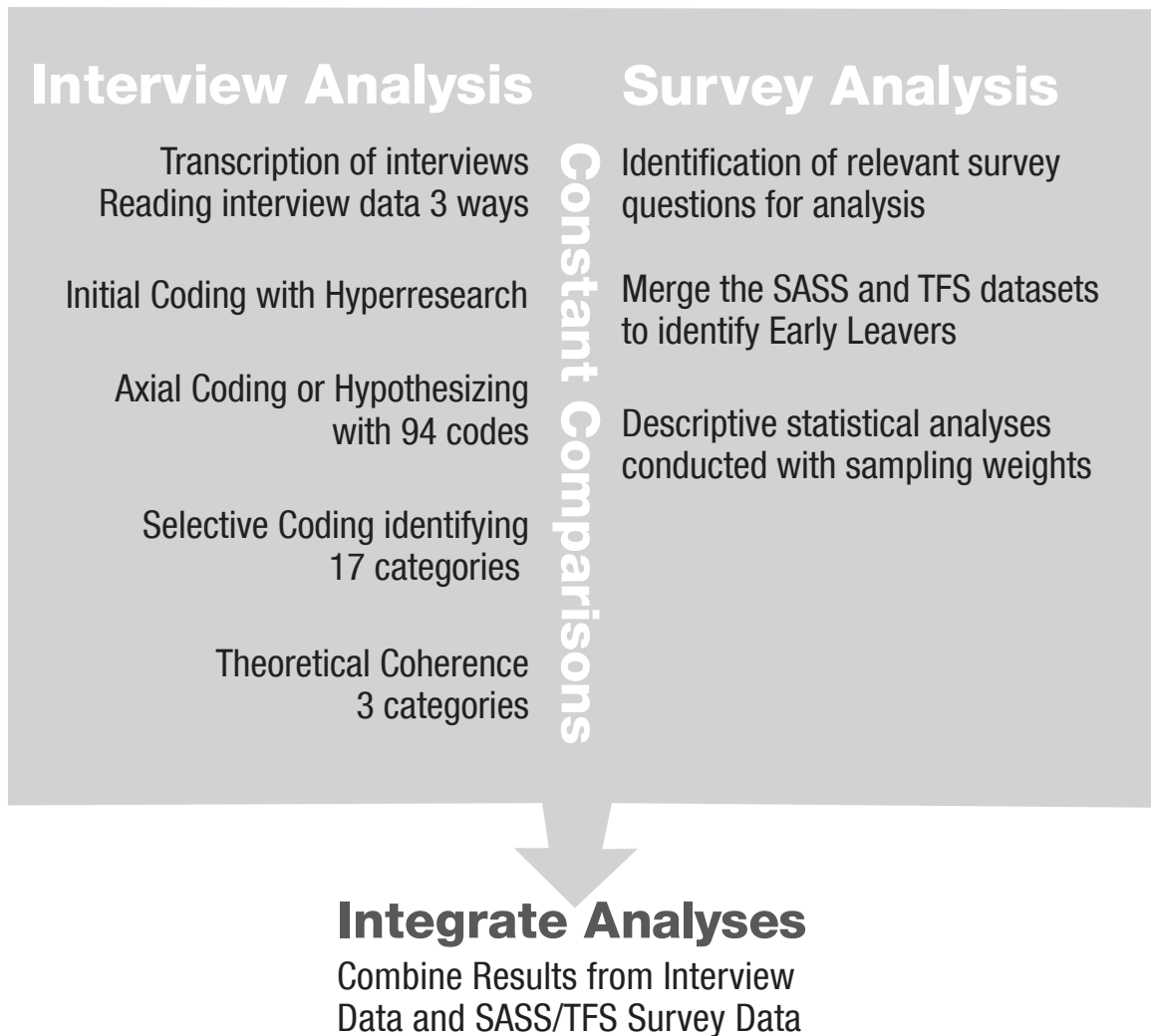


Figure 3.2. Data analysis procedures.

with open coding, then hypothesizing, and finally selective coding. This is done by “searching the data corpus,” carefully reviewing the data to note emerging patterns, themes, and even discrepant cases (Erickson, 1986). Open coding reveals emerging conceptual categories, or abstractions from the data that capture participants’ responses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Categories describe observations, dividing data into units that indicate similarities and differences (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). These categories contain properties and even subcategories that further segment the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Glaser and Strauss (1967) clarify that “a category stands by

itself as a conceptual element of the theory. A property, in turn, is a conceptual aspect or element of the category” (p.36). Properties include a listing of the similarities and differences between other categories, “core properties are then used to develop an abstract definition of the category” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 170). This process simplifies and reduces the data, but also “expands, transforms, and reconceptualizes data, opening up more diverse analytical possibilities” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 29).

The process of open or initial coding began with reading the interviews three different ways. First, each case was read, reading the first and second interviews of each participant in succession. Then, all the first interviews were read, followed by all the second interviews. Finally, all the Catholic school early leaver interviews were read followed by all the public school early leaver interviews. During these three readings, brief synopses of each participant were created, detailing in outline form the experiences of the teachers, including descriptions of the school context (e.g., colleagues, administrators, and students), successes and disappointments, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and factors that influenced participants’ teaching experiences and decisions to leave. Themes across the interviews were identified, as well as themes among Catholic school teachers and themes among public school teachers. Coding can be done according to theoretical frameworks that guide the study, therefore, close attention was given to instances and concepts related to theories of commitment and identity in the initial coding process as these middle range theories were more suited to capture the particularities of the interview data than socio-cultural theory. These were translated into initial codes. These initial codes were tested by constantly questioning whether the codes and categories were appropriate, remaining open to “new perspectives” of the material and to “unforeseen directions” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 515). HyperResearch, a computer software program, was used as a tool to organize the codes and conceptual categories, mindful of Charmaz’s warning that using these programs runs the risk of overemphasizing coding rather than analysis. One interview

from every participant was selected to test the initial codes using HyperResearch. Different sections of these interviews were coded to capture the concepts participants expressed in the interviews. Example codes included “Veteran Teachers,” “Why Other Teachers Leave,” and “Participant K-12 Experiences.” After coding several different interview sections, the list of codes was examined to determine what codes were being used, which codes were not, and where definitions needed to be clarified. A revised list of codes was then used on several more interview sections. This process was repeated several times.

Axial coding or hypothesizing. After initial coding, codes must be interrogated, tested, and further analyzed to reveal how categories are related. Glaser and Strauss (1967) defined this as axial coding or hypothesizing. This analytic approach “involves trying to discover what sort of relationship—if any—exists between two (or more)” concepts (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 258). This process is done in conjunction with initial open coding, identifying possible connections between categories, properties of these categories, and subcategories by comparing codes within and between the interviews of the same participant, among codes within specific interviews across participants, and, for this study, between public and Catholic early leavers. These comparisons and resulting linkages between conceptual categories are “guided by both implicit and explicit theoretical assumptions” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 171). This stage of coding, therefore, identified any possible relationships between the explicit theoretical assumptions of commitment and identity as well as other emerging relationships unrelated to these theories. These hypotheses or relationships were suggestions, in that they were not tested relationships between categories. These relationships needed to be further developed and tested throughout the cyclical process of data analysis and through theoretical coherence.

The list of initial codes, therefore, was revised, collapsing codes to create general codes that identified major themes and possible components of a framework for leaving

teaching early. For example, in the initial list of codes, 23 different codes were used to identify emotions, including nostalgia, stress, relief, and pride. In axial coding the general code of “Emotions of Leaving” was used. This revised list of codes was used with several whole interviews. After coding several interviews the codes were examined, similar to the process used in initial coding, to determine which codes were being used and which needed greater clarification. This process was repeated several times with whole interviews. A finalized list of 94 codes was then used on all 50 interviews (see Appendix F for code dictionary). It was extremely important throughout these coding processes to remain open to new and unexpected conceptual categories and hypotheses that might emerge (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Miles & Huberman, 1994). For example, it was entirely possible that commitment and identity would not adequately explain the career decisions of leavers.

Selective coding. Once hypotheses are identified, these need to be carefully scrutinized through a process of selective coding, which is a more direct and conceptual form of coding, focusing on defining categories that represent larger amounts of the data (Charmaz, 2000). Here the data is abstracted even further into more general categories that subsume several codes and even categories. These general categories “evolve and develop through successive iterations until the category is “saturated” or where new data do not add meaning to the category (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 256). Data are reorganized according to broader analytic interpretations, providing the “core” of the emerging theory, model, or assertions (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is essential that data collection and analysis include contrary cases or disconfirming evidence as these help identify properties of conceptual categories, establishing “the parameters or distribution of the construct” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 175). This process includes closely examining discrepant cases to see whether the data “fit” within the existing categories

(non forcibly) and whether categories “work” in providing meaningful explanations, in this case about attrition early in teaching careers (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Researchers seek “*diversity* in emergent categories” in order to synthesize “as *many levels* of conceptual and hypothetical generalization as possible” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 37). Thus, analyzing discrepant cases and disconfirming evidence leads to further modification of categories, hypotheses, and models. Researchers ask questions of the data and the results of data analysis, verifying that the relationships make sense, looking for “patterns, themes, and regularities as well as contrasts, paradoxes, and irregularities” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 47).

In this study, selective coding was conducted by grouping participants according to different criteria and codes in order to determine the best explanation of the data. For example, participants were grouped according to when they entered teaching (e.g., mid-career changers, just out of college), according to career path (e.g., those who began teaching and left; those who began teaching, left, came back to the classroom and then left), according to entering commitment (e.g., those who thought of teaching as a career, those who thought of teaching as short-term employment), and a number of other arrangements. Each of these categories was examined to determine if they adequately and truly explained the data and were useful in answering the research questions, giving special attention to disconfirming evidence. Remaining open to new concepts and analyzing disconfirming evidence ensured that the resulting framework of leaving teaching early truly captured the perspectives and diverse range of experiences of teachers who left early. Seventeen categories were defined, including professional commitment, exploratory commitment, short-term commitment, vested commitment, neutral commitment, effective and satisfied, effective and frustrated, ineffective, goal change, role change, school change, life change, and Catholic identity change.

In interpretive qualitative research, “evidentiary warrants” are established where

the assertions or hypotheses are substantiated with examples from the data (Erickson, 1986). Miles and Huberman (1994) called this “building a logical chain of evidence” where researchers link data, explaining causal relationships that result in a given outcome. The selective, overarching codes were tested by rereading the codes and related interview data within each of the 17 categories to ensure the abstractions were accurate and to build the chain of evidence to support the emerging framework. For example, in the category “Professional Commitment” to teaching there were 18 relevant codes including, “Career Plan–Teaching,” “Career Plan–Why Teach,” “Expectations–Teaching,” “Expectations–Students,” “Participant Characteristics–Teacher Preparation,” and “Participant Characteristics–Academic Success.” These codes and their corresponding interview data were reread for each of the 9 participants in this category. Themes and evidentiary warrants among participants were identified. During this analysis process, relationships between factors, commitment, and identity were linked to the outcome of leaving teaching.

Theoretical coherence. Theoretical coherence involves interpreting the data in keeping with an emerging theoretical perspective. The materials collected are not data, they are resources of the data (Erickson, 1986), which must be interpreted and “systematically explored to generate meaning” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 46). Interpretations move beyond the data to broader, general conceptual frameworks “that can account for the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the phenomena under study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 261). Researchers must build “carefully reasoned arguments that develop inferences and establish connections beyond the limited scope of a study” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 197). For those studies informed by theoretical frameworks, analysis includes assessing whether the data collected fit with the framework (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). These theoretical frameworks are often modified or even discarded to include “categories more closely attuned to the data” (p.199).

In this study, the data were analyzed in keeping with a general sociocultural theoretical framework. Further, relationships between commitment and identity helped interpret the data and make connections between the 17 categories, grouping them into three categories of entering commitment, teaching experience, and the decision to leave teaching for all 25 participants. The relationships between these three categories, the data, and sociocultural and commitment theory were identified, resulting in a framework that explained the behaviors, factors, and career decisions of early leavers in uniform ways that can be applied beyond this study.

Constant comparison and memos. Constant comparisons refine concepts and specify the dimensions and distinct elements of categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). This process broadens the theoretical explanation, resulting in a more generally applicable model that “has greater explanatory” power (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 24). Throughout data analysis constant comparisons were made among and between participants, among and between emerging conceptual categories, and between conceptual categories and results from the SASS and TFS data analysis. Since the interview and survey analyses were done at the same time, results of these analyses influenced subsequent data analysis. For example, in searching for interesting and relevant questions on the SASS and TFS, results from the interview sample helped determine which questions were salient. When significant relationships were found in the SASS and TFS analyses, this influenced data analysis and interpretation of interview findings.

Memos help researchers “grapple with ideas about the data,” defining analytic direction of refining categories and hypotheses (Charmaz, 2000, p. 518). Memo writing was used to document and elaborate emerging themes and relationships when conducting the interviews, during the coding process, and during the survey analysis. Memos were written after each interview, noting initial impressions and any observations that were

not recorded during the interview, and then throughout the coding process to elaborate on emerging themes not only among the codes and categories in the interview analysis, but also among findings in the survey analyses with the interview results. Memos were also used to identify possible discrepancies and holes in the explanatory power of the codes and framework and document possible biases. Thus, memo writing and constant comparisons were particularly important in this mixed methods research design for integrating the findings of the interview and survey analyses.

SASS and TFS Analysis Procedures

Questions from the 2003-2004 SASS Public and Private Teacher Questionnaires that pertained to school climate, teacher attitudes about workplace conditions, and participant career plans were selected for statistical analysis along with pertinent questions of the 2004-2005 TFS Former Teacher Questionnaire on factors leading to leaving the profession, attitudes of teaching and the administration, opinions rating current workplace aspects relative to teaching, and future plans. Sample questions analyzed for this study include: “To what extent do you agree or disagree that the principal lets staff members know what is expected of them?” (SASS question 63/64 A); “To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members?” (SASS question 63/64 L); “To what extent do you agree or disagree that the stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren’t really worth it?” (SASS question 66/67 A); “How important was tak[ing] courses to improve career opportunities WITHIN the field of education in your decision to leave the position of a K-12 teacher?” (TFS question 13 H); “Would you consider returning to the position of a K-12 teacher?” (TFS question 23). (See Appendix G for list of SASS and TFS questions analyzed.) Most questions required participants to respond using Likert scales. For example, respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance specific factors had in their decisions to leave

teaching, including change in residence, pregnancy/child rearing, and salary and benefits. Respondents could answer “Not at All Important,” “Slightly Important,” “Somewhat Important,” “Very Important,” or “Extremely Important.”

The selected survey questions were analyzed using SPSS statistical software to determine how public and Catholic school early leavers responded to survey questions. Identifying public and Catholic early leavers required merging the SASS and TFS datasets. The SASS contains information on the schools in which participants taught; this information is not included on the TFS. Therefore, it is not possible to determine what type of school TFS respondents taught (public, Catholic, other religious, or nonsectarian) by analyzing the TFS itself. Teacher responses on the SASS and TFS can be linked, however, to determine important background characteristics of TFS participants. This process required a one-to-one data merge, linking responses by teacher identification number across both surveys. A subset of the sample was then drawn by selecting cases of public and Catholic teachers who taught full-time for fewer than 6 years and did not leave to retire. Conversely, to determine how early leavers responded to SASS questions also required a data merge. The SASS questionnaire is conducted while teachers are still in the classroom. In order to determine if participants were leavers, therefore, requires merging data to the TFS. In this process, a concatenate merge was applied, creating a dataset that included both SASS private school teachers and SASS public school teachers. A one-to-one data merge was then applied between the new SASS dataset and the TFS dataset linking responses by teacher identification number. Once again, a subset was then drawn by identifying respondents who taught full-time and left teaching within 6 years for reasons other than retirement.

Once public and Catholic early leavers were identified, analyses were conducted to determine how these participants responded to selected questions, calculating sample sizes, means, percentages, and standard deviations. Since SASS and TFS use complex

sampling design, sampling weights were used throughout statistical procedures and reporting of results. In complex sampling designs, participants are selected based on different probabilities and each participant represents a given segment or subsample of the population. For example, leavers and new teachers are subsamples of the overall population of teachers. These teachers are harder to sample because there are fewer of them. Therefore, disproportional stratified sampling techniques were used, sampling more participants from these subsamples to ensure they were represented in the SASS and TFS (Tourkin, et al., 2007). Samples in surveys using complex sampling designs, therefore, “do not reflect accurate proportional representation in the population of interest” (Walker & Young, 2003, p. 425). Each participant represents a different number of cases in the population, unlike simple random samples where every participant has equal probability of selection and represents the same number of total subjects in the population (Dowd & Duggan, 2001; Glass & Hopkins, 1996; Walker & Young, 2003). Sampling weights are the inverse of selection probability (Dowd & Duggan, 2001). For the SASS and TFS, sampling weights were developed by NCES to take into account the number of cases in the population that selected respondents represent and also an adjustment for non-response (Luekens, et al., 2004; Tourkin, et al., 2007). For example, should a teacher within a given subsample not respond, the other teachers in the subsample then represented more teachers within the population and sampling weights are adjusted accordingly. Using these weights allows estimation of population characteristics.

Integrity of the Study

Throughout the entire data analysis process, interview data were read and reread multiple times in a constant process of analyzing the data as they were collected, expanding emerging concepts, developing theoretical explanations of why teachers left early, and ensuring integrity of the findings (Erickson, 1986). In the SASS and TFS analysis,

every effort was made to ensure statistical results were accurate and could be replicated. The NCES and United States Census Bureau, which conducts both surveys, took a number of measures to ensure internal and external validity of the survey instrument and data collected.

Rigor

The credibility of qualitative research has increased, but it has only established a “fragile niche” within the education field (Lather, 2001). Many still question the rigor of qualitative research, which threatens to “consign all qualitative research to the determination of not being research at all” (p.243). Qualitative research assumes that realities are constantly changing and contextually based. Replication, therefore, is an inadequate and inappropriate measure of rigor. Instead qualitative studies assess rigor by whether or not the study was conducted thoughtfully using dependable methodologies of data collection and analysis (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The basic question is whether another researcher would “concur with the results of the study, given the data collected” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 67). To enhance rigor, researchers make their biases clear as well as their research procedures for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. With its emphasis on simultaneous data collection and analysis, constant comparisons, and repeated testing of emerging categories and models, interpretive qualitative analysis techniques provide a systematic approach to data collection and analysis. For this study, memo writing also supported a rigorous process by documenting the procedures used. Memos were used for elaborating biases, further strengthening the rigor of this proposed study.

In quantitative research, rigor is typically determined by whether the findings can be replicated. Thus, the SASS and TFS analysis procedures were carefully considered and scrutinized to ensure their accuracy and replicability. NCES conducted reinterviews of the questionnaires with each SASS administration to measure consistency in response

between the original survey and the reinterview (reliability of the data) for specific questions deemed critical or suspected to be problematic. While high response variance was found in 25% of the reinterview questions in the Private Teacher Reinterview Questionnaire and in 19% of the 26 questions in the Public Teacher Reinterview Questionnaire, suggesting problems with reliability, overall the SASS and TFS are believed to be reliable (Tourkin, et al., 2007).

Reflexivity

Qualitative researchers acknowledge their interaction with participants and environments they study. Written reports reflect not only participants, but the researcher as well. Researchers should be aware of this, acknowledging that “data are filtered through the researcher’s unique ways of seeing the world” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 36). Reflexivity involves making clear what assumptions and biases researchers have and how this may in turn impact the study and its findings. Using a reflexive approach, I continually checked against my own preconceptions and biases in an iterative process between data analysis and theory. I am a former Catholic school teacher who left classroom teaching early to pursue further education. These experiences influenced how I collected and interpreted the data, as I was able to relate to participants. I was especially mindful of not assuming that I understood participants’ points-of-view, even when they were similar to my own (Charmaz, 2000). Through memo writing I explored and asked questions about how my biases and worldviews may be shaping my interpretations. The cyclical nature of interpretive qualitative analysis techniques between analysis and data collection facilitated this process, forcing me to revisit and question initial interpretations of the data. For example, in the coding process the codes captured not only ideas and experiences closely related to retention, but also those seemingly unrelated to the research questions. This served as a way to check against biases. A rough outline of major themes and potential

arguments was created. These arguments were constantly revised throughout the analysis process and served as a reminder of the assumptions with which I, as the researcher, was working to ensure that I was not overlooking major themes, discrepancies, or disconfirming evidence.

Reflexivity in qualitative and quantitative research also recognizes that researchers influence participants by studying them. Observing and interviewing participants will “create social behavior in others that would not have occurred ordinarily,” which could lead to biased interpretations (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 265). For example, participants could craft responses, giving answers they think the researcher wants to hear. To help avoid this in the interview collection, efforts were made to ensure that participants had a clear understanding about the purposes of the interviews, the objectives of the study, and how the interviews would be used and analyzed. In the SASS and TFS, similar efforts were made to increase validity of the survey instrument.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research is often understood in terms of credibility and transferability; credibility being the “extent to which the data, data analysis, and conclusions are believable and trustworthy” and transferability defined as the readers “determining the degree to which a study is ‘transferable’ to their own context of interest” (Lather, 2001, p. 244). Representativeness is a major concern, as researchers must safeguard against “abusive generalizing” of the data, or forcing findings to fit, and overemphasizing selected data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Such research practices result in findings that are not true representations of participants’ perspectives. Reliability and replicability are also related to validity, referring to whether accounts accurately and authentically interpret the data and include information about the procedures used to arrive at the interpretations and conclusions of the study. In their recommendations to increase validity in

qualitative research, Miles and Huberman suggested analyzing alternative explanations, looking for negative evidence and outliers, and getting feedback from participants about the findings and interpretations. The analysis of the interview data sought to provide a true account by using the participants' words, actions, understandings, and philosophies as much as possible. This is consistent with both the broad theoretical framework and analytical approaches used for this study. Interpretive qualitative analysis techniques also included Miles and Huberman's suggestions of examining negative and alternative evidence as part of its systematic approach.

Administrators at NCES used a number of techniques to increase internal and external validity of the SASS and TFS survey instruments and responses. Data were processed carefully scrutinizing unit and item non-response, searching for identifiable patterns of non-response. In addition, skip patterns in the surveys were checked to ensure participants had followed them correctly and careful procedures were followed to adjust and correct response errors. These procedures are carefully documented throughout the dataset. The general quality of the data was verified by checking for consistency among these edits, examining responses, patterns of response, summary statistics and crosstabulations to ensure that results reflected expected distributions and relationships, checking against prior administrations of the surveys and other research (Cox, et al., 2007; Tourkin, et al., 2007). NCES administrators found no evidence of substantial bias, indicating strong internal validity of the surveys. External validity of the SASS and TFS data was conducted by comparing results to the survey frame from which the samples were drawn: the Common Core of Data (CCD) and the Private School Universe Survey (PSS). Different reporting techniques are used in the SASS and the CCD and PSS: SASS asked the schools to provide a list of teachers in the school whereas in the CCD counts are taken from statewide official tallies of teachers. Still the SASS and TFS are considered to have strong external validity (Cox, et al., 2007; Tourkin, et al., 2007).

Limitations

All studies are limited; “every act of measurement loses more information than it gains, closing the box irretrievably and forever on other potentials” (Wheatley, 2006, p. 65). Observing the world through a sociocultural lens filters and limits what is observed. While this research study seeks to understand teacher attrition by exploring how the culture of schools and various other contexts in teachers’ lives influence decisions to leave, this study is limited in that it does not specifically observe the schools in which these teachers taught. The actual school culture as participants’ experienced it could never be recreated; these are complex evolving cultures that are contextually based. Asking participants about their lived experiences, however, and probing them to be explicit about meanings within their different cultures increased understanding of these cultures.

It was difficult to determine whether or not participants were effective teachers without other corroborating evidence. Since retention of quality teachers is the major concern for schools, this limits the findings of this study. Participants were asked questions like, “What was the reaction to your departure? What was the reaction of your administrators, colleagues, students, and parents?” in an effort to determine effectiveness of participants. Several participants were quite open about their perceived ineffectiveness as teachers, yet others may not have been as open or may not have perceived themselves as being ineffective.

In addition, the participants recruited for the interviews were of convenience rather than a systematic sample, since leavers are difficult to find. The participants interviewed, therefore, provide useful insight, but they do not represent the wide range of diverse perspectives found among the population of early leavers.

Research Design Summary

In summary, this study seeks to explore why teachers leave early in their careers by conducting interviews with a sample of 25 former teachers, including public and Catholic school teachers. The sample includes Catholic school leavers in order to gain needed information about this group of teachers who experience higher attrition rates. Data collection also included a careful examination of the 2003-2004 SASS and 2004-2005 TFS results to reveal how public and Catholic school early leavers responded to questions related to their decisions to leave. Interpretive qualitative analysis techniques were used to analyze the interview data, comparing it with the larger population of early leavers represented in the SASS and TFS generating a framework of the phenomenon of leaving teaching early through a process of simultaneous data collection and analysis. Efforts were made to ensure the integrity of the study, including the rigor, reliability, reflexivity, and validity of the interview and survey data.

In the next three chapters, results from the data analysis are presented, offering a set of assertions explaining the characteristics and nature of the phenomenon of leaving teaching early, specifically examining the entering commitments, teaching experiences, and the decision to leave teaching early of the 25 teachers interviewed for this study. Analyzing the interviews from 25 teachers who left early in their careers and comparing their statements with a national sample of teachers in the SASS and TFS revealed a complex and dynamic relationship between factors in the personal, professional, school, and societal contexts in which individuals worked and lived on their decisions to leave teaching.

CHAPTER 4: LEAVING TEACHING EARLY

“Some mornings I had to imagine a big hand pushing me to get on the subway to come to work, because if I didn’t I would just stay home.” These are the words of one of the teachers in this study of early leavers. He entered teaching enthusiastic about a long-term career as a classroom teacher, but by the end of his short time in the profession, he was discouraged by unmotivated colleagues, bureaucratic structures that did little to support teachers, and strict curricular frameworks that limited teacher autonomy and professionalism. Leaving teaching, this teacher explained, was “not as easy as you would think,” involving emotions not only of relief, but also of guilt about “abandoning kids.” Yet, factors in his personal, professional, school, district, and societal contexts ultimately led him to the difficult decision to leave classroom teaching.

Like the teacher quoted above, the other participants interviewed for this study experienced a range of emotions and were influenced by a number of factors in their ultimate decision to leave teaching early. This study argues that most early leavers cannot be adequately described with common stereotypes about leaving. If we are to understand why teachers leave early, that is, within the first 5 years of teaching, a more comprehensive and complex approach is needed. For example, one common assumption is that early leavers are not as committed to teaching as those who stay; early leavers are assumed to enter teaching as a temporary job. On the contrary, my analysis of the data collected for this study indicates that not all early leavers planned to leave teaching. In fact, some early leavers entered teaching planning to teach as a long-term career, just as the participant quoted above had. A complex interaction of multiple factors and circumstances led them out of public and Catholic school teaching. Other common assumptions include the idea that teachers leave early because they are dissatisfied with their teaching experiences or leave to take higher-paying jobs. My analysis suggests, however, that some teachers left despite being satisfied with teaching, and some left even when it meant accepting lower-

paying jobs. Some participants in this study did enter teaching with short-term commitments to teaching or with other career aspirations that would eventually lead them out of the classroom. Some were dissatisfied with their teaching experiences and salaries and decided to leave. My analysis reveals that simply examining the commitment of teachers as they entered the classroom or sources of their dissatisfaction with teaching does not capture the multiple factors and circumstances that influence their decisions to leave teaching.

This chapter has two parts. The first presents a framework, which was developed through systematic analysis of 50 interviews with early leavers and statistical analysis of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). This framework was also informed by commitment theory (Becker, 1960; Kanter, 1972), by larger notions about schools as cultures (Lortie, 1975; Sarason, 1971; Waller, 1932), and by literature on the culture of Catholic schools (Bryk, et al., 1993; Grace, 2002; Heft, 1997). The framework focuses on the phenomenon of early leaving as a process involving commitment, the nature of teaching experiences, and career decisions within complex personal, professional, school, and societal contexts. The second part of the chapter analyzes data regarding the first aspect within the framework: participants' experiences and commitments upon entering teaching.

A Framework for Understanding Early Leaving

To understand the convergence of factors and circumstances that influenced the career decisions of the teachers in this study requires examination of their commitment to teaching, their teaching experiences, and their decisions to leave early throughout their short time in the profession. Commitment and sociocultural theory were used to closely examine the phenomenon of early leaving among the 25 participants in this study. This study is based on the theoretical understanding that commitment is not something that teachers have when they enter and lose when they leave. Rather, commitment is con-

stantly developing and evolving throughout a teacher's career. Commitments change as teachers experience different factors and circumstances in their various contexts. Teachers continually make choices that determine their career paths. This study is also based on the theoretical understanding that as individuals engage within their distinct cultures and contexts they negotiate and create a shared understanding of what it means to live and work within those cultures. This negotiation has an impact on how individuals interpret their experiences, concerns, and choices. Teachers not only live and work within their school contexts, but also within their personal, professional, and societal contexts, and, among Catholic school teachers, parish, diocesan, and Catholic Church contexts. These distinct cultures and contexts influence teachers' commitments, experiences, and decisions to leave early. In this study, a framework was developed through data analysis and informed by sociocultural and commitment theory that allows for a close examination of the phenomenon of leaving teaching early by analyzing three different aspects of this phenomenon: the commitments of teachers as they enter the classroom, the experience of classroom teaching, and the decision to leave. Within each of these three aspects, there were distinct differences in the experiences of the teachers. These aspects and categories are outlined in Figure 4.1, which captures graphically the general experiences of the 25 public and Catholic teachers in this study.

It may seem odd that in order to understand early leaving, one must examine entry into teaching, but participants' entering commitment had a powerful impact on their teaching experiences and career decisions. In this first aspect of leaving teaching early, participants entered with differing expectations about how long they would stay in teaching. Some participants thought of teaching as a long-term career, while others entered teaching knowing they would leave early. Still others were unsure how long they would teach. These expectations had an impact on their commitment to teaching, their teaching experiences, and ultimately their decision to leave teaching. These different kinds of com-

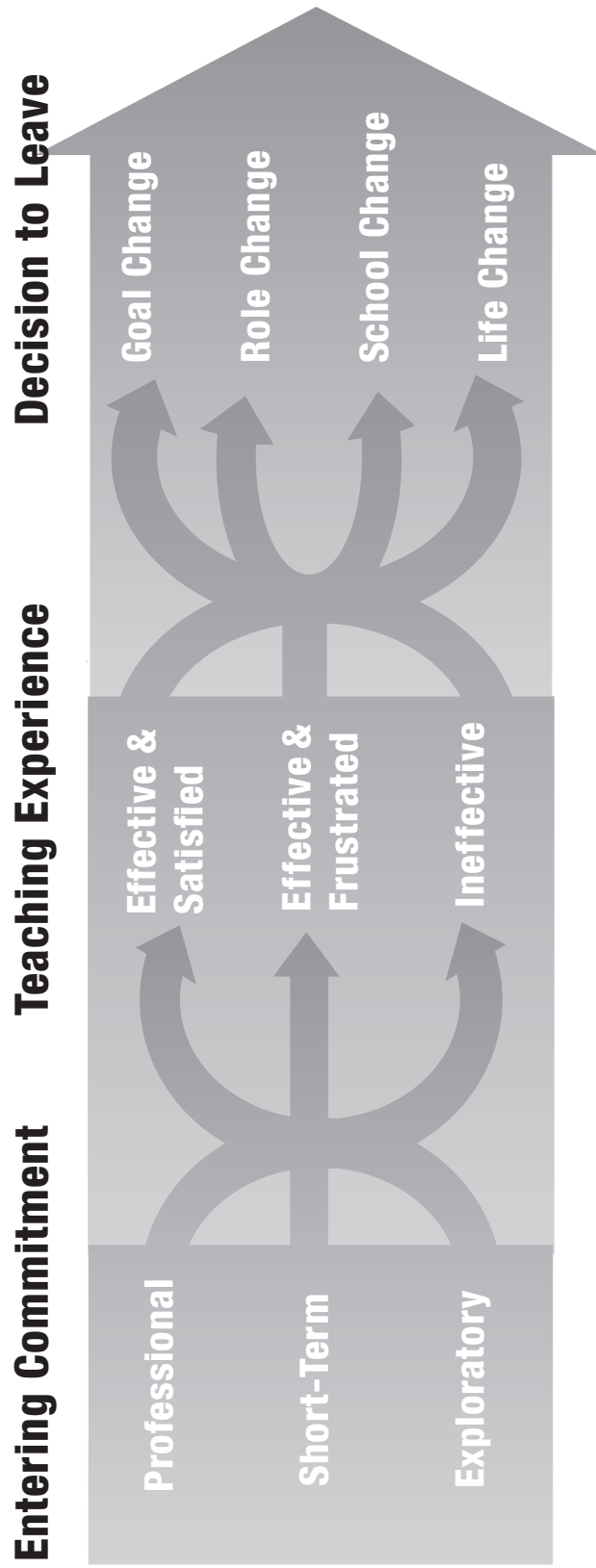


Figure 4.1. Leaving teaching early.

mitments are represented in Figure 4.1 as professional, short-term, and exploratory under the label “Entering Commitment.” Entering commitment alone, however, did not determine the decision to leave. As noted, some teachers in this study entered with long-term commitments and left early. Thus, a more complex approach that examines commitment throughout a teacher’s brief time in the profession along with teaching experiences and decision to leave is needed.

Teaching experience is the typical subject of many retention studies. These studies often examine specific factors that lead to dissatisfaction among teachers, such as salary or administrative support. This study, however, examines teachers’ experiences as the second aspect of leaving teaching early. Rather than isolating specific factors in teaching that participants found satisfying or dissatisfying, this study explores teachers’ overall impressions and characterizations of their experiences. All of the teachers in this study experienced highs and lows, frustrations and disappointments, successes and failures during their time in the classroom. Overall, teachers’ experiences could be described by one of the three following characterizations: They either believed that they were effective teachers and were satisfied with teaching, they believed that they were effective teachers but were frustrated with their schools, or they believed that they were ineffective teachers. These characterizations are represented in Figure 4.1 under the heading “Teaching Experience.” As noted, this analysis challenges the common stereotype that those who leave are dissatisfied with teaching. Some teachers interviewed for this study left early even though they thought they were effective and were satisfied with their experiences.

Whether or not teachers believed they were effective and satisfied influenced their decision to leave. Leaving the classroom was an emotional experience as participants decided to seek positions both within and outside the field of education. This study found there were four different life and career changes that influenced the decision to leave, including goal changes (e.g., deciding to go back to school), role changes (e.g., decid-

ing to pursue another career), school changes (e.g., experiencing staffing action, school closures) and life changes (e.g., becoming a parent). These life and career changes led teachers out of the classroom, though some participants planned to return to teaching and many planned to remain in the field of education. These life and career changes are represented in Figure 4.1 under the heading “Decision to Leave.” Again, my analysis indicates, contrary to common assumption, that many left teaching seeking further education or for family reasons rather than for salary reasons.

In each of the aspects of leaving teaching early, the 25 public and Catholic school teachers in this study were influenced by personal, professional, and societal contexts. For example, within their personal contexts, teachers’ family and friends had an impact on commitment to teaching, as did their prior work experiences and educational background in their professional contexts. Within societal contexts, expectations about teaching, teachers’ perceptions of the role and value of teachers in society, political stances, and religious beliefs also affected participants’ decisions to leave teaching. Once in the classroom, school and district contexts had a role in teacher commitment and the decision to leave. Interactions with other teachers, students, and the administration, along with district policies and requirements had a powerful impact on participants’ developing commitment to teaching, their teaching experiences, and their decisions to leave early. These contexts are represented in Figure 4.2 by interlocking arrows indicating the complex interactions between factors in these different contexts.

Within the group of 25 teachers interviewed for this study were 10 Catholic school teachers. My analysis suggests that, like other teachers, Catholic school teachers reported similar commitments, experiences, and factors that influenced their decisions to leave. Like the public school teachers in this study, Catholic school teachers’ commitment was constantly changing and developing throughout their brief time in the profession. In addition, these teachers developed a commitment to teaching in *Catholic schools* and



Figure 4.2. Contexts that influenced early leaving.

described factors, circumstances, and experiences specific to teaching in Catholic schools that had an impact on their decisions to leave early. The aspects of the phenomenon of leaving Catholic school teaching early are represented in Figure 4.3.

As Catholic school teachers entered teaching with different expectations about how long they would stay in teaching in general (professional, short-term, or exploratory), they also entered with different expectations about how long they would teach in *Catholic schools*. Some only wanted to teach in Catholic schools and planned to remain in these settings their entire careers, which is termed “vested” commitment in this study. Others planned to leave or were uncertain as to how long they would teach in Catholic schools, which is labeled “neutral” commitment in this study. Commitment to teaching in Catholic schools was different from commitment to teaching in general. For example, several participants entered teaching with a professional commitment, planning to teach long-term, yet they did not necessarily expect to stay in *Catholic schools* long-term; thus, they entered Catholic school teaching with a neutral commitment. These different kinds of entering commitments had an impact on their teaching experiences and decision to

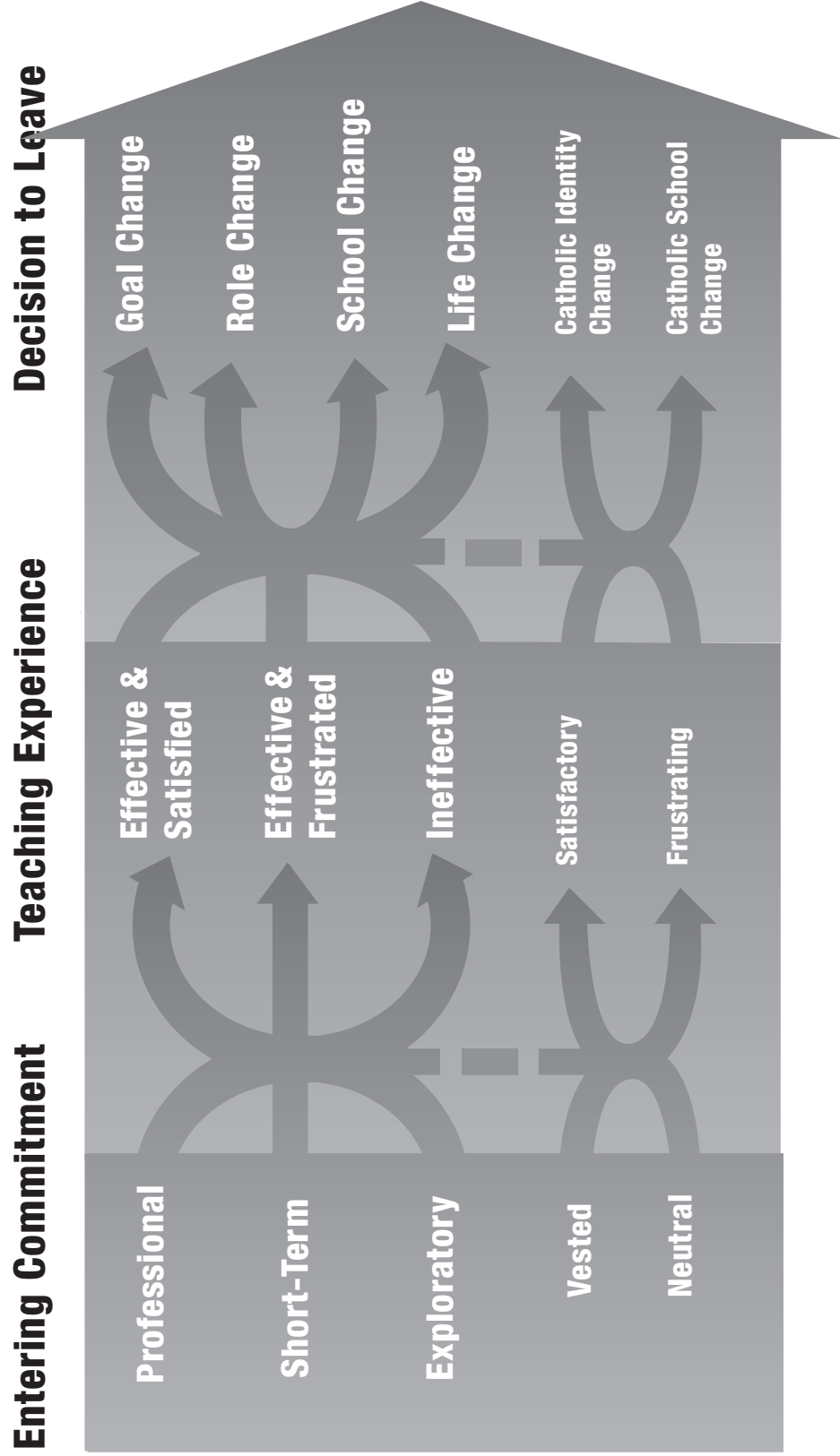


Figure 4.3. Leaving Catholic school teaching early.

leave Catholic schools. Entering commitment to Catholic schools is represented in Figure 4.3 under “Entering Commitment” as “Vested” and “Neutral.”

During the second phase of leaving teaching early, Catholic school teachers experienced factors and circumstances specific to Catholic schools that had an impact on their commitment to teaching in these settings. For instance, several Catholic school teachers in this study perceived themselves as effective, but also reported frustration. These teachers not only described frustration with aspects of teaching in general, including lack of collegiality, but also with aspects specific to Catholic schools, including the mission of their schools and how Catholic identity was or was not emphasized in the school. Thus, Catholic school participants described factors and circumstances unique to Catholic schools that influenced their commitment to teaching in these settings. They characterized their overall experiences in Catholic schools as either satisfactory or frustrating based on these factors. These characterizations are represented in Figure 4.3 under “Teaching Experience” as “Satisfactory” and “Frustrating.”

In the third aspect of leaving Catholic teaching early, some left teaching in Catholic schools because they were leaving teaching in general, while others left teaching in these settings because their commitment to teaching in Catholic schools had diminished. Those whose commitment to teaching in Catholic schools declined experienced one of two changes: Catholic identity change, where they became disengaged with the Catholic Church; or Catholic school identity change, where they became frustrated with Catholic schools and the lack of emphasis on Catholic identity. These changes in Catholic identity and Catholic school identity were specific to Catholic schools and were added factors for Catholic school participants in their decisions to leave teaching early. For some, these changes led them out of Catholic schools entirely, while others planned to return to Catholic schools as teachers, counselors, or administrators. These career and life changes are represented in Figure 4.3 under “Decision to Leave” as “Catholic Identity Change” and



Figure 4.4. Contexts that influenced Catholic school early leaving.

“Catholic School Change.” Catholic school teachers’ commitments and decisions to leave were influenced by factors not only in their personal, professional, and societal contexts, but also their parish, diocesan, and Catholic Church contexts. These contexts are represented in Figure 4.4.

The framework of this study, based on theoretical assumptions about commitment and culture and derived from systematic data analysis of 50 interviews, allows close examination of teacher experiences and commitment over time including an analysis of three aspects of leaving teaching early. It considers the various factors and circumstances in teachers’ personal, professional, and religious lives as well as greater societal contexts in which participants lived and worked. The framework also provides a complex approach to understanding why teachers leave early. The remainder of this chapter examines the first aspect of leaving teaching early: entering teaching.

Entering Teaching

One participant had always thought about going into medicine, but as she neared graduation, she realized she was “disillusioned with medicine.” She loved working directly with people, and she soon discovered that “instead of seeing them when they are sick and then not seeing them again, if I am a teacher, I can see them every day and work with them.” She entered teaching with the intention of staying long-term.

This study finds that contrary to common assumptions about early leavers, not all entered with short-term commitments to teaching. In fact, some of the participants in this study entered the field intending to teach long-term, but, like the teacher above, they left teaching within 5 years. On the other hand, many early leavers interviewed for this study entered teaching without a strong commitment to a long-term career in the classroom; they entered with short-term or exploratory commitments. Teachers’ entering commitment was an important component of early leavers’ decisions to leave early: Entering commitment has an impact on teachers’ classroom experiences, how they perceive factors and circumstances, and their career decisions. If we are to understand early leavers who enter with long-term commitments as well as early leavers who enter with short-term and exploratory commitments, we cannot focus solely on entering commitment. Simply examining the commitment that teachers have as they enter the classroom fails to capture the compounding nature of factors and circumstances that influence their commitment to teaching and how entering commitment affects the decision to leave early. A more complex approach that examines commitment to teaching throughout a teacher’s short time in the profession is needed.

The participants interviewed for this study entered the classroom with differing expectations about how long they would continue teaching. In this study the term “professional” is used to describe participants like the teacher above, who entered with a long-term commitment to teaching. “Short-term” commitment applies to participants who

entered teaching as a temporary job with plans to move on to other careers. For example, some participants entered teaching planning to leave relatively soon to pursue graduate studies. “Exploratory commitment” describes those who entered teaching unsure whether teaching would be a long- or short-term career. These participants were open to teaching as a long-term career, but were anxious to see how well their experiences went in the classroom. These types of entering commitment are presented in Figure 4.1 under the label “Entering Commitment,” which represents the entering experiences of all 25 participants interviewed in the study.

Participants’ commitment to teaching as they entered the profession was influenced by a variety of factors in their personal and professional lives and greater societal contexts. Personal contexts included influences from family and friends, participants’ own K-12 school experiences, prior experiences working with youth, and other personal influences. Many participants had worked or volunteered in classrooms and other youth programs prior to teaching. These experiences gave them confidence in their ability to work with students. Professional contexts included, among other things, the work or college environments of participants as they decided to enter teaching, their professional identities, and their expectations of teaching and work environments in schools. For example, several career changers entered teaching expecting the work environment to be collaborative, like their other work environments. Influences from societal contexts, including perceptions of the role and value of teachers, local and global events, and religious beliefs, also shaped participants’ decisions to enter the classroom and commitment to teaching. Several participants mentioned the events of September 11th as motivating them to do community service. These personal, professional, and societal contexts are represented in Figure 4.2.

The following sections provide an analysis of participants’ commitment as they entered teaching. Each section presents one or two examples of participants’ experiences

as they decided to teach and their entering commitment to teaching. These examples provide insight into the unique experiences of participants interviewed for this study and how the personal, professional, and societal contexts influenced their commitment to teaching as they entered the classroom. Following the analysis of participants' entering commitment to teaching is an analysis of entering commitment to teaching in Catholic schools. Analysis of the SASS and TFS is presented throughout, comparing early leavers interviewed in this study to early leavers in the population of teachers.

Professional Commitment

Teaching was my calling
-Clara

Participants in this category present an interesting case: They entered teaching expecting to stay long-term, but ultimately left within 5 years. Nine of the early leavers interviewed for this study entered the classroom with a professional commitment to teaching. Unlike those who entered teaching to explore the profession or as temporary employment, these participants had no intentions of leaving the classroom for other careers. Two main groups emerged among those with professional commitment: career changers who developed a strong interest in and commitment to teaching because they considered a career in the classroom as a more rewarding profession than their previous jobs, and recent graduates who saw teaching as a good career option. Olivia provides an example of a career changer and Izel's experience illustrates that of a recent graduate.

Olivia had a career in healthcare, working in hospital administration after obtaining a degree in public health. She then worked as an assistant dean at a prestigious university. As circumstances in her personal life changed, Olivia came to believe that teaching would offer her a more rewarding career that would allow her to spend more time with her children. Olivia, however, had always had an interest in teaching. While getting

her undergraduate degree, she had taken classes in education, earning her certification in high school English. At the time, she had thought that she was too young to go into teaching; over the years, however, that interest remained. When Olivia had her own children, she found that her volunteer experiences in her sons' classrooms were not only about enjoying being around her children, "but the excitement of the learning and observing the learning" (Interview I). Olivia believed teaching offered something different from her current professional path, which consisted of a "continuum of high-pressure jobs doing things that were seemingly less important to me" (Interview I). Teaching was something important to Olivia; she "cared so much about the kids" (Interview II) and wanted to provide them with a quality education. She also believed that teaching would allow a better quality of life with her children. Olivia entered a master's in teaching program to earn her certification in elementary education, despite the perceived change in status that accompanied leaving her university assistant dean position to enter the classroom. Olivia indicated that her mother, for instance, was not thrilled with the career move, telling her "It's not as appealing to say that your daughter is a public school teacher as it is to say that she is an assistant dean at [university]" (Interview I). Olivia was committed to teaching in urban schools and planned to stay until retirement.

Olivia's decision to teach and her commitment to teaching as she entered were influenced by personal contexts. Having her own children rekindled an interest in teaching that had started when she was in college. Olivia explained, "When I became a parent, it became really clear to me that [teaching] was something I liked and was good at and was so different from what I was already doing" (Interview I). Societal pressures were weighed carefully; Olivia was aware of the sacrifice in perceived status that leaving her university position entailed. She explained that at her high school reunion

I had my "Dean of [University]" title and after I left I was like, "Well, you know,

if I wanted to make a good impression on people at a reunion, I did it and now I can do whatever I want.” I mean, not that linear, but...it sounds good to say you’re [dean at a prestigious university], but by the time I left [university] I was like, okay, I’m not impressed with my title. (Interview I)

Kanter’s (1972) explanation of commitment as dependent on how individuals “orient” themselves to the costs and rewards of participation proves helpful here. For Olivia, the costs and rewards of continuing on her professional path as an assistant dean were outweighed by what she saw as the potential for greater quality of life in teaching. Personal contexts changed Olivia’s perceptions of costs and rewards: She had two children and hoped to spend more time with them. Teaching also offered an intellectually stimulating career, something that she would not have to give up by changing careers. Like Olivia, participants in this group of career changers were also attracted to a career in teaching because it involved engaging in something important and inherently valuable: helping students learn. Participants in this group worked in business, music, and temporary jobs and believed that there would be more opportunities to engage in something they found important in teaching than in their previous jobs. For example, one participant was working in business, training adults. She explained, “I liked seeing the ‘I get it’” (Nicole, Interview I). She believed that if she went into teaching, she would experience that “I get it” moment more often.

The second group of those with professional or long-term commitments to teaching entered the profession directly after college. These participants decided as they were graduating that teaching presented a “practical” career. For example, Izel entered teaching directly after earning his undergraduate degree in English. He always assumed “whether it was consciously or unconsciously” that he would teach. Izel explained that he never felt any pressure to enter teaching, but

once I started to think more practically about what can I be good at and happy with and have some success with, I think teaching became the practical choice. Not a fall back by any means or a second best job, it was just something that, for whatever reason, just seemed to click. (Interview I)

Izel entered teaching with an understanding of the pressures and challenges he would face based on his father's experiences as a 36-year veteran teacher. He explained, "It's not what they show in the movies" of going into an inner-city school and "saving the day" (Interview I). When asked if he entered teaching as a career, Izel responded slowly:

Yeah, I think so, as much as I ever felt long-term about anything, which that's a whole other question I guess. Once I got into it especially, and realized that it was what I was going to do I knew that I was going to be in it for the long haul—maybe at different levels and in different capacities, but I knew education would be the center of any future academic or professional pursuits, and I still feel that way even as I start a different grad program again. Whether I go on and teach at the college level or do different work within the field in general, I don't think I'll ever go too long without being in a classroom. (Interview I)

For Izel, the decision to enter teaching was the result of carefully considering what would interest him and where he could experience success. Personal contexts, including his father's experiences in the classroom, influenced his decision to begin a career in teaching. Like Izel, most participants in this group believed that they had realistic expectations about teaching given the experiences of family members and friends who were teachers. These participants had a deep respect for the teaching profession and knew that teaching would be difficult. Izel experienced some societal pressure in terms of needing a "practical" career; he explained "people kept saying, what are you doing with an English degree other than teach?" (Interview I). There was an expectation to enter a profession upon graduation, a pressure that many participants in this group experienced.

Izel's case suggests some of the difficulties in categorizing teachers' entering

commitment. He knew that he was going into teaching for the “long haul,” but he also qualified that statement: Classroom teaching would always be a *component* of his work within the field of education. One could argue, therefore, that Izel did not see classroom teaching as a career. Rather, Izel saw working in education as a career. Izel, however, was shocked he was considered a leaver because, even though he was leaving the classroom for graduate school, he still considered himself to be a teacher. He explained, “I may do different things within education, but I feel like some form of teaching will always be part of it” (Interview I). His goal was to obtain his doctorate and continue to engage in the classroom in a variety of ways.

Izel is an example of what Quartz and her colleagues (2008) term “role changers”—teachers who leave the classroom but remain in education. Quartz and her colleagues argue that while role changers, like Izel, do leave schools with vacancies, these individuals continue to serve schools in important ways. “Leaving teaching” has a technical definition (i.e., leaving a classroom teaching position) to help measure attrition and schools’ needs. According to Quartz and her colleagues, and Izel’s case, this definition is insufficient. Role changers are different from those who leave the field of education entirely because they continue to work in classrooms and they may not consider themselves to be leavers.

Participants who entered teaching with a professional commitment and left early present an interesting and perplexing case. One would expect that those with a professional commitment would not leave, yet these participants left within 5 years. These findings, however, are consistent with the literature on entering commitment of new teachers. Research on teachers as they enter the profession, including stayers and leavers, confirms that some individuals enter teaching committed to the profession as a life-long career (S. M. Johnson, 2004). They make what Ball and Goodson (1985) termed a “positive commitment” to teaching, clear in their decision that teaching was a long-term career. I return

to the issue of commitment theory and how my study addresses current research about how we understand commitment to teaching in the last chapter of the dissertation.

The SASS and TFS provide a way to compare interview participants in this study with the greater population of teachers. My analysis of the SASS and TFS data, designed to extract public and Catholic school early leaver responses from the overall sample in the SASS and TFS, confirms results found in the qualitative analyses: Public and Catholic school early leavers in the SASS and TFS sample entered teaching with different expectations about how long they would stay in the classroom. The SASS and TFS results suggest that, like those interviewed for this study, some early leavers entered with “professional” commitments to teaching. In the SASS, teachers were asked how long they planned to continue teaching. Results from the merged SASS and TFS databases indicate that about 55% of public and 54% of Catholic school early leavers planned to stay in teaching as long as they were able or until retirement (see Table 4.1). These response categories correspond to the term professional commitment used in this study. These findings support the idea that early leavers do not necessarily enter with short-term or exploratory commitments as one might expect. They also suggest that the interview participants in this study reflect the larger population of early leavers. This study, which used a mixed methods approach to understand early leaving, makes a unique contribution to current research on retention. The qualitative component provides a nuanced understanding of why teachers leave early, while the quantitative component helps to determine whether the experiences of 25 interview participants reflect the greater population of early leavers.

This study, which only looked at leavers, suggests that researchers and policymakers must be wary of assumptions that those entering teaching with professional or long-term commitments will be retained. Role changers, like Izel, help to explain how those who enter with such a strong commitment to teaching leave early; however, not all participants in this category left with intentions to remain in the field. A closer examina-

Table 4.1

Entering Commitment of SASS/TFS Respondents (SASS Question 68/69B)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
I will teach as long as I am able	27,712	43.3	2,134	48.6
I will teach until I am eligible for retirement	7,199	11.3	229	5.2
I will continue teaching unless something better comes along	4,755	7.4	804	18.3
I definitely plan to leave teaching as soon as I can	4,362	6.8	203	4.6
Undecided at this time	19,929	31.2	1,020	23.2

tion of commitment throughout teachers’ time in the profession is needed, therefore, to understand why those with a professional commitment leave early.

Short-term Commitment

I certainly didn't go in with the intention of being a teacher for the rest of my life
-Peter

Many participants in this study entered teaching knowing that they would leave. Twelve participants in this second category of entering commitment to teaching had a short-term commitment to teaching. They entered with career aspirations that would eventually lead them out of the classroom. Unlike those with professional commitments, these participants knew even as they entered teaching that their years in the classroom were numbered. Analysis of participant interviews revealed that among participants with short-term commitments to teaching there were two groups. In the first group were participants who began their teaching careers with plans to eventually leave the classroom, but remain in education—“role changers.” These participants entered with long-term com-

mitments to education, planning to enter careers in academia or in school administration. Unlike Izel in the previous section, who planned to remain in teaching but became a role changer, these teachers entered teaching expecting to become role changers. In the second group were those who entered the classroom with career goals that would lead them out of the field of education entirely. Connor provides an example of those who planned to leave teaching, but remain in education. Addy is an example of a participant who planned to leave the classroom for a career outside education.

Connor entered teaching with the long-term goal of becoming a college professor. Connor, who majored in theology and obtained a master's in divinity, had a strong Catholic identity and was committed to serving God: "I really do want to devote my life to the Catholic Church and to being a minister in whatever way, shape, or form that might be" (Interview I). He worked as a youth minister right after college before entering his master's program and worked as a musician after his graduate studies. When damage to his ear sidetracked his career as a Christian rock musician, Connor began looking for youth ministry positions, but was intrigued by teaching. He explained,

I was searching to be a director of youth ministry again and I also was for the first time looking at maybe becoming a teacher, which I hadn't really ever considered for some reason. It wasn't how I saw myself. So, I said, I would love to teach. I lived in academia all my life and I always loved it. (Interview I)

Connor liked the schedule of a teacher over that of a youth minister and knew that teaching would combine his passion for working with youth with his love of learning. Connor's motivation to enter teaching also stemmed from his long-term career goals.

I saw [classroom teaching] as a temporary career. I saw it as a stepping stone to what might become a full career as maybe a professor of theology. I thought

there's no better way to get your credentials and have experience and teach than working with high school students and teaching at that level first and then working your way up to get the whole developmental perspective of things. (Interview I)

Connor illustrates quite clearly a short-term commitment to teaching. Connor's previous life experiences and personal commitment to serving the Church were influential in his decision to enter teaching; he had worked with youth before and knew that he was effective with this particular age group. This confidence led him to teaching despite his lack of credentials. Connor took certification classes through the diocese while in his first year of teaching. Circumstances in his professional life and health also affected his decision to enter teaching; his music career needed to be put on hold while his ear healed. Connor entered with intentions to become a role changer; he wanted to leave teaching at the secondary level to teach at the college level. Connor eventually did change roles after he was not rehired at the school. He became a music instructor in an after school program. Connor's experiences were similar to those of other participants who planned to seek non-classroom positions in education; they saw teaching as a valuable experience that could help them in future careers. Like Connor, these participants planned to pursue graduate school, resulting in new careers within the field of education, including school administration and teaching at the collegiate level.

The second group of those who entered with short-term commitments to teaching planned to leave teaching for careers outside of education. For example, Addy entered teaching planning to leave after 2 years to enter law. Addy had always done well in school, participating in honors programs and unique opportunities in field research and the sciences. Education was emphasized by her parents. After her college graduation, Addy had aspirations to enter law, but wanted some work experience. She was drawn to the mission of the Teach for America program. She explained,

I don't think I was thinking so much of the teaching aspect as I was about the mission of Teach for America, which is "One day all children will be able to receive an excellent education" or something like that... That's what attracted me to Teach for America, and consequently teaching because that's their avenue through it. (Interview I)

Addy saw teaching not only as a way to earn work experience, but also as a way to give back to the community before going on to law school.

I thought, going into it, I'll do my 2 years and I'll go to law school afterwards, simple as that. Get some work experience. The other thing was because 9/11 happened; one of my professors talked about how every person should do community service. Every young person should do community service... So, it was also, "Okay, I'll do 2 years" –you know, partly community service, going to another area, learning about a different culture, learning about living in a different area, and giving back. (Interview I)

Addy clearly did not think of teaching as her life-long career. She sought to leave the field of education entirely. Her personal contexts, including her own positive experiences as a student and her parents' valuation of education, influenced her decision to enter teaching. The 9/11 attacks had an impact on Addy's decision to enter service. Like Addy, participants in this group expressed a desire to give back. For example, one participant explained, "I had this sense that I should give back to society at large" (Peter, Interview I). Addy taught for 2 years before going to graduate school, although she did not enter law. Instead, Addy got her master's in education policy.

Becker's (1960) concept of "side bets" applies here in understanding participants with short-term entering commitments. Side bets are interests that develop and influence career commitment and choices. For participants with a short-term commitment to teaching, these other interests included going back to school, entering another field, or staying in education pursuing opportunities outside of the classroom. Connor's side bet was

his interest in becoming a college professor. Addy's side bet was her desire to enter law. These side bets helped to determine the commitment that Connor, Addy, and other participants in this group were willing to make to teaching as they entered the classroom.

The findings presented here are consistent with previous research that many enter teaching with short-term commitments and see teaching as a way to give back to society. Johnson's (2004) research found that many, including stayers and leavers, enter teaching with a short-term commitment to the profession. Johnson termed these teachers "contributors" or those who planned to teach temporarily before beginning a career in another profession. These individuals saw "teaching as a short-term opportunity to contribute to society for part of their career" (p. 29). Lortie's (1975) classic work asserted that many enter teaching for altruistic reasons. In this study, short-term is used to describe those participants who went into teaching as a temporary job and were planning to move on to other careers. This is similar to Johnson's "contributor" category, although in this study "short-term" includes not only those who wanted to make a contribution to society, like Addy, but also those who saw teaching as a stepping stone to other careers in academia and those who planned to continue their own education, like Connor.

Results from the SASS and TFS suggest that, like the participants interviewed for this study, many public and Catholic school early leavers entered teaching with short-term commitments to teaching. In the SASS and TFS sample, about 14% of public and 23% of Catholic early career leavers planned to stay "unless something better came along" or planned to leave teaching as soon as they were able (see Table 4.1). These responses indicate a short-term commitment. Among those interviewed for this study almost half (12 of the 25 participants) saw teaching as a short-term position. Though the goal of the qualitative interview analysis of participants in this study was never generalizability to the population of teachers in the United States, comparing entering commitments among interview participants to SASS and TFS respondents suggests that those

with short-term commitments were represented more often in this study.

The findings presented here suggest important information on the characteristics and career plans among early leavers: Many who enter the classroom do not intend to stay. This confirms common assumptions about early leavers and also provides one reason why teachers leave early. This alone, however, does not fully explain why teachers in this study left early. Multiple factors and circumstances throughout their time in the profession influenced early leavers in their decision to exit the classroom. Commitments change. Addy, for example, planned to leave education entirely, but instead became a role changer. One could imagine, too, that those who enter with a short-term commitment sometimes stay long-term. In order to understand why teachers leave we must examine their entering commitment as well as their commitment to teaching as it evolves and changes throughout their time in the profession.

Exploratory Commitment

I wasn't sure if teaching was a career; but I was open to that
-Trevor

The career plans of teachers as they entered the classroom were not always clear. In this third category of entering commitment, 4 participants were uncertain if teaching would be a long-term career. These participants were interested in teaching, but entered the classroom unwilling or unable to make a commitment, short- or long-term, to teaching. Rather, they remained open to the possibility of teaching as a long-term career, deferring any decisions on how long they would stay in teaching until they had experience in the classroom. Erika's experience entering teaching exemplifies participants in this group.

As Erika graduated from college, she faced the dilemma of deciding on a career. Erika majored in American Studies and minored in African American studies. Like a number of other participants, Erika was so focused on doing well in school that she had

not put much thought into what would happen afterwards. She enjoyed her undergraduate experiences, but her major was not necessarily “practical” in terms of streamlining her into a career path. Her father was a lawyer, and Erika spent the summer of her junior year of college working in a legal services center, but she was not certain whether she wanted to pursue a career in law and she knew that she was not ready for law school. This posed a problem for Erika because she did not have a “path.”

I like having paths. I feel like so many people like me grow up the way I did: In high school you’re going to go to college and you’re focused on which colleges you should be trying to get into and you always have this path. (Interview I)

During college, Erika volunteered in an urban outreach program working with middle school students and enjoyed that experience. She heard about the Mississippi Teaching Corps and the Teach for America (TFA) program and was intrigued. Not only would this give her a path but she believed this would also give her an opportunity to “put her money where her mouth was” (Interview I) in terms of her African American studies background. Rather than “just discussing racial studies in your little elite college” (Interview I), Erika could gain real experience and in-depth knowledge about the subject she had studied. In terms of entering commitment to teaching, Erika was not sure whether teaching would be a long-term career, but she was open to the possibility.

I had this sense that maybe I was interested in law, but I really wasn’t sure about that at all and I thought that [teaching] was potentially something that I could do. I thought that the possibility was there because I knew I loved to work with 12 and 13 year-olds and because I knew that this path was important work to do that I thought that it was my best shot at finding [a career] outside of law my first year out. (Interview I)

Erika's decision to enter teaching was influenced by her professional and personal contexts. Her academic major, along with her previous experience working with youth, gave her the confidence to pursue teaching as a possible career. In terms of societal contexts, Erika believed that teaching in inner-city schools was important work and the TFA program offered a sense of prestige:

The most important thing to me at that point was finding something that I felt was important and it just felt really important to me. And, to be perfectly honest, TFA does have prestige, so it's not like resume-wise I was sacrificing anything. (Interview I)

Like Erika, other participants with exploratory commitments were drawn to teaching because they wanted to work with youth. These participants knew that they were interested in teaching, but hesitated to make a firm commitment without more teaching experience.

Erika's inability to make a career commitment reflects research findings that individuals in the 21-28 age group look to explore what it means to be an adult, keeping options open and avoiding "strong commitments" while at the same time trying to become responsible, contributing adult citizens (Sikes, 1985). "This phase...is in many respects something of a trial period and it seems that teaching is a career which allows scope to attempt and to accomplish both tasks" (p. 58) of becoming responsible citizens and contributing to society. Erika knew that teaching was important work that she could enter without making a "strong" commitment and without having to commit years of training.

These findings on exploratory commitment are in accord with previous research and with findings from my original analyses of the SASS and TFS. Johnson's (2004) study found that among stayers and leavers, some entered teaching with an "exploring orientation," or were "uncertain about whether they would stay" (p. 29). They entered teaching "sizing up the work of teaching" (p. 29) to determine whether or not they were interested

in a long-term career in teaching. Ball and Goodson (1985) describe this as having “negative commitment” where the decision to teach is the result of a series of non decisions. The term exploratory is borrowed from Johnson’s work. Results from SASS and TFS also reveal that, like participants interviewed for this study, many public and Catholic school early leavers were uncertain about how long they would stay in the profession. Almost 31% of public and 23% of Catholic early leavers in the SASS and TFS sample were undecided about how long they planned to remain in teaching (see Table 4.1). This suggests that these 4 interview participants reflect the population of early leavers.

Attrition among those who are uncertain how long they will stay in teaching is not surprising because they do not have a strong desire to teach long-term. Again, this highlights a fundamental problem in retention: Many who enter teaching do not have strong commitments to teaching as a career. Stopping here, without exploring how entering commitment changes and influences teachers as they continue in the profession, would not to capture the confluence of factors that affect early leavers. These teachers were undecided about whether teaching would be a career; something else in their experiences influenced their decision to leave. Only by examining teachers’ sense of commitment throughout their time in the profession will we understand what happened to these teachers that made them decide to leave and how their entering commitments affect this decision.

Entering Catholic School Teaching

The 10 Catholic school teachers in this study entered Catholic school teaching with different expectations about how long they would teach in these settings. Participants’ entering commitment to teaching in these settings was often different from their entering commitment to teaching in general. This study finds that contrary to popular assumptions about Catholic school early leavers, not all participants entered with neutral commitments to teaching in Catholic schools, or with plans to leave Catholic school

teaching. Of course, some did enter with neutral commitments and left early. Even those who entered with vested commitment, or who planned to teach in Catholic schools long-term, left early. The findings presented here indicate that if we are to understand why participants left Catholic schools, we must examine their entering commitment to Catholic schools as well as their commitment to teaching in general. In addition, we must examine Catholic school participants' commitment as they entered Catholic schools and throughout their time in the profession to fully understand why they left early.

Participants entered Catholic schools with either vested or neutral commitment to teaching in Catholic schools. In this study, the term "vested commitment" is used to describe participants who planned to remain in Catholic schools for the duration of their careers. These participants sought to express their Catholic beliefs and share these with their students. The term "neutral commitment" is used to describe participants who entered Catholic schools uncertain about how long they would continue teaching in Catholic schools. These participants were not necessarily drawn to the Catholic mission of these schools and could envision themselves teaching in public and other private settings. Catholic school entering commitment is represented in Figure 4.3 under "Entering Commitment" as "Vested" and "Neutral."

Catholic school participants' entering commitment to teaching in Catholic schools was influenced by personal, professional, and societal contexts, just as these contexts influenced all participants' commitment upon entering the profession. In terms of personal contexts, for instance, all 10 participants who taught in Catholic schools went to Catholic schools for elementary, secondary, or higher education. These experiences influenced their commitment to teaching in Catholic schools. In addition, Catholic teachers were influenced by the Catholic Church context. This included Catholic Church teachings and values, the growing secularization of society, and one's Catholic identity and experiences in the Catholic Church. Several participants had strong Catholic identities and entered

Catholic schools with a desire to engage students in discussions about the Catholic faith. The following sections provide a more detailed analysis of those who entered Catholic schools with vested and neutral commitments.

Vested Commitment to Teaching in Catholic Schools

I never considered going to public schools ever
-Brett

In this study, 4 out of the 10 Catholic school teachers entered Catholic schools with vested commitments to Catholic schools. These participants had a strong desire to teach in Catholic schools and planned to remain in Catholic schools for the duration of their careers. They were motivated by a sense of wanting to share their faith. Catholic schools also offered an appealing alternative to standards, testing, and bureaucracy perceived to be in public schools. Brett provides an example of those with vested commitments to teaching in Catholic schools.

Brett loved English literature and originally planned to become an English professor, but realized that finding tenure track positions would likely mean leaving his hometown where he wanted to raise his family. Becoming a high school English teacher was the “next best alternative” (Interview I). Brett wanted to prepare students for college by offering them lessons and skills he wished he had received in high school. He believed that Catholic schools would best provide those teaching opportunities. His experience student teaching in an urban public school only “cemented” his commitment to teaching in Catholic schools. Brett saw that Catholic schools created an atmosphere “much more conducive to what kids need at that age” (Interview II), constructing a safe environment and a sense of right and wrong that helped students to experience success. Brett observed,

I see very often with the public schools that...it's almost like the boundaries are so wide...they can get away with so much. The parents aren't involved. It's al-

most like you do them a huge disservice because you're not creating a safe place for them in which to explore. (Interview II)

Brett secured a position at his alma mater, a Catholic high school. For Brett, "It was really important to me that I was in an educational system that I believed in and I felt was the right one for me. So I never considered going to public schools ever" (Interview II). Clearly, Brett had a vested commitment to Catholic schools as he only wanted to teach in these schools.

For Brett, his personal experiences in Catholic schools as well as his own philosophy of teaching and learning influenced his decision to enter Catholic schools and his commitment to teaching in these schools. Brett had a strong Catholic identity, attended Catholic elementary and secondary school, and maintained a strong commitment to Catholic schools. His teaching goals and observations that his ability to fulfill these goals would be limited in public schools led him to Catholic schools. Like Brett, other interview participants who entered with vested commitments to Catholic schools had attended Catholic elementary, secondary, undergraduate, or graduate schools—2 participants attended Catholic schools from kindergarten through graduate school. Participants in this group were drawn to Catholic schools because they believed that these schools allowed more autonomy than public schools. Research confirms that Catholic school teachers report greater autonomy and decision making with curriculum than do public school teachers (O'Keefe, 2001).

The findings presented here are consistent with previous research on Catholic schools that among those who enter Catholic schools, many are "highly committed, professional teachers who viewed their work within their schools as careers" (Bryk, et al., 1993, p. 131). Schuttloffel (2001) found that some teachers seek out positions in Catholic schools "to share the faith." What these studies fail to capture, however, is Catholic

school teachers' commitment to teaching in general. Examining Catholic school teachers' entering commitment to teaching in Catholic schools only tells us half the story. For example, Brett entered with a short-term commitment, planning eventually to seek a career in administration. Even though Brett was committed to teaching in Catholic schools, he did not intend to teach long-term. Six out of the 10 Catholic school participants in this study entered with short-term commitments to teaching in general. Three of the 4 participants with vested commitment to teaching in Catholic schools had short-term commitments to teaching. This means that Catholic school teachers who entered with vested commitment to teaching in Catholic schools planned to stay in Catholic schools during their entire time in the teaching profession, but did not always intend to stay in teaching long-term.

Results from original analysis of the SASS and TFS data indicate that, like Catholic school participants interviewed in this study, many Catholic school early leavers entered with short-term commitments. Over 20% of Catholic early leavers reported short-term commitments to teaching, compared to 14% of public early leavers (see Table 4.1). This suggests that the Catholic school teachers interviewed for this study reflect the larger population of early Catholic leavers: Many teachers who enter Catholic schools do intend to leave teaching early.

Some Catholic school participants entered Catholic schools with a strong desire to teach in these settings, yet left early. Results presented here indicate one reason that Catholic school teachers left early was because they had short-term commitments to teaching in general. This means that even though these participants were committed to teaching in Catholic schools, they did not necessarily plan to stay in teaching long-term. This helps to explain why Catholic school teachers left early in their careers and could explain earlier findings that private schools experience higher rates of attrition.

Neutral Commitment to Teaching in Catholic Schools

This job landed in my lap...if I were to stay in teaching I would switch to a public school.
-Nick

Many Catholic school participants entered teaching undecided about how long they would teach in Catholic schools and could envision themselves teaching in public or other private settings. In this second type of entering commitment to teaching in Catholic schools, 6 of the 10 Catholic school participants interviewed for this study entered with neutral commitment to teaching in these settings. While none were opposed to teaching in Catholic schools, and in fact several were drawn to the strong mission of Catholic schools, these participants did not express the same commitment to teaching in Catholic schools as those in the previous group. Many of the participants who entered with a neutral commitment to teaching in Catholic schools lacked teaching credentials. Catholic schools provided an opportunity to enter teaching without meeting these requirements; they began their teaching careers in Catholic schools out of practicality. Brenna provides an example of participants who entered with neutral commitment to teaching in Catholic schools.

Brenna, whose father was a deacon in the Catholic Church, remembered being one of the only families on the block who prayed together on Sunday nights. Once she decided to enter teaching, however, she was not drawn to Catholic schools because of strong identification with the Church. Brenna did not explicitly express an interest in sharing the faith, like those with vested commitment to teaching in Catholic schools. Rather, Brenna was drawn to schools with a strong mission.

I can't describe it any other way than just feeling I had a vocation to teaching and that's why I think that I'm drawn to the Catholic school model *or at least a school with a very well defined mission*, because it's not about passing on knowledge to me. It's not about trying to discipline students to become really self-controlled human beings. It's not that. It's about becoming more intimately connected with other people at a critical stage in their development when they're figuring out who

they are and sort of assessing their future and saying, “Okay, what are the things that I have potential in and where can I go?” [italics added] (Interview I)

Although in many ways it sounds like Brenna had a vested commitment to Catholic schools, her explanation suggests that she was drawn to schools with a strong mission, which included Catholic schools but other schools as well, indicating a neutral commitment. Brenna initially accepted a Catholic school position because she did not have an education background. She taught psychology, which had been her major, at an affluent, suburban Catholic high school, where she felt lost and very alone. Brenna left after one year, due to her differences with the school and personal reasons. She later earned a master’s in teaching and came back to classroom teaching, but wavered on whether or not to enter Catholic schools. Public schools offered more money and she applied to both public and charter schools in addition to several Catholic schools as part of her job search.

Brenna decided to enter Catholic schools again. After her student teaching experience in an urban public high school, Brenna believed that she was not ready for that type of environment.

So I was discouraged by that [student teaching experience], but it was probably a good thing that I was feeling discouraged because it allowed me to say, “Okay, I don’t know that I’m ready to be in an urban school like this. I think I need a couple years of teaching experience under my belt again, so I’m going to start in an urban Catholic setting and we’ll see where life takes me at that point.” (Interview I)

Like Brett, Brenna’s student teaching experience influenced her decision to enter Catholic schools. She still did not have a vested commitment to teaching in Catholic schools. She was going to *start* in Catholic schools and was open to teaching in other settings once she obtained more experience. Catholic schools provided the perfect environment to gain that experience. Brenna reported that teaching in Catholic schools would allow for a coopera-

tive relationship with parents and students in an environment focused on learning and the whole development of the child. This was a prevailing theme among Catholic school teachers in this study. Research on Catholic schools confirms what many of these participants intuited: The culture of Catholic schools encourages and sustains a higher level of parental involvement (Bryk, et al., 1993; Convey, 1992) as well as high expectations and academic standards for all students (Bempechat, 1998; Bryk, et al., 1993; Convey, 1992).

Brenna's experiences with the Catholic Church, including her Catholic upbringing, positive experiences in Catholic schools, and strong Catholic identity influenced her decision to enter Catholic schools. These factors alone were not enough to lead to a vested commitment to Catholic schools, in part because Brenna believed that Catholic schools did not offer a good salary. This led to "a lot of soul searching" (Interview I) about whether teaching in Catholic schools was feasible. Brenna explained, "I knew that the salary would be significantly less in most of the Catholic schools in [large urban city]" (Interview I). Brenna explained, however, that she was "committed to getting a job" (Interview I), whether that be in public or Catholic schools. Many other participants in this group also believed that salaries in Catholic schools were lower than those in public schools. Like Brenna, many entered despite the lower salary because it was easier to find teaching positions in Catholic schools, which did not have the same certification requirements. Similar to Brenna, participants in this group were not opposed to the Catholic mission of these schools, but they were not as eager to share the Catholic faith as were those with vested commitments to teaching in Catholic schools.

The findings presented here are consistent with previous research findings that many teachers enter Catholic schools solely because they need a job (Schuttlöffel, 2001) or because they see it as a way "to give something back for what they may have received during their own schooling" and plan to leave to pursue other careers and family goals (Bryk, et al., 1993, p. 131). In other words, teachers enter Catholic schools because they

want to teach and Catholic schools allow them to enter the classroom with fewer certification requirements. These teachers do not express a desire to “share the faith.”

These findings confirm common assumptions about Catholic early leavers and the problem that Catholic schools face in retaining teachers: Many enter Catholic schools without a strong commitment or desire to teach in these schools. Even participants like Brenna who had a strong Catholic identity do not always enter Catholic schools with vested commitments to teaching in these settings. Focusing on entering commitment to teaching in Catholic schools, however, fails to adequately explain why Catholic school teachers leave early. Commitments can change. Schuttloffel’s (2001) study, for example, found that among those who entered without strong commitments to teaching in Catholic schools were teachers who formed a commitment to the mission of Catholic schools during their teaching experiences and decided to stay. Examining teachers’ commitment to teaching in Catholic schools as they enter, teach, and leave these schools is needed.

Entering Commitment and Leaving Teaching Early

Interestingly, my analysis of the entering commitment of the 25 participants in this study and of early leavers in the SASS and TFS both contradicts and confirms assumptions about early leavers. Some might assume that early leavers are not as committed to teaching long-term as those who stay in teaching, but this study indicates, contrary to popular belief, that some early leavers entered teaching with professional commitments to teaching. Some entered Catholic schools with vested commitment to teaching in Catholic schools, and left early. Of course, as many assume, some participants entered with short-term commitments and left early, and many entered Catholic schools with neutral commitments and left early. This certainly is one reason why teachers left early. Commitments can and do change and just as some teachers who entered with long-term commitments to teaching decided to leave, one could imagine that some teachers who enter

with short-term commitments decide to stay. Similarly, while some teachers entered with vested commitments decided to leave Catholic schools, and one could imagine that some with neutral commitments decide to stay in Catholic schools. Simply hiring teachers who are committed to teaching long-term will not solve the problem of retention. Rather, policymakers and researchers must examine how teachers' commitment to teaching changes throughout their time in the profession, as they enter, teach, and leave the classroom. This includes gaining an understanding of how various factors within teachers' personal, professional, and societal contexts and how entering commitments have an impact on commitment to teaching.

Entering commitment is an important component in the decision to leave. My analysis of participants' experiences of entering teaching suggests an important reason why teachers leave early: uncertainty. Many participants, even those with short-term and professional commitments, expressed feelings of uncertainty about their career choices. This uncertainty prevented many from making long-term commitments to teaching. For example, among those who entered teaching directly after college, a number expressed that they had trouble deciding on a career. For some this was because going to college was their goal; what would happen beyond that had not been given serious thought. Victor, for instance, explained "my whole life my whole MO was always 'I'm going to college'...when [college] graduation came I didn't know what I was going to do and I didn't really think about it" (Interview I). Making a long-term commitment to any career was not something that Victor and several other participants were ready to do.

Many participants who had trouble making a long-term commitment stated that teaching provided a career—professional, short-term, or exploratory—that was comfortable and familiar. Lortie (1975) explained that unlike many other professions, individuals are intimately aware of what it means to be a teacher from their own experiences as students. For every participant in this study, school was a positive experience (although for one par-

ticipant, this academic success was not experienced until graduate school). For example, Emily, a public elementary school teacher, explained her motivation to enter teaching:

I love learning myself. I like school. I have done well in school. People have different associations with different places; like if you're a musician, the hall, or if you're a dancer, it would be the studio. I felt that way about school...I remembered school as a place of learning and change and productivity as a really dynamic and exciting place. So I thought that is where I want to be. (Interview I)

Many participants reported a similar love of learning and desire to share that feeling with young people. Lortie (1975) explained that because people are so familiar with teaching, the career is more accessible. This "accessibility fosters the entrance of people who might never have gone to college to become teachers" (p. 49). This provides a plausible explanation for why many leave early in their careers: Teaching was familiar, but not necessarily the best fit.

Even among those who entered with professional commitment to teaching, their entering commitment was not always clear. For example, while Colin believed when he began teaching that it would be a long-term career, after leaving the classroom he realized that teaching was more of a "recycled dream" and not something about which he was entirely passionate.

I felt a little bit like a fraud because I wasn't as passionate about going into—I mean I went into teaching maybe like a soldier going into some kind of battle that he's not really thrilled about going into; not like leading the charge, but more like, "Oh my God, I don't know if I'm ready for this." There's a difference between people who leave [the master's program] really worried about it and people who left thinking, "Oh my God, I cannot wait to be a teacher." (Interview II)

While examining entering commitment is important, if researchers only focus on certain aspects of a teacher's time in the profession, reflections like these will be overlooked. It was only after Colin left that he realized the tenuousness of his commitment to teaching. This uncertainty or lack of clear, strong commitment to teaching as participants entered the classroom affected their commitment as they began their classroom experiences.

As demonstrated by the examples in this chapter, entering commitment was influenced by multiple factors in participants' personal, professional, and societal contexts. These factors, the interaction between factors, and their impact varied in each case. For example, some participants had family members who were teachers. For several teachers, this had a positive influence on their commitment to teaching, with their family members supporting their decision to enter teaching. For other participants, this had a negative influence on their commitment to teaching. One participant explained that her parents did not have good teaching experiences and tried to dissuade her from entering the profession. In each case, the multiple factors that influenced entering commitment were always from either their personal, professional, or societal contexts. A more complete discussion of how this study adds to our current understanding of teacher commitment is presented in the final chapter.

As participants transitioned into the classroom, their commitments to teaching changed. The next chapter explores participants' experiences as classroom teachers and the various influences that affected their developing sense of commitment to teaching and teaching in Catholic schools.

CHAPTER 5: TEACHING EXPERIENCES

“I felt like I was dropping the ball all the time. I was working as hard I could and I was being mediocre. That was totally new to me.” For the teacher quoted here, teaching was a “calling,” but her professional commitment slowly deteriorated while she was teaching. She struggled throughout her first year. In her second year, she could see even more clearly that despite working as hard as she could, she was barely managing. For this teacher, who was accustomed to success, the experience of failing in the classroom was devastating to her sense of worth and self-efficacy. It challenged her identity and affected her decision to leave early.

Like the teacher quoted above, the 25 participants interviewed for this study experienced challenges and successes while they were teaching that influenced their commitment to teaching and decision to leave teaching early. It is often assumed that early leavers are dissatisfied with their teaching experiences. Many of the early leavers in this study, however, were not dissatisfied with teaching. They described their schools as great working environments and found their administrators and colleagues to be supportive. There were participants in this study who were dissatisfied with teaching and left, and it is true that every participant identified aspects of teaching that he or she found frustrating. Identifying and analyzing these aspects that teachers found frustrating in isolation, however, would result in a narrow and incomplete understanding of the phenomenon of early leaving. My analysis tries to consider the overall experiences of teachers and how these affected the decision to leave early.

This chapter examines the phenomenon of early leaving by analyzing the teaching experiences of participants, the second aspect of leaving teaching early. In this aspect, teachers characterized their overall experiences in one of three ways: they believed that they were effective and were satisfied with teaching; they believed that they were effective, but were frustrated with certain aspects of teaching; or they believed that they were

ineffective. Effective and satisfied teachers reported supportive, collegial relationships with fellow teachers and administrators, as well as positive relationships with students. Effective and frustrated teachers considered themselves good teachers, but they were unable to meet their students' needs due to school constraints. They were frustrated with the lack of available resources and support from colleagues and the administration. Finally, several of the teachers in this study knew that they were not good teachers. They believed that they were not delivering good instruction or meeting their students' needs, in some cases despite support from the school. Teaching experiences had a significant impact on the decision to leave teaching early. These characterizations are represented in Figure 4.1 under "Teaching Experience."

Participants' general experiences while teaching were influenced by a multitude of factors and circumstances in their personal and professional lives and in their societal contexts. For example, professional contexts included a developing sense of professional identity as a teacher. As participants gained teaching experience, they developed identities that were shaped by their interactions with students and colleagues. In addition, participants were influenced by the school and district contexts in which they worked, including interactions with other teachers and school and district administrators as well as policies and job requirements. Some participants, for instance, developed positive working relationships with their colleagues, while others were frustrated by a lack of professionalism among colleagues. These contexts and various interactions between them affected participants' overall characterizations of their teaching experiences as well as their commitment to teaching and decision to leave teaching early. These are represented in Figure 4.2.

The following sections provide an analysis of teachers' overall experiences. Each section details one participant's teaching experience and how factors from various contexts and entering commitment influenced the decision to leave. Next, the teaching experiences of Catholic school teachers are analyzed. Results from the Schools and Staff-

ing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) are integrated throughout the chapter to compare the experiences of those interviewed to that of the larger population of public and Catholic early leavers.

Teaching Experience

Effective and Satisfied

I think I was very satisfied with teaching. I walked away from it feeling like I had accomplished something personally as a teacher.
-Reid

Some teachers left teaching despite enjoying their classroom experiences. In this study, 10 of the 25 participants left teaching even though they reported positive experiences in the classroom and a general sense of success. These teachers thought that they were effective in delivering instruction and addressing the academic needs of their students. They developed good relationships with their students and collegial, supportive relationships with the faculty. Nevertheless, they decided to leave teaching early. Reid provides an example of the participants in this group.

In college, Reid studied history, a subject she had become passionate about from her own high school experience. Reid was interested in finding a career where she could continue to engage in the subject. Several mentors encouraged her to consider teaching and upon their suggestion, Reid entered the profession. She entered with an exploratory commitment. Reid explained, “It all depended on how my first year went to see if [teaching] was really right for me...I thought I would figure it out pretty quickly” (Interview I). Reid started teaching at her alma mater, an all girls Catholic high school. During her first year, Reid taught world history and geography along with two elective courses that she was not expecting to teach: psychology and “law and society.” Reid did not have a strong background in either of the elective subjects and explained that those courses were particularly challenging her first year:

Psychology was a whole new bag of tricks because I didn't have a huge background in it. I had to stay a day ahead of the kids basically. I tried to stay more than that, but it literally became a day ahead. (Interview I)

The department chair was supportive and gave Reid the freedom to develop the two electives into academically rigorous courses. The challenge of developing the electives, along with Reid's continuing efforts to organize and manage grading and planning, made her first year "overwhelming" (Interview I). She was somewhat prepared for this: Her aunt had taught in Catholic schools for 20 years and had warned her that the first year would be particularly difficult.

Despite feeling overwhelmed in her first year, Reid returned for a second and a third year. She reported that she felt she was picking up momentum, enjoying herself more and experiencing a sense of confidence that she was "conveying things effectively and that [the students] were enjoying learning":

I think hearing that they were really enjoying it as much as I did and having that impact in a way that my high school history teacher had on me, I felt like I had accomplished what I set out to do, which was to really give these kids a picture of what I loved and figure out if they loved it. Even if they didn't, if they enjoyed being in my classroom I was happy. And it seemed like most of them did. (Interview I)

Reid credited the school for providing the support she needed to be successful. She described the school as a strong, "tight-knit" community. Reid believed, from her experiences as both a student and as a teacher, that the school created a community in which all the students knew one another, where alumni stayed connected to the school, and where parents were actively involved. "So it pulls you in and keeps you connected to the school" (Interview I). The administration encouraged teachers to become involved in the school, clearly communicating expectations, but not "constantly micromanaging" teach-

ers, which created a professional and supportive working environment. The colleagues in her department worked particularly well together. Reid developed good relationships with many of the faculty, both the nuns who were “lifers” and provided inspiration, and the younger teachers who, like her, were just “cutting their teeth,” trying to figure out if teaching was a good fit for them professionally (Interview I). Despite her overall satisfaction with teaching and confidence in her effectiveness as a teacher, Reid’s interest in pursuing a graduate degree in history continued to “nag” at her. After 3 years in the classroom, she decided to leave teaching for graduate school.

Reid’s teaching experiences were influenced by her personal, professional, and school contexts. Her family was extremely supportive of her career, especially in the often overwhelming first year of teaching. Her mother was a psychology major and helped Reid develop the psychology elective her first year. The school climate, including collaboration with colleagues in her department, friendships with other teachers, and clear communication with the school administration made for a positive, supportive working environment that allowed autonomy. These factors interacted, influencing Reid’s sense of professional identity and self-efficacy. Her entering commitment influenced her decision to leave; she was uncertain as to how long she would stay in teaching. Despite her positive experiences, this uncertainty remained and she could not ignore her interests in earning a master’s degree in history.

Reid’s classroom experiences were similar to those of other interviewees who experienced success. These teachers were confident in their ability to teach. Like Reid, most of the successful teachers in this study liked teaching, or at least the fundamental aspects of teaching, and liked their school cultures. One participant explained,

I really enjoyed the interaction with the students. I loved having them. I didn’t necessarily love having them as students. As people they were great. As students,

I mean, that's part of being a teacher is being challenging and learning your roles and your boundaries. I really liked the support from the other faculty and I liked the actual teaching aspect; I liked the delivery of material and I liked coming up with these really innovative lessons. (Addy, Interview II)

Participants in this category described close friendships and collegial relationships with other teachers and, in some cases, the administration.

My analysis contradicts some previous findings that those who leave teaching are typically dissatisfied with their schools (S. M. Johnson, 2004), with collegiality among other teachers (Luekens, et al., 2004; Markow & Martin, 2005; Weiss, 1999), or with interactions with administrators (Ingersoll, 2003a; S. M. Johnson, 2004; Luekens, et al., 2004; Markow & Martin, 2005). This analysis also contradicts previous findings that the experience of success is important in retaining teachers (Day, et al., 2007; Grubb, 2007; S. M. Johnson, 2004). The teachers who characterized their teaching as effective and their experiences as satisfactory experienced success, yet still left early. These findings also raise questions about Kanter's (1972) theory of commitment, which suggests that when individuals develop solidarity and positive social relationships within a group, they become more committed to that group. Ten of the 25 participants in this study left teaching early despite having formed collegial relationships with other teachers and experiencing success and satisfaction. As the next chapter demonstrates, rather than conditions in their schools and professional contexts influencing their decision to leave, most of these teachers who were satisfied experienced changes in their lives and careers that had an impact on their decision to leave teaching early.

My analysis of the SASS and TFS indicates that many early leavers were satisfied with their teaching experiences. About 66% of public and 54% of Catholic school early leavers reported that dissatisfaction with teaching as a career was not at all important in their decision to leave teaching (see Table 5.1). Furthermore, only 5% of public and 2%

of Catholic early leavers reported dissatisfaction with teaching as the most important reason for leaving (see Table 5.2). The implication is a majority of early leavers were satisfied with teaching. The experiences of participants interviewed for this study, therefore, are not unique, but reflect the overall population of early leavers: Many teachers leave despite being satisfied with teaching.

The results presented here suggest that the common assumption that teachers who are satisfied stay in teaching needs to be examined more closely. Ten of the 25 participants in this study believed that they were effective teachers and were generally satisfied with teaching, yet left early. They described their schools as great working environments and had good working relationships with their colleagues. If anything, the school cultures gave these participants second thoughts about their decision to leave teaching. For these participants, entering commitment and, as the next chapter explores, life and career changes had more of an impact on their decision to leave early than did teaching experiences.

Table 5.1

The Importance of Dissatisfaction with Teaching as a Career on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13J)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Not at all important	42,497	66.4	2,379	54.2
Slightly important	4,155	6.5	562	12.8
Somewhat important	7,972	12.5	350	8.0
Very important	5,151	8.1	325	7.4
Extremely important	4,181	6.5	774	17.6

Table 5.2

Most Important Reason for Leaving among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 14)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Pregnancy/child rearing	17,468	27.3	917	20.9
Staffing action	8,264	12.9	722	16.4
Change in residence	6,765	10.6	540	12.3
For better salary or benefits	5,860	9.2	214	4.9
Dissatisfaction with teaching assignment	5,055	7.9	293	6.7
Take courses WITHIN the field of education	4,783	7.5	115	2.6
Other family or personal reasons	3,523	5.5	417	9.5
Dissatisfaction with teaching as a career	3,263	5.1	92	2.1
Take courses OUTSIDE the field of education	3,039	4.8	408	9.3
To pursue position other than K-12 teacher	2,799	4.4	456	10.4
Health	1,560	2.4	216	4.9

Effective and Frustrated

This is not a system designed to help these children. I cannot function within such a system.
-Amanda

Ten participants interviewed for this study believed that they were good teachers but were unable to accomplish what they hoped in the classroom due to conditions in the school or school system. Like those in the previous group, these participants thought that they were effective teachers, but they believed that their students' learning needs were not met, citing issues including lack of collegiality, administrative support, and resources. The inability to meet students' needs due to these constraints led to frustration and had an

impact on their decision to leave. Amanda provides an example of participants who considered themselves good teachers, but experienced frustration while they were teaching.

After receiving her undergraduate degree, Amanda earned her elementary certification and worked as a classroom aide for one year. The following year, she taught 4th grade at a parochial school, but left at the end of the school year because she believed she was too young for the responsibility and could not communicate effectively with parents. Amanda came back to teaching after a 10 year hiatus, during which she worked in a variety of jobs across the country. Amanda knew that she could not simply go back to the classroom after having been out for 10 years; thus, she enrolled in a master's program in special education. Two weeks into her year-long student teaching internship, Amanda reported that she fell in love with the students, but realized that the public school system was not serving them. She described teachers "brutalizing" and "terrorizing" the students, teachers "who lived to make assistant aides cry," and students suffering as a result (Interview I). Amanda explained that teachers were too busy and too overwhelmed to engage with students or have a positive impact in their lives. After finishing the master's program, Amanda was skeptical about working in the bureaucracy of public schools based on her observations. She wanted to work with children, though, and saw teaching as her best option.

When I was looking at schools over the summer, I didn't even want to be looking at schools then. But unfortunately I kind of succumbed—which is not like me—to the pressure of finding a job in September and it needs to be working with kids and I only have 2 months to do that, so let me go to the public schools, because I was really anxious to be working with the kids. (Interview II)

Despite her reservations, Amanda accepted a K-2 learning center position, teaching a multiage group of students with special needs. She entered teaching with exploratory

commitment, unsure how long she would stay in teaching. Upon entering the classroom, Amanda discovered that the position had changed from a K-2 learning center to a K-3 learning center, serving students with special needs from kindergarten through grade 3. When Amanda voiced her complaints, the administration questioned whether she felt competent to do the job. For Amanda that was never a doubt; she knew she could do the job. Rather, she explained, taking on such a diverse set of needs would require “sacrifice[ing] and compromis[ing] the needs and the best interests of the children and their families” (Interview I). Amanda explained that she would have to cut corners and the overwhelming workload would negatively affect her ability to teach her students. That was a sacrifice she did not want to make. Amanda’s frustrations only continued when she could not obtain the curriculum materials she needed. Although several of her students needed special services, the school would not allow Amanda to use the curriculum she thought best because she did not have the training. Even though Amanda thoroughly enjoyed working with the kids, she could not help but feel that they were being “disserved”:

Obviously I really, really, really enjoyed working with the children every minute of the day...they were around me all day long and it was great and [a school is] the best place to get that, but I couldn’t help them. I would sit there and no matter how much fun we were having playing a reading game, in the back of my mind I’m like this is bullshit. This is not the program that they need. But they won’t let me teach the program that you need, they won’t give me the time to teach you the program that you need...I’m disserving them. There’s so much more these kids could be getting from me and it’s not fair to them that they’re not getting it from me. (Interview II)

Other issues within the school context influenced Amanda’s decision to leave as well. Amanda did not experience a sense of collegiality with other teachers. She explained, “I felt like a lot of people didn’t like me and I didn’t care....It’s so ironic. It’s a cult. Teaching is a cult; it’s a club and if you don’t subscribe to the cult’s rules and

regulations, you're out" (Interview I). Her workload did not help matters either. Between having 25 to 30 students across four grades in 12 different general education classrooms, with 25 different disabilities and few resources with which to teach, Amanda thought that her workload was closely tied to how "kids get disserved" (Interview II). Two months into the year, Amanda gave her notice that she would be leaving in December. Amanda believed that the system did not serve the students and that in order to have the impact on students that she desired, she needed to work with students with special needs on her own, by starting a co-op with alternative and holistic services for students.

Amanda's personal, professional, school, district, and societal contexts as well as her entering commitment influenced her teaching experiences, commitment to teaching, and decision to leave teaching early. Societal and personal pressures to get a job pushed Amanda into taking a teaching position despite her reservations about working in public schools. These reservations had an impact on her experiences and how she perceived public schools. Within the school and district contexts, Amanda became frustrated when her expectations about what she should be providing her students conflicted with bureaucratic regulations and the school culture, precluding her from meeting the needs of her students. Amanda explained that many factors within the school and district context compounded to affect her ability to meet students' needs:

These kids aren't getting what they need because [administrators] denied sending me to that autism conference. These kids aren't getting what they need because of the social relationships with colleagues. These kids aren't getting what they need because of manageability of the workload. They're not getting what they need because I'm so freaking tired when I come in the next morning." (Interview II)

Amanda's experience of frustration highlights several common experiences of the other 9 participants who thought that they were good teachers, but experienced overall

frustration with teaching. Several participants were frustrated that schools did not meet the needs of students. For example, one participant who worked in a school serving minority students reported dissatisfaction and frustration with the pedagogical approach used by her school: a workshop model focusing on discrete reading skills rather than exposing students to rich reading materials. She explained, “Ultimately, I really felt like it was this fucked up institutional racism in reverse, disserving these kids by being so committed to one pedagogical model that you are systematically denying them any content knowledge at all” (Olivia, Interview I). Participants also experienced frustration with a lack of professionalism among faculty. Some described the faculty as “dead weight” who lacked a sense of team effort in trying to improve the school and student achievement. One participant reported that “the lack of collegiality was disheartening” (Aaron, Interview II). One theme that Amanda did not experience, but was prevalent among other participants in this group, was frustration with feedback from administrators. Some participants never received any affirmation from the administration because their principals were either too “stretched” to observe them or simply did not provide critical feedback. One participant, who taught for 3 years reported, “I didn’t know if I was a good teacher. I had never had a review” (Nicole, Interview I). Another teacher, who was observed twice a year, explained, “I never really got much feedback about how it is that I could improve my classes” (Asher, Interview I). He would have welcomed constructive criticism to help improve his teaching.

The findings here are consistent with previous research on teacher retention. Researchers have found that many teachers who leave report dissatisfaction with school support, resources, and collegiality (Ingersoll, 2001; S. M. Johnson, 2004; Luekens, et al., 2004; Markow & Martin, 2005; Weiss, 1999). Kanter’s (1972) theory of commitment proves helpful in explaining why these participants left. According to Kanter, commitment is influenced by whether cultures create more benefits than costs and whether

individuals are able to establish positive relationships. For the participants in this group, teaching did not provide the intrinsic rewards of having a positive impact on students. Many teachers had trouble forming collegial relationships with other teachers in their schools. This also led to a decreased commitment to teaching, and ultimately a decision to leave teaching early.

Original analysis of the SASS and TFS suggests that many early leavers were frustrated with the way their schools were run. For example, in the SASS questionnaire, about 29% of public and 28% of Catholic school early leavers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “I like the way things are run at this school” (see Table 5.3). Almost 29% of public and 21% of Catholic early leavers who had left teaching and were working in new jobs responded that opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others were better in their current position than in teaching (see Table 5.4). This means that many early leavers were frustrated with their schools and believed they did not have opportunities to have a positive impact on others. This suggests that the experiences of the interview participants in this group reflect the overall population of early leavers.

Table 5.3

SASS/TFS Respondents’ Reports on whether they Like the Way the School is Run (SASS Question 66/67C)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Strongly agree	5,788	9.7	1,302	30.0
Agree	39,326	61.3	1,865	42.4
Disagree	14,790	23.2	965	22.6
Strongly disagree	4,051	6.4	259	5.0

Table 5.4

TFS Respondents Compare Opportunities to Make a Difference between their Current Position and Teaching (TFS Question 20T)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Better in teaching	12,828	44.6	1,202	62.2
Not better or worse	7,694	26.8	328	17.0
Better in current position	8,220	28.6	403	20.8

For participants in this group, mounting frustrations with their schools influenced their commitment to teaching. Frustration, however, was not their only reason for leaving. A number of factors, including lack of resources and little collaboration among faculty, contributed to an inability to meet students’ needs. The approach of examining entering commitment and classroom experiences, as well as the multiple factors and circumstances that had an impact on the decision to leave, reveals a much more complex and nuanced understanding of why these teachers became frustrated and left.

Ineffective

*I sucked at teaching...I was a bad teacher.
-Victor*

Self-efficacy has a powerful impact on career decisions and commitment. Teacher self-efficacy includes a “teacher’s personal sense of effectiveness as a teacher” (Ashton, 1985, p. 144). Teachers enter the classroom with expectations about what they themselves should be able to accomplish as teachers (e.g., establish positive relationships with students, provide students with quality education). In his study, 5 participants developed a sense of low self-efficacy or personal efficacy when they failed to meet their own expectations. Unlike participants in the previous group, these teachers did not feel that schools

were impeding their ability to achieve success; rather, they blamed themselves and focused on their own perceived ineffectiveness. Clara provides an example of participants in this study who considered themselves ineffective teachers.

Clara decided to go into teaching because she “enjoyed math and [was] not sure what to do with it” (Interview I), and she also knew that she enjoyed working with young people. Teaching seemed the ideal combination of those interests. Clara reported, “I really liked the idea of teaching math” (Interview I). She entered a post-baccalaureate teacher certification program after finishing her bachelor’s degree in math and thought of teaching as a long-term profession. She began teaching at a suburban high school teaching ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade algebra, honors algebra, and pre-calculus. Immediately, Clara experienced a “shock to the system”:

The biggest culture shock was, well, if I am too lazy to get this done, I affect every single one of my students. If I am too lazy to put together a good lesson plan, that affects their experience and their education. So it was a huge leap in responsibility. (Interview I)

The responsibilities of the job took over Clara’s life. She struggled through her first year and knew she was not doing good work. Teaching was very different from the tutoring and one-on-one experiences she had previous to entering teaching. Clara reported,

I did not always have good lesson plans and I knew it and I did not always get papers, tests, and homework back in time. I was not great at classroom management and I was terrible about calling parents...I was really good one-on-one explaining to kids and I really loved my students. I knew I was being caring towards them, but I was not doing excellent work; I was competent, but not excellent. That was shocking to me. (Interview I)

Clara was used to success. Experiencing failure was another “shock to the system.”

Despite her difficulties with teaching, Clara liked the school she was in. She found her colleagues to be extremely supportive, especially those in the math department. “It was a great department to work with because they were so smart and really involved and loved their work, had a lot of passion” (Interview I). Clara was assigned a mentor her first year, with whom she met with regularly. In addition, for each class she taught, Clara was assigned a partner teacher to help with lesson planning and other needed support. Clara described her colleagues as “really great teachers...No one just coasted. Even the veteran teachers worked hard” (Interview I). Clara was grateful for her colleagues’ help and explained,

I think I let them down sometimes because I just was not able to always do as much as I should have been able to do. They were understanding of the limitations of a new teacher...they really invested in me and [had] been supportive of me and I just couldn’t do it. (Interview I)

Clara was hopeful that her second year would be better. “Everyone says your first year of teaching is the hardest thing you will ever do and I absolutely agree that it was” (Interview II). But the second year, in many ways, was worse. Clara explained that her second year was worse because

I wasn’t as naïve about it; I was understanding better what I should be able to do and so on. I was getting more discouraged, maybe, was part of it. I think I might have even felt less successful my second year. (Interview II)

Clara had a particularly difficult class that year with students who had “tons of behavior and learning problems” (Interview II). She tried different management techniques, but nothing seemed to work. Even in her other classes, Clara continued to struggle to meet her students’ needs.

With teaching there are so many things going on because these three students are with you, these three are confused, but for different reasons, and three do not even care. You have to get enough of them with you and figure out how to not get the quick ones bored. (Interview I)

In addition, Clara reported that “for the kids that their personal priorities were not math, I felt like I was torturing them, because I was basically” (Interview II). Clara had a difficult time “forcing” math on these students.

Clara clearly did not consider herself a good teacher. Although she reported “I think I was better at teaching the kids who wanted to learn” and had succeeded at forming respectful, caring, and positive relationships with her students, in general she believed that she was not an effective classroom teacher. During her second year, events in her personal life made teaching even more challenging. These events had an impact on her commitment to teaching and her decision to leave. Clara explained,

I think if I had not dealt with this double whammy loss in the fall [in her personal life], maybe I would have made it another year. I don’t know. Or maybe I would still be teaching. It is hard to say. (Interview II)

Despite support from her colleagues in her school context, Clara had a difficult time experiencing success in the classroom. In addition, Clara experienced a conflict with the professional obligations she had as a teacher, telling students what they should be learning and administering the high-stakes standardized tests that they needed to pass. She reported she felt that she was “inflicting an agenda” on her students. “One thing that really did not fit for me with teaching is that I had to force an agenda on people’s lives and was not comfortable with it” (Interview II). Clara left teaching after her second year and began coursework towards becoming a minister.

Clara’s experience is similar to the other 4 participants who developed a sense

of low self-efficacy. These participants struggled to gain a sense of success and accomplishment. One participant reported, “I just had never felt like a bigger failure in my life. I really wanted badly to do well for [the students], but I just couldn’t do it” (Erika, Interview I). The teachers in this category were accustomed to success, but found that in their classroom experiences failures outweighed successes. Interestingly, all but 1 of these 5 teachers reported that they had networks within and outside the school where they received advice and support to improve their teaching. Several participants reported observing other teachers to glean useful strategies. Despite these supports, these teachers continued to experience a sense of low self-efficacy. In their school contexts, they were surrounded by what they thought were master teachers. Participants in this category reported that they knew what good teaching was and they compared themselves to the master teachers with whom they worked. This comparison, along with a sense that they were not accomplishing what they had hoped, was detrimental to their self-efficacy. Emotionally, it was difficult for many of these teachers because they believed that they were not meeting their students’ needs. These 5 teachers came to the conclusion that they were not as successful as they wanted to have been or should have been.

These findings are consistent with research on the importance of success in retaining teachers. Johnson (2004), Day, et al. (2007), Nieto (2003), and Grubb’s (2007) research reviewed earlier all reported that teachers who achieve success with their students are more likely to stay. Research has found that having a low sense of personal efficacy can have a “devastating effect” on professional commitment to teaching (Ashton, 1985). The experiences of these teachers differs from research indicating that providing support to teachers increases retention (S. M. Johnson, 2004; Kelley, 2004; Marvel, et al., 2007; OECD, 2005). Participants in this category reported a wealth of support, yet still considered themselves ineffective. The 5 participants in this study who developed a sense of low self-efficacy were accustomed to success. They had been good students and had posi-

tive prior experiences working with youth as tutors, volunteers, and teaching assistants. Their teaching experiences challenged their identities as successful individuals. Identity is closely related to commitment; identity influences commitment and commitment influences identity (Kanter, 1972). This helps to explain why these teachers left: Their identities were “threatened” (Ball & Goodson, 1985).

Analysis of public and Catholic school early leavers’ responses to questions on the SASS and TFS indicates that many who left teaching early reported a low sense of self-efficacy. Among public early leavers who had new jobs, about 41% reported that their sense of personal accomplishment was better in their current position compared to teaching. Almost 18% of Catholic early leavers believed that personal accomplishment was better in their current position (see Table 5.5). The experiences of low self-efficacy among the interview participants were not unique to this group. Rather, analysis of the SASS and TFS indicates that self-efficacy was an issue for many early leavers. Understanding why teachers leave early, therefore, requires examining self-efficacy and whether or not teachers believe they are effective.

In this study, 5 participants believed that they were ineffective teachers and were not able to accomplish what they had hoped. They blamed their own personal efficacy. These teachers tried countless strategies and techniques to improve their teaching, but

Table 5.5

TFS Respondents Compare Sense of Personal Accomplishment between their Current Position and Teaching (TFS 20S)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Better in teaching	10,515	36.6	875	45.2
Not better or worse	6,326	22.0	716	37.0
Better in current position	11,902	41.4	343	17.7

still believed that they were unsuccessful. They enjoyed several aspects of teaching, including their colleagues and the students, but as Clara explained “there was enough stuff that made me unhappy and that made me exhausted all the time, and miserable, depressed, and anxious and unhappy. It just wasn’t worth it” (Interview II). This provides a more nuanced understanding of why teachers leave that very few studies have captured: Some teachers left because they believed that they were not good teachers. Multiple factors within these participants’ personal and professional lives, along with their own expectations of themselves and what they could and could not accomplish in the classroom, led them to characterize their teaching as ineffective, and ultimately influenced their decisions to leave.

Teaching Experience in Catholic Schools

Catholic school teachers experienced not only factors and circumstances while teaching that influenced their commitment to teaching in general, but they also experienced factors and circumstances that affected their decision to leave teaching in Catholic schools. For example, some Catholic school participants expressed satisfaction with collegial relationships in their schools, which had an impact on their commitment to teaching in general. In addition, several participants valued the strong faith-based communities in their schools. This sense of community had an impact on their commitment to teaching in Catholic schools. The distinction here is that collegiality influenced commitment to teaching in general and faith-based communities influenced commitment to Catholic school teaching, as this was an aspect unique to Catholic school settings. Thus, this section focuses on the experiences of the 10 Catholic school teachers in this study and how they interpreted the Catholic aspects of their teaching experiences, developing overall characterizations of their teaching experiences in Catholic schools as either satisfactory or frustrating. These are represented in Figure 4.3 under “Teaching Experience” as “Satis-

factory” and “Frustrating.” Catholic school teachers developed a sense of their own self-efficacy, but in this study, participants did not describe ways in which Catholic schools in particular had an impact on their personal efficacy. For example, although one Catholic school participant reported a sense of low self-efficacy, this did not influence his decision to leave teaching in Catholic schools, nor did the particular aspects of Catholic schools influence his personal efficacy.

Catholic school teachers were influenced by multiple factors in their personal, professional, school, and societal contexts. In addition, Catholic school participants were affected by parish, diocesan, and Catholic Church contexts. Parish and diocesan contexts include interactions with local priests, parishioners, and diocesan administrators in addition to local church and diocesan policies. For example, several participants had parish priests who were involved in the life of the school, including directing liturgies, sacramental preparation, and religious formation. Interactions with the priest and parish community of the school influenced participants’ experiences and decisions to leave teaching in Catholic schools. These contexts are represented in Figure 4.4.

Satisfactory Experiences in Catholic Schools

I felt there was a real sense of togetherness that did make me feel like part of the school as a whole.
-Lindsey

Despite leaving early, many Catholic school teachers were satisfied with their Catholic school teaching experiences and remained committed to the mission of these schools. Among the 10 Catholic school interview participants, 7 reported positive experiences in the Catholic schools in which they taught. These participants attributed their positive experiences to several aspects unique to Catholic schools, including the ability to engage in conversations with students about faith, a sense of community among faculty, students, parents, and parishioners, and professional work environments in which teachers had

autonomy over the curriculum. Lindsey provides an example of those who characterized their overall Catholic school teaching experiences as satisfactory.

Lindsey went to Catholic school from kindergarten through graduate school. In college, she majored in sociology and was very active in campus ministry and social justice initiatives. After graduation, she wanted to do volunteer work and explained, “I had always wanted to teach or thought about teaching” (Interview I). She enrolled in a Catholic teaching corps program, where in exchange for 2 years of service in high-needs Catholic schools, Lindsey lived in community with other corps teachers and earned her master’s in teaching. Lindsey chose to teach in Catholic schools, explaining, “I think Catholic schools are where I’m most comfortable and most at home” (Interview I). Entering teaching with professional or long-term commitment to teaching and vested commitment to Catholic schools, Lindsey planned to teach in Catholic schools her entire time in the profession. She taught second grade at a Catholic elementary school on the West Coast serving Hispanic and African American students from low-income families.

In her first year, Lindsey worked to decipher the appropriate expectations for her second graders, which “wasn’t the second grade of my childhood of [desks in] straight rows” (Interview II). At the same time, she tried to balance taking graduate courses, learning to manage the workload, and trying to meet the needs of her students, most of whom were behind in reading. The principal took steps to provide a supportive environment for Lindsey, knowing that she would have limited training as she entered her first year and would be taking classes. Lindsey explained that the principal also helped her to establish realistic expectations, constantly reminding her to strive for “Progress, not perfection!” (Interview I). Lindsey’s mentor was the former second grade teacher, who started teaching first grade the year Lindsey was hired. Her mentor was extremely helpful in providing Lindsey with lesson plans and strategies for organizing her classroom. At the end of her first year, Lindsey reported that her students left her class reading. She came to

the conclusion that teaching was “something I knew I was good at....This was something that was probably where I was supposed to be” (Interview II).

Lindsey continued in her 2-year commitment to the school and even stayed for a third year. She described the school as a “really great place to be” and liked working in a Catholic setting. Lindsey described the Catholic community as “strong” and explained that by her third year in the school she “felt really connected to the *whole* school community” (Interview II); she knew all of the students in the school and had developed positive relationships with members in the school community. Lindsey developed collegial relationships with most of the other teachers and worked with the parish staff to prepare her students and the parish children for First Reconciliation and First Communion. She appreciated that in the Catholic school setting she had the freedom to answer students’ questions about God and religion, topics that inevitably come up in any school setting. Lindsey explained, “What I did like about being in a Catholic school...was that you didn’t have to watch what you said as much in terms of religion, because they’re 7 [years old]—they’re going to ask the questions [about God] whether or not they’re in a Catholic school” (Interview II). Lindsey also believed that, unlike public schools where trends in standardization had eliminated teacher autonomy, in Catholic schools she had greater freedom with the curriculum. She explained, “If I wanted to take 2 weeks to do double-digit subtraction with borrowing because [the students’] heads exploded, I can take it” (Interview I). Despite enjoying her experiences, Lindsey had trouble adjusting to the city and she started to feel burned out. She made the difficult decision to leave the school after her third year. Lindsey moved back to the East Coast and almost accepted a middle school position at a Catholic school, but another job opportunity presented itself that was too hard to turn down: A job at her alma mater, a Jesuit university, working in the development office.

Lindsey’s teaching experiences in Catholic schools were influenced by her per-

sonal, professional, school, parish, diocesan, and Catholic Church contexts as well as her entering commitment. In her personal and Catholic Church contexts, Lindsey reported had positive experiences in Catholic schools, retreats, and service programs. These positive experiences influenced her entering commitment to teaching in Catholic schools; Catholic schools were where she felt comfortable. This, in turn, helped Lindsey to form good relationships with colleagues, with whom she shared her Catholic values, and with the parish staff, with whom she worked to prepare students for the sacraments. These interactions bolstered her sense of community with the school. The ability to engage in questions about God with students and to have control over the curriculum also had an impact on Lindsey's commitment to teaching in Catholic schools because she believed that these opportunities were lacking in public school settings. Her principal, mentor, and other colleagues provided a supportive school environment that helped Lindsey experience success with her students. As a result, Lindsey developed a positive professional identity as a teacher.

Lindsey's experiences highlight similarities among the 7 participants who were satisfied with their teaching experiences in Catholic schools. All 7 believed that their schools were a good fit. They liked their schools and described a strong sense of community within the school. One participant explained, "There's more of a community feel to [Catholic schools] is really what it comes down to. I think everybody feels part of that and they are invested in it and that's important" (Brett, Interview I). Like Lindsey, most of these participants entered with vested commitment, or entered teaching with a strong desire to teach in Catholic schools. Several participants enjoyed and appreciated the autonomy afforded in Catholic schools. The satisfactory experiences of these participants did not necessarily have an impact on their decisions to leave early. If anything, these participants were somewhat hesitant to leave because they had such positive experiences in the classroom. As the next chapter describes, entering commitment and life and career

changes influenced these participants' decisions to leave teaching in Catholic schools.

The results from these interviews are in accord with previous research findings that Catholic school teachers report a strong sense of community in their schools and collegiality among their peers (Bryk, et al., 1993; Liu & Meyer, 2005; Schaub, 2000). This contradicts Ingersoll's (2001) hypothesis that strong communities in small faith-based private schools may lead to increased attrition because teachers may find it difficult to find like-minded colleagues. These findings are also consistent with research indicating that Catholic school teachers report high job satisfaction (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005a). Kanter's (1972) theory of commitment and the influence of "moral compellingness" help to explain why these participants were committed to teaching in Catholic schools and the positive experiences they had, although it does not explain why they left. Commitments are based on whether individuals identify with the norms and values of a culture. These participants maintained strong Catholic identities and were satisfied with the Catholic aspects of their teaching experiences; however, they still left early.

Analysis of Catholic early leaver responses on the SASS and TFS indicates that, like participants in this group, most Catholic early leavers were satisfied with their Catholic school teaching experiences. Results reported previously on teacher satisfaction indicated that for almost 54% of Catholic school early leavers, dissatisfaction with teaching was not at all important in their decision to leave early (see Table 5.1). Dissatisfaction with teaching as a career was the least important of 11 factors, including pregnancy and child rearing, salary and benefits, and taking courses within and outside the field of education, in the decision to leave early (see Table 5.2). In addition, many Catholic early leavers reported that colleagues shared their values and beliefs. Almost 86% of Catholic early leavers and 86% of public early leavers reported that colleagues shared beliefs and values about the mission of the school (see Table 5.6). This is not surprising given that Catholic school teachers tend to be Catholic, and, therefore, enter these schools with a

Table 5.6

TFS Respondents' Reports on whether Colleagues Share Beliefs & Values about School Mission (SASS question 63/64J)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Strongly agree	17,471	27.3	1,901	43.3
Agree	37,548	58.7	1,872	42.6
Disagree	7,467	11.7	258	12.0
Strongly disagree	1,470	2.3	89	2.0

common core of values and beliefs. These findings indicate that many early leavers reported that colleagues shared their beliefs and values about the school mission. This suggests that the experiences of the 7 Catholic school participants in this group reflect the overall population of Catholic early leavers.

These results, both qualitative and the quantitative, contradict previous research and common assumptions that those who leave Catholic schools do not experience a sense of community or do not identify with the Catholic mission of these schools. Among Catholic school early leavers, many were satisfied with their teaching experiences. These findings underscore the importance of examining commitment throughout early leavers' time in the profession. To understand why teachers leave early, we cannot simply examine the aspects that teachers find frustrating or satisfying. Indeed, many early leavers have positive experiences in the classroom that had little to do with their decision to leave.

Frustrating Experiences in Catholic Schools

The person who was leading this community was someone I disagreed with so ardently on some of the basic points of my own beliefs.

-Asher

This second group of Catholic school teachers typifies what many think of when discussing attrition of Catholic school teachers: Teachers who leave Catholic schools be-

cause they are frustrated or dissatisfied with teaching in these settings. In this study, only 3 of the 10 Catholic school participants experienced frustration in their Catholic school teaching experiences. The participants in this group expressed dissatisfaction with the sense of community in the school and how the Catholic mission in their schools was upheld. This had an impact on their overall characterizations of their teaching experiences as well as their decision to leave early. Asher provides an example of the 3 participants in this group.

Asher entered a Cristo Rey Catholic high school² after graduating with his master's degree in social ethics and theology. His studies focused on "inequalities and resolving those inequalities" (Interview I), and he was interested in finding a job that would allow him to continue to explore and work with these issues. The Cristo Rey high school where Asher accepted a teaching position was the "perfect fit" because the school served disadvantaged students, and thus offered opportunities to address inequalities.

Asher explained,

It was a perfect fit because the students all come from a working class background. The majority of them are from immigrant families...It's designed to be a college preparatory school and for them I would say just about all the students would be the first ones to go to college. So this goes back to the same thing of what I was studying in college and what I was hoping to get in my first job. (Interview I)

Without any background or training in education, Asher taught freshmen and sophomore religion in addition to working with campus ministry. He entered with a vested commitment to Catholic schools, as he was only interested in working in Catholic schools, and he entered teaching with a short-term commitment, planning to leave teaching to become a college professor. Asher struggled during his first year with classroom management and

² There are 22 Cristo Rey Network high schools across the country, providing quality, Catholic, college preparatory education to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in a corporate work study model where students work in corporate settings one day a week to offset tuition and gain valuable work experience.

lesson planning, but overall he was satisfied with teaching and decided to stay for another year. “Once I got past the first month, even though it seemed like hell, I knew it was something that I really wanted to be involved with for the rest of my life and I was even thinking, well, maybe I don’t need to go onto college” (Interview I).

During his second year, Asher reported that the school administration talked with the staff about needing to make “sacrifices”: Teachers would need to sacrifice their time, taking on additional workload and tasks to ensure that students had a quality academic experience. Asher explained that he firmly believed in the school’s mission, and, as a result, took on extra classes and campus ministry responsibilities in his second year. He also coached the baseball team (“it was pretty clear that if I didn’t coach there wouldn’t be a team because there wasn’t a team beforehand” [Interview I]), ran student government (which did not exist before he got there), reorganized and led retreats, and coordinated various events and celebrations at the school. Asher explained,

It was something that I did out of an obligation that I felt I had to the school and to the students, and it was definitely presented to me in that way: That it could be a great school, but that meant that you had to sacrifice. (Interview II)

The workload took its toll, however, as Asher reported: “I just felt like weeks lumped on top of each other and weekends just became two days where you could work on your grading or your lesson planning and stuff like that without having to teach” (Interview I). Asher reported that he did not have the time needed to de-stress and rejuvenate.

Nevertheless, the workload did not drive Asher out of teaching: “I wouldn’t say workload was a primary reason for me leaving; it was the reason why I first started to ask myself the question, ‘Should I be here any longer?’” (Interview II). Asher’s main frustration was that while he willingly made sacrifices, other colleagues did not.

I think there are about 18 to 20 teachers at the school and some of them are the most generous, giving people you could imagine. A big source of my frustration with the school came from the fact that there was this other portion of the faculty and staff that did absolutely nothing outside the school hours. (Interview II)

Asher explained that there was a divide among the culture and faculty in the school, as prior to becoming a Cristo Rey Network school, it was a “very poorly run Catholic school” (Interview I). The new model, according to Asher, brought in ambitious students and attracted equally “ambitious and dedicated teachers,” with very different attitudes towards taking on the administration’s call of “sacrifice.” This “split culture” and lack of professionalism in a corporate work study program, Asher believed, were “corrupting factors of professionalism [and] the mission of the school” (Interview I). Asher explained that he became increasingly dissatisfied with how the school’s mission was upheld. This dissatisfaction became more acute during his second year with a new principal, who, as Asher explained, had “very different philosophies about urban education and Catholic education. He was a person who didn’t believe in social justice and said that the Church was only there for charity” (Interview II). Asher reported, “It seemed like a conflict at the very core of who I was and why I was teaching at that place” (Interview II). Asher decided to leave teaching in Catholic schools, hoping to do research. While he applied to several positions within the field of education, he also applied to positions working in housing and economics, both within and outside the Catholic Church.

Asher experienced factors in his personal, professional, school, and Catholic Church contexts that had an impact on his teaching experiences and commitment to teaching in Catholic schools. In his personal and Catholic Church contexts, Asher was committed to service and the mission of the Catholic Church. This, along with his professional identity as a teacher and sense of obligation to his students, prompted Asher to take on extra responsibilities in the school to provide his students with a well-rounded educa-

tion. While he was willing to do this, Asher came to believe that he held fundamentally different views of professionalism and the Catholic mission of the school than did most of his colleagues and even the new principal. These differences led to frustration and influenced his decision to leave teaching in Catholic schools.

Asher was disappointed in how the mission of the school was upheld. This was also true of the other participants in this group. Asher perceived that his colleagues and the administration both played a role in the diminished Catholic identity of the school. Another participant also reported dissatisfaction not only with colleagues, but also with parish priests who were not committed to Catholic schools. For example, this participant reported that the priest at her first school was not involved in the school. "It was torture to get [the priest] to say Mass. We wanted to bring the kids to Mass for something and the pastor said no...I'm like, 'We're a Catholic school!'" (Nicole, Interview I). Yet another participant reported that he could not be himself because he was working in a conservative Catholic environment. He explained, "I got fed up with feeling that my gifts couldn't be used fully because of ultra-conservative perspectives" (Connor, Interview II). This participant was frustrated that he could not engage with his students on certain topics about the Church because of the conservative environment.

Current literature indicates that Catholic identity in Catholic schools is a growing concern (Cuypers, 2004; Grace, 2002; Grace & O'Keefe, 2007; Groome, 1996). Many believe that lay teachers are unable or unwilling to maintain the mission and identity of these schools once dominated by religious. The teachers in this group, however, were willing and eager to serve the Catholic mission of these schools, contradicting these assumptions. Here again, Kanter's (1972) theory that individuals who identify with the values and beliefs of a culture are compelled to participate in those cultures helps to explain why these participants left. They were drawn to Catholic schools by the mission of these school settings, but they found the Catholic identity of these schools was lacking.

Results from the SASS and TFS analyses indicate that many Catholic early leavers questioned whether the missions of their schools were being upheld. In the SASS and TFS, more than half of Catholic early leavers and about 66% of public early leavers reported that their principal was either not at all effective, slightly effective, or somewhat effective at developing broad agreement among the staff on the school’s mission (see Table 5.7). Though this question is not specific to Catholic school mission, it does provide insight into how Catholic school teachers perceived how the mission of their schools was upheld. These findings are interesting given that in the previous section, SASS and TFS analysis results revealed that many Catholic early leavers thought that they shared beliefs and values on the mission of the school with colleagues (see Table 5.6). These findings suggest that the 3 interview participants who were frustrated with how the school mission was upheld reflect the population of Catholic early leavers.

Participants in this group left Catholic schools frustrated that the mission and identity of these schools was not emphasized. They experienced frustration with teaching in general, including frustration with workload and lack of support from administrators and colleagues, but they also expressed frustration specific to Catholic schools. These findings underscore the fact that mission is an important aspect of school cultures. Under-

Table 5.7

TFS Respondents’ Reports on whether the Principal Developed Broad Agreement about the School’s Mission (TFS Question 15G)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Not at all effectively	13,942	21.8	1,038	23.6
Slightly effectively	6,770	10.6	690	15.7
Somewhat effectively	21,805	34.1	692	15.8
Very effectively	15,026	23.5	1,252	28.5
Extremely effectively	6,414	10.0	719	16.4

standing how this influences commitment to teaching and teaching in Catholic schools, where mission is an essential component of the school, is important in order to gain insight into the phenomenon of leaving Catholic schools early.

Teaching Experience and Leaving Teaching Early

My analysis of the teaching experiences of the 25 participants interviewed for this study and of early leavers in the SASS and TFS again both contradicts and confirms some of the stereotypes about early leavers. Many people assume that teachers leave because they are dissatisfied with teaching, but many participants in this study were satisfied with teaching in general and were satisfied with teaching in Catholic schools. This contradicts stereotypes about early leavers and underscores the necessity of taking a comprehensive approach, examining the overall characterizations that teachers had of their experiences in the classroom and how commitment changes throughout early leavers' short time in the profession. Analyzing the experiences of these 25 teachers, it became clear that focusing on distinct factors like salary, workload, collegiality, and support did not capture in a meaningful way these teachers' experiences, how their commitment to teaching changed, and what influenced their decision to leave early. This was especially true of individuals who considered themselves effective teachers and were satisfied with their teaching experiences. Entering commitment and multiple factors and circumstances in participants' various contexts coalesced, compounded, and interacted, affecting overall characterizations of their teaching and teaching experiences. Each participant clearly articulated that it was an interaction of factors that influenced her or his impressions of the teaching experience, commitment to teaching, and decision to leave. As one participant explained, "For me it's about more than just if this were here and that were there, I would do this. I'm complicated Aubrey, okay? I'm a complicated person" (Victor, Interview II). Furthermore, dissatisfaction with certain aspects of teaching was not always a reason for leaving. For example,

one participant explained,

Whatever deficiencies I felt now or would've felt in the future about money, whatever collegial issues I thought I had now or could come up in the future, I don't think those things would've ever outweighed just loving teaching. So I don't think any of those in and of themselves or any of those two together would've driven me out. (Izel, Interview II)

The findings presented here challenge the assumption that tinkering with single factors will entice more to stay in teaching.

One the other hand, some teachers were dissatisfied and left teaching early, confirming assumptions about leavers. They experienced frustration and a sense of low self-efficacy. Dissatisfaction with teaching experiences, therefore, does explain why some teachers leave early. One factor that seemed to influence many teachers in this study was success. Teachers who became frustrated or developed a sense of low self-efficacy left because they believed that they were not able to meet their students' needs. One participant explained,

A person can only take so much failure. Obviously people have different tolerance levels in terms of what that failure rate is, and I certainly wasn't going in there thinking I would bat a thousand. To bat even .250 would've been tough but to bat zero, I mean that's a little awful. I mean 0 for 4 every day gets a little bit tiresome. (Daniel, Interview II)

For many, success was determined not only by their own expectations of what they should accomplish, but was also measured by their ability to navigate the system and maneuver around barriers to teaching (e.g., lack of resources and lack of collegial and administrative support).

Studies like the SASS and TFS, the OECD report, and qualitative studies like

Johnson's (2004) provide data on the factors that lead to dissatisfaction, frustration, and leaving. While these studies provide some answers to why teachers leave early, we do not have a framework for interpreting the data to understand teachers' overall impressions of their teaching experiences and how these influence the decision to leave. This study provides such a framework and argues that understanding why teachers leave early requires a comprehensive approach that examines teachers' experiences throughout their time in the profession. Research needs to focus on how the multiple factors in teachers' various contexts interact and how this relationship influences teachers' characterizations of their experiences and decision to leave early. Day and his colleague's (2007) work on teacher effectiveness and student achievement found that "although external social, policy, school and classroom level factors are important, they do not in themselves fully account for either teacher effectiveness or student learning and achievement" (p. 25). The findings presented here indicate that the same could be said about teacher retention and attrition: Single factors in and of themselves do not explain why teachers leave early. Entering commitment, teaching experiences, and the multiple factors from various contexts in teacher's lives influence career decisions, the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: DECISION TO LEAVE

“I sort of left as quietly as I came, with no one knowing that I even left, no one knowing I had even arrived.” The new teacher quoted here explained that he had received a letter in the mail from the superintendent terminating his teaching position. The school had decided to make a change, he was told, yet his own principal had never even acknowledged that he had been laid-off. The teacher explained, “You were treated like you really screwed up badly, so badly that we can’t even talk about it.” But he had no idea what he had done. His classroom had been showcased throughout the year as a special program the school was offering and his students’ test scores improved. Rather than pursue a position at another school, this teacher decided to leave teaching, a decision that was difficult emotionally. He explained that leaving was bittersweet—“the sweet part is the kids, they teach you a lot and you teach them something...but the bitter part is...feeling used.”

Like the teacher quoted above, the 25 participants interviewed in this study experienced changes in their personal lives, careers, and schools that had an impact on their commitment to teaching and ultimately their decision to leave teaching early. The public often assume that those who leave teaching do so to take higher-paying jobs. Many of the early leavers in this study, however, left due to circumstances and life changes and did not pursue higher-paying jobs. In fact, many participants took positions earning less than when they were teaching. Some, of course, were dissatisfied with salary and left, but simply explaining the decision to leave in terms of salary or even changes in personal lives, careers, or schools does not provide a complete understanding of why these teachers left early. As I have argued in previous chapters, teachers’ entire experiences during their short time in the profession need to be examined, along with multiple factors in the various contexts that influenced their commitment and decision to leave early.

Analyzing the experiences of the 25 early leavers in this study revealed that par-

ticipants experienced four different types of life or career changes that had an impact on their decision to leave, which I refer to as: goal changes, role changes, school changes, or life changes. Participants who decided to pursue graduate school experienced a goal change, whereas those who left to accept a new job experienced a role change. Sometimes the school decided to make a change, as was the case with the teacher quoted above, and teachers were laid-off or never hired into permanent positions. Life changes, including getting married or having children, also had an impact on teachers' commitment and decision to leave. Figure 4.1 represents these changes under "Decision to Leave." These changes influenced participants' decision to leave and their career paths as some left education, others planned to return to teaching in the future, and still others remained in the field of education, accepting jobs as school counselors, administrators, and education researchers.

The decision to leave early was influenced by multiple factors in participants' personal and professional lives, in their school, district, and societal contexts. Participants' entering commitment and teaching experiences also had an impact on their decision to leave early. For example, some of those who decided to leave due to a goal change had entered teaching knowing they would eventually leave for graduate school. Factors in their school contexts, including colleagues leaving, students graduating, and disagreements with the administration or school policy, interacted with their interests to pursue graduate school, creating the right timing to leave the classroom. Leaving teaching was an emotional experience for teachers in this study. Some doubted their decision, feeling a sense of guilt about abandoning their students. Others had a strong sense that they had made the right decision and even felt a sense of relief. The emotionality of leaving teaching was an important component in the decision to exit, which is rarely discussed and not documented in the literature on teacher retention.

This chapter explores the third aspect in leaving teaching early, analyzing the

four types of changes that influenced participants' decisions to leave. Each section details one kind of change by examining a participant's experience and outlining similarities among teachers who also experienced the same type of change. The teaching experiences of Catholic school teachers are also analyzed, particularly how changes influenced their commitment and decision to leave Catholic schools. Given their importance, the impact of salary on the decision to leave as well as the emotions of leaving are explored in two separate sections. Throughout the chapter, results from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) are presented to provide a comparison between those interviewed for this study and the general population of early leavers in the United States.

Decision to Leave

Goal Change

I had always wanted to go to grad school at some point and it was just a question of when.
-Reid

Nine participants of the 25 in this study left teaching to attend graduate school, seeking degrees both within and outside the field of education. They experienced a goal change; they no longer wanted to be classroom teachers and instead sought further education to pursue different long-term career goals. Many of these teachers had entered teaching knowing they would leave for graduate school and were generally satisfied with their teaching experiences. Others were ineffective or frustrated and left for graduate school to pursue careers where they hoped they would be more effective. Some participants in this group left hoping to have a wider impact. Nick provides an example of participants who experienced a goal change and decided to leave teaching.

Nick did not want to teach. As a physics major, Nick explained that he and his classmates in college “used to talk about the fact that one of us would end up teaching

high school physics and how lame that is because what we're doing is so interesting” (Interview I). As physics majors, Nick and his classmates were able to explore topics beyond the purview of the high school curriculum. Teaching high school would not allow them to continue to engage in these exciting topics. Nick took a position as an engineer following graduation, but when layoffs threatened his job, Nick began to explore other career options. Nick entered teaching at an affluent Catholic high school with a short-term commitment, planning to teach for 2 years before earning a graduate degree in planetary science. In his first year, Nick worked closely with the other teachers in the physics department, which provided the support he needed because he entered teaching without any preparation. Working with his colleagues made for a positive first-year experience:

The three of us were working together so closely [and] were so obviously enjoying that relationship and what we were doing that it inspired the students and they got excited....I can't imagine a better first-year experience for a teacher. (Interview I)

Despite enjoying teaching, Nick remained interested in going back to school and applied to several planetary science graduate programs in his second year of teaching. The application process, Nick admitted, was “halfhearted” (Interview I). After spending the summer between his first and second years of teaching in a research lab, Nick started to question whether he wanted to do planetary science at all. When he was not accepted to any of the programs, he continued teaching at the school for 2 more years, assuming the head coach position of the girls' rowing team in his third year at the school and taking other responsibilities, including representing the school at provincial meetings and the faculty at board meetings, assuming the lead position in his department, and taking part in the school accreditation team. Nick enjoyed the work and explained, “I don't know how much of that was them asking or me volunteering. I really liked working with those peo-

ple” (Interview I). Overall, Nick thought he was an effective teacher and characterized his teaching experiences as satisfactory.

By his fourth year, however, Nick’s satisfaction with teaching “fell off” (Interview II). He explained, “I was at a point where I was 26, and I had had the same job for 4 years and now was the level lead, the head coach, and I was like, ‘I’m 26 years old and I’ve reached the top of this career’” (Interview II). Nick also started to become dissatisfied with his own teaching: “I just fell into this rut and I didn’t feel like I was necessarily proud of my work” (Interview II). Nick realized he did not want to become a “lifer” either: “I look at the people who’ve been [at the school] for life and their view of reality is skewed” (Interview II). In addition, incidences at the school made him question the administration, while simultaneously, Nick’s girlfriend was moving to the opposite coast. All of these factors coalesced. Nick decided to leave teaching, though he was still interested in education. He wanted to have a larger impact on student achievement and learning, hoping to work with schools and nonprofit agencies to implement and evaluate school interventions. He applied to several graduate programs in education, moved with his girlfriend, and attended graduate school. Still, the decision to leave was not easy for him because he had enjoyed his experiences, and he knew the school was “the best school and work environment that I could be in” (Interview II) in terms of support, resources, and collegiality.

Nick’s commitment to teaching and decision to leave were influenced by factors in his personal, professional, and school contexts. His entering commitment and teaching experiences also influenced his decision to leave classroom teaching. Professionally, even as he entered teaching Nick knew he did not want to be a teacher. He explained, “I think you could say that the reason I left teaching was because I didn’t foresee myself as a high school physics teacher for forever” (Interview II). He also believed that his opportunities for professional advancement would be limited if he stayed at the school. In his teaching

experiences, his satisfaction with teaching began to diminish because he found himself in a rut and he wanted to have a wider impact on teaching and learning. Nick began to question the administration's decisions about student discipline and school policy, and he knew that while the school was a great environment in which to work, he did not want to be a "lifer." Most importantly, however, Nick's girlfriend was moving. All of these factors interacted, providing the catalyst for him to act on his goals of going to graduate school and having a larger impact.

Like Nick, most of the teachers in this study who experienced a goal change were satisfied with their overall teaching experiences and thought they were effective teachers, but factors in their personal, professional, school, district, and societal contexts made for the right timing to leave teaching for graduate school. Other teachers in this group thought they were ineffective or were frustrated by their teaching experiences and sought further education to find more suitable positions where they could have a positive impact on others. Like Nick, 6 out of the 9 participants in this group entered with short-term or exploratory commitments. Many participants in this group left teaching to have a wider impact, both within and outside the field of education. For example, one participant explained leaving was "about having a wider spread and wanting a more prestigious job and wanting to have higher impact and going back to school and learning more and being able to pass that on" (Addy, Interview II). Like Nick, 7 participants in this group left teaching, but stayed in education. Many entered graduate education programs. Several of the interview participants who had completed their graduate work took positions as curriculum directors, academic advisors, and education researchers. Two participants in this group left teaching and planned to pursue jobs outside the field of education in law and in ministry.

The findings presented here are consistent with previous research on teacher retention that indicates that many leave to go back to school (Ingersoll, 2003; Luekens, et al.,

2004; OECD, 2005). Since most of the participants in this group entered with short-term or exploratory commitments, they never developed strong identities as teachers. These participants entered teaching with career plans and goals that would lead them out of teaching. For example, Nick explained that he never foresaw himself as a long-term high school physics teacher. Another participant explained, "I think maybe even when I was doing my student teaching I had a feeling I would go back to school. I think it kind of made me jealous of leaving school. I decided I wasn't quite done with it" (Colleen, Interview II). Identity influences commitment (Kanter, 1972), which helps explain why these teachers left. Kanter argues that committing to a culture requires individuals to reevaluate their identity and accept the norms of the culture. These participants knew going into teaching that they would not be teaching long and did not develop strong identities as teachers, which had an impact on their commitment and subsequent decision to leave teaching.

Results from analyses of the SASS and TFS reveal that many teachers left early to pursue coursework to improve their career opportunities both within and outside the field of education. Almost 20% of public and 23% of Catholic school early leavers reported that taking coursework to improve their careers within the field of education was somewhat, very, or extremely important in their decision to leave teaching early (see Table 6.1). Nineteen percent of public and almost 31% of Catholic early leavers reported that taking coursework to improve their careers outside the field of education was somewhat, very, or extremely important in their decision to leave teaching (see Table 6.2). These results suggest that the participants interviewed for this study reflect the overall population of early leavers and that many who leave teaching take coursework to improve their career opportunities.

The findings presented here indicate that many teachers leave early due to goal changes. Though most were satisfied with their teaching experiences, they sought further education to engage in intellectual pursuits and have a wider impact on society. These findings help explain the initially puzzling finding that many of those who were satisfied

Table 6.1

The Importance of Taking Courses to Improve Career Opportunities within the Field of Education on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13H)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Not at all important	48,812	76.3	3,042	69.3
Slightly important	2,612	4.1	347	7.9
Somewhat important	4,827	7.5	497	11.3
Very important	2,203	3.4	267	6.1
Extremely important	5,502	8.6	238	5.4

Table 6.2

The Importance of Taking Courses to Improve Career Opportunities Outside the Field of Education on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13I)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Not at all important	48,068	75.2	2,856	65.0
Slightly important	3,687	5.8	176	4.1
Somewhat important	6,081	9.5	443	10.1
Very important	3,155	4.9	256	5.8
Extremely important	2,965	4.6	660	15.0

with teaching left early: They experienced a goal change. But these findings also demonstrate that multiple factors in teachers' various contexts as well as their entering commitments and teaching experiences had an impact on the decision to leave early. These factors converged to create the right timing for teachers to leave. As noted, this confirms the argument that it is important to examine teachers' entire time in the profession in order to understand why they leave early.

Role Change

[Leaving teaching] was just about a time to change.
- Victor

Seven of the teachers interviewed for this study left the classroom for other jobs. All but one of the teachers in this group experienced frustration or thought they were ineffective and decided to leave teaching to pursue other careers within or outside the field of education. While these participants would have welcomed an increase in salary, they did not leave the classroom for more lucrative careers. Instead, they were motivated to leave teaching by their sense of frustration and inability to achieve their goals in the classroom. They took other positions, hoping to have the impact they thought they were going to have in teaching. Julien provides an example of participants who, in pursuit of a role change, decided to leave teaching.

During college, Julien went on a service trip to a third-world country that completely changed his worldview and perspective on life. He explained, “Seeing people from a completely different background and culture taught me a lot. It made me realize things about myself that I wasn’t aware of” (Interview I). Julien wanted to provide similar experiences for others and saw teaching as a practical option where he could engage students and “challenge people’s assumptions and to get them to think for themselves instead of just assuming everything [from] their parents or school or teachers is true” (Interview I). Julien majored in biology and earned his teacher certification in secondary education. He entered teaching with a professional or long-term commitment and started teaching at an affluent, suburban high school. He taught for 4 years in diverse teaching settings on opposite coasts, moving two times to support his wife as she completed graduate school. Over his 4 short years in teaching, he worked in an affluent, suburban high school, a rural, alternative high school, a rural middle school, and an urban, high-needs high school.

In each of these school settings Julien experienced a similar frustration—feeling “restricted” by the school system. He was disappointed that he was unable to accomplish what he set out to do, which was to challenge his students at a deeper level about their assumptions and help them determine what they wanted to do with their lives. He explained,

I think I definitely challenged people to think differently and made them reevaluate what school was for and why they went or what they were going to get out of it and how they were going to apply themselves. But I wasn’t able to take them to that next level and help them really define what they did want to do. (Interview II)

Julien believed that taking students on service trips and connecting learning to real-world situations would have provided opportunities to engage students on these important topics, but those opportunities were not available in the school system. Even the service trip programs that were offered were geared toward those who could afford to go and did not challenge students to think at a deeper level. In addition, Julien was frustrated with the level of professionalism among teachers. He explained, “Basically, as a teacher I felt that teachers were being treated less and less as professionals while they were giving lip service to it and claiming that they were professionals” (Interview II).

Julien left teaching, deciding that it would be best to work outside the school system in order to achieve his goals of challenging young people’s perspectives. He went into real estate investing, intending to earn enough money to start his own program that would take students on “cultural, ecological education trips” (Interview II). His vision was that the program would include meeting prior to the trip to learn about the country they would visit, then students would engage in “a culminating experience of traveling to a different country and traveling around, meeting the people, getting to know the people and the country, and doing some kind of a service project” (Interview II).

Julien explained that he could have stayed in education, but he had larger goals he wanted to accomplish.

I could have done that: stayed in the classroom and just done what I could to affect kids that happen to come through my classroom, but I had an opportunity to do something else that was a bigger goal and is going to take much longer to achieve, but if I'm able to do it would be a lot more rewarding because I'll be able to have the freedom to go back and make an impact. (Interview II)

Julien's decision to leave and his commitment to teaching were influenced by his personal, professional, school, and district contexts as well as his entering commitment and experiences in the classroom. Julien explained there was not one single factor that led him out of teaching, but a combination of factors. He entered teaching with expectations about what he hoped to accomplish with his students, but school and district policies did not allow him the freedom with the curriculum to connect learning to the real world. Julien reported that he felt restricted in terms of curricular choices and decision-making. While schools gave "lip service" to professionalism, Julien thought that teachers were not treated as professionals. In addition, Julien explained, he and his wife moved yet again and he did not want to have to "start from scratch in establishing myself in the system as someone that's hardworking and willing to do what's necessary" (Interview II). While salary was not the main reason for leaving, it certainly contributed to his decision. Julien took courses while he was teaching to increase his salary. He earned both his principal certification and superintendent certification. He indicated during the interviews that he never intended to go into administration, but took the courses for salary reasons and found them interesting. But even these salary increases did not provide the necessary means for Julien and his wife to meet their financial goals. Julien began exploring other options and explained,

the more I learned about entrepreneurship and investing, I realized if I applied myself I could make a whole lot more money much quicker and then I could go back and do my own after school program and not be restricted by the system and what someone else wanted to do. (Interview II)

Clearly, Julien had personal and professional goals that required a role change and led him out of teaching.

Julien's experience was similar to others who left teaching for other jobs or careers. Six of the 7 participants who chose role change were frustrated with their teaching experiences or thought they were ineffective and believed they were not able to accomplish what they had hoped due to school conditions. For example, one participant had a particularly difficult year when the school decided to pilot a new curricular program and middle school model, but did not structure it properly with appropriate support. He explained,

I guess for me that's the biggest thing, the lack of a sense of accomplishment. In teaching there is a lot of intrinsic self motivation going on and when you get absolutely no sort of adrenaline rush, or no endorphin kick from having given a decent lesson and having the kids really following what you're doing—which is why you're in the classroom anyway because that endorphin kick is pretty cool—when you don't get that you're just like, "Wow, this is a waste of time!" (Daniel, Interview II)

Another participant, Amanda, who was profiled in the previous chapter, left teaching because she believed the school system did not meet students' needs. She left to achieve her goals of effectively serving students with special needs. Like Julien, she planned to start her own education program. She explained, "I'm not here to fight the system. I'm not here to change the system, but I'm going to change the system by creating my own" (Interview II). Four of the 7 participants in this group decided to leave teaching, but stay in education. Two planned to start their own education programs, 1

became a guidance counselor, and another worked at a university. The other 3 participants were so frustrated with their teaching experiences that they left teaching and education altogether. One went into business, one into nonprofit work, and the other into a post-doc research assistantship.

These findings are consistent with the literature in teacher retention on the importance of experiencing success (Day, et al., 2007; Grubb, 2007; S. M. Johnson, 2004; Nieto, 2003). For example, Day and his colleagues (2007) found that teachers' identities are influenced by their ability to manage situations in the classroom, or resilience, which had an impact on teachers' sustained commitment to teaching and their effectiveness. The results of this study also demonstrate that when teachers lacked resilience or believed that they were unable to manage the classroom effectively, this influenced their decision to leave early. These findings are also in accord with Lacey's (1977) study where many teachers were committed to improving the lives of students and when teaching proved to be an ineffective means toward achieving those goals, they left teaching. The 7 participants in this study who elected a role change were committed to having an impact on the lives of students, and, like the teachers in Lacey's study, found that teaching did not provide the means to accomplish those goals. Kanter's (1972) notion that individuals weigh the costs and benefits of participating in a group as they make decisions about participating and committing to the group or culture helps to explain why these teachers left. Most of the teachers in this group were disappointed with the intrinsic rewards in teaching. They entered teaching hoping to make a difference in the lives of students and develop positive relationships with administrators, colleagues, and students. These intrinsic rewards outweighed the costs of teaching, including heavy workloads and low salary. For the participants in this group, these rewards were often absent, which had an impact on their decision to leave early. For example, one participant explained,

I'm not afraid to work hard, because I do work 12 hour days. It's more like how rewarded I feel doing the work because my rewards, while finances are a consideration, I need to get more out of my work. I guess I'm a little bit of a meaning seeker myself. (Victor, Interview II)

My analysis of the SASS and TFS reveals that many other early leavers leave to pursue jobs outside the classroom. Among public school early leavers, about 34% reported that seeking a position other than as a classroom teacher was somewhat, very, or extremely important in their decision to leave teaching. About 38% of Catholic school early leavers reported that pursuing another position was somewhat, very, or extremely important in their decision to leave (see Table 6.3). About 4% of public and 10% of Catholic early leavers reported that seeking another job was the most important factor in their decision to leave teaching (see Table 5.2). This suggests that the participants interviewed in this study who opted for a role change reflect the overall population of early leavers. Many early leavers decided to make a role change that led them out of the classroom. These quantitative findings provide an understanding about how prevalent role changes were among early leavers. Results from the qualitative interview analysis provide a more nuanced understanding of why these teachers left early, with multiple factors in their various contexts and overall teaching experiences converging to influence their decision to leave early.

My analysis and other larger studies indicate that many teachers choose a role change, leaving teaching for non-classroom jobs both within and outside the field of education. But as I have suggested, no single explanation provides a complete understanding of why teachers leave. Examining the teaching experiences and multiple factors within the personal, professional, school, district, and societal contexts of participants revealed that many left teaching because teaching was not an effective way to achieve their goals. They were frustrated with their teaching experiences or believed they were ineffective.

Table 6.3

The Importance of Pursuing a Position Other than that of a K-12 Teacher on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13G)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Not at all important	40,176	62.8	2,518	57.4
Slightly important	2,030	3.2	184	4.2
Somewhat important	7,740	12.1	455	10.4
Very important	7,621	11.9	582	13.3
Extremely important	6,390	10.0	651	14.8

While salary was a factor for some of these participants, it was one among many that had an impact on the decision to leave. This contradicts the common stereotype that teachers leave for salary reasons, a topic that is taken up later in the chapter.

School/Personnel Changes

Finding another teaching position would have been like a rebound date.
-Olivia

Some participants in this study were the subjects of administrative decisions that terminated not only their jobs, but their commitment to teaching. In this study, 6 participants were laid-off, fired, or never hired into permanent positions. Despite the fact that in many ways the decision to leave was made for these participants due to staffing actions, each participant in this study had the option of seeking another teaching position, but most chose not to do so. Rather, early leavers in this category came to the conclusion that classroom teaching was not a good fit for them and left teaching. Emily’s experience exemplifies participants in this group.

For Emily, teaching was going to be a lifelong career. She graduated with a mas-

ter's degree in teaching from a program that emphasized teaching for social justice and was eager to enter the classroom to implement many of the things she had learned. She accepted a teaching position in a K-1, multiage classroom in the school district where she had attended elementary school. The school principal was familiar with and positive about Emily's teacher education program, having taught courses for the program. Emily was optimistic that she had found the right school. She explained that she loved her students, who came from very different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds from one another. Several students spoke languages other than English at home and celebrated rich ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including Chilean, Filipino, and Japanese. Emily explained that she made a conscious effort to talk about language and filled her classroom with materials that honored her students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. She developed good relationships with her students and could see that they were making progress. "I knew I was doing good things with the kids" (Interview II). Despite parents' initial reservations about having a new teacher, Emily believed she worked well with families and developed a strong rapport with them, identifying strategies to meet students' academic and social needs.

Even with her successes, though, Emily struggled. She was overwhelmed by the tasks of trying to incorporate bilingual and special education along with "taking care of the difficult kids with behavioral problems and social problems" (Interview II). She also had difficulty developing classroom management skills. "I did not have a teacher voice... So, it took me a long time to develop that... Classroom management was a struggle for me" (Interview I). Emily acknowledged she had a lot to learn, but she was willing, motivated, and confident that she would only improve as she gained more experience. Throughout her first year Emily was anxious about a looming district observation process that would determine whether she would be offered a contract the following year. The observation by the district administrator was scheduled for October, but the principal

sensed that Emily was not ready and moved it to April. Six months later when the district administrator finally came for the observation, Emily was worried, but, she explained, “I could not imagine that if I was working hard, even if they did not agree with what I was doing, they would at least recognize my potential and work with me” (Interview II). She had been given positive feedback from her principal throughout the year that indicated that while she had more to learn, she was doing well. The observation, however, did not go well. The district administrator informed Emily during the post-observation meeting that her contract would not be extended. When pressed, the district administrator cited Emily’s classroom management as the reason for not extending the contract, describing her class as “out of control” (Interview I).

For Emily, the staffing action came as a complete shock: “I had no idea I was not going to keep my job. It totally came out of the blue” (Interview I). It was not until afterwards, Emily explained, that she could see there were warning signs and that her priorities were not where they needed to be. Rather than focusing on keeping her job by following the standards and proving her competency, Emily reported that she had focused on developing a culturally relevant classroom that met not only the academic needs of her students, but their emotional and social needs as well. Emily knew about the state’s standards and certainly incorporated them in her lessons, but they were not her focus. Emily sought to create an inclusive classroom and focused on other aspects of teaching, including social and emotional development of her students, which were not emphasized in the standards. Emily explained, “I went in there in the first year thinking I am going to do all this social justice stuff. I was not paying attention to keeping my job” (Interview I). Still, she believed that the district and administration were not explicit about their expectations.

I really felt like they needed to be explicit about [job expectations]. That would have been fair and then if I had not passed them, even after trying to pass them,

then they could let me go and I would have felt at least it was explicit and open communication. In that way, I felt manipulated because if classroom management was such a big thing the first year over good relationships with parents, and kids and making progress—that did not count for anything, I guess. So I felt like I was not evaluated fairly and explicitly and given a chance to correct myself. (Interview I)

Emily believed that the way in which she was laid-off was unethical and unprofessional. It destroyed her self-confidence. She reported that the district did little to help her “redirect” her talents to find a more suitable position, which, she believed, was “irresponsible to the profession” (Interview II). As a result, it took her a long time to “bounce back” and though she tried to continue a career in teaching, applying for other classroom positions and working as a substitute teacher, Emily explained that she developed an “aversion” to teaching and lost her “zeal.” The idea of starting all over again at a new school was overwhelming. “[Starting over] is just like jumping into ice cold water, you just have to take the plunge” (Interview II). Emily was not willing or able to take the plunge.

Emily’s commitment to teaching and decision to leave were influenced by a confluence of factors in her personal, professional, school, and district contexts as well as her teaching experiences. In the school context, Emily was frustrated that her principal did not give her explicit feedback: “She hadn’t given me accurate [feedback]. If I was not doing well, then I should have known that” (Interview II). This lack of support and explicit feedback had an impact on Emily’s ability to improve her teaching. District pressures made Emily question her professional identity as a teacher. The experience of being laid-off was so shocking that Emily had a hard time recovering, but this staffing action was not the only reason she left teaching. According to Emily, the stress and workload, along with a strong sense that she had to “repress [her] intellectual self” were important factors as well. Fundamental differences with the school system were also an

issue; “I just was really creeped out that I was maintaining the status quo and I had no way to change that. Basically I tried. I stepped even a little bit outside of that box and I was totally flattened” (Interview II).

Like Emily, each of the 6 participants in this group was surprised by the staffing action that terminated their jobs. Each of them also reported that there was no prior feedback from the administration indicating that their jobs were in jeopardy, and no one was explicit about any shortcomings they had. One participant reported that he was never formally observed or evaluated by the administration. The experience of being laid-off or never hired was difficult for participants in this group because they had been successful in the past. One participant explained, “It was a huge ego thing just because not only [had] I never been fired, at almost every job I’d been at they’d said, ‘Look if you ever want to work here again come back’” (Colin, Interview I). Like Emily, the participants in this group readily admitted they were not perfect teachers and that they had a lot to learn; but each also believed they had the potential to be great teachers. Participants reported that the experience left them too “shell shocked” to return to teaching. Four participants in this group left teaching and accepted positions within the field of education, one worked as a support services representative for a nonprofit curriculum group, one entered a graduate program in education, one worked in an after-school program, and another worked as an education services coordinator for a large urban public school district. One participant left education altogether, returning to her previous career in healthcare.

These findings are consistent with the literature that some people leave teaching due to personnel or staffing actions (Ingersoll, 2001). In fact, Ingersoll found that “school staffing cutbacks due to lay-offs, school closings, and reorganizations account for a larger proportion of turnover than does retirement” (p. 20). The 6 participants in this study experienced a “threat” to their identities as professionals (Ball & Goodson, 1985). They had each experienced success in the past; getting fired was a “shock.” These participants were

forced to reevaluate their identities because others perceived them as ineffective, which contrasted with their identities as successful individuals. This challenge to their professional identities had an impact on their commitment to teaching and decision to leave.

Analyses of SASS and TFS data indicate that, like the participants interviewed for this study, many early leavers reported staffing actions as important in their decisions to leave early. Thirty-two percent of public and 30% of Catholic early leavers reported that staffing action was somewhat, very, or extremely important in their decision to leave teaching (see Table 6.4). Furthermore, almost 13% of public and 16% of Catholic early leavers responded that staffing action was the most important reason for leaving (see Table 5.2). These results suggest that the experiences of these 6 interview participants are not unique, but reflect the overall population of early leavers.

Table 6.4

The Importance of School Staffing Action on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13E)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Not at all important	42,909	67.1	2,775	63.2
Slightly important	846	1.3	302	6.9
Somewhat important	6,437	10.1	328	7.5
Very important	5,693	8.9	127	2.9
Extremely important	8,070	12.6	859	19.6

Participants in this group decided not to seek other teaching positions after experiencing a staffing action that terminated their classroom jobs. However, staffing action or school change was not the only reason these teachers left early. Multiple factors and circumstances within their various contexts influenced their commitment to teaching and decision to leave. Some would argue that the attrition of teachers who are laid-off is a good

thing. Attrition can be healthy and necessary if teachers are not performing and providing quality instruction. It is not possible to determine the teaching quality of the participants in this study other than by what participants reported, but what is perhaps most troubling is that 4 out of these 6 participants entered with professional or long-term commitment to teaching and each believed they would be great teachers. In general, prior to having their jobs terminated, they were satisfied with their classroom experiences and planned to stay. The action to terminate their employment was particularly devastating to participants who envisioned a long career in the classroom.

Life Change

I must take care of my kids. That's my responsibility.
-Brett

For three interview participants, getting married or having a child was a life change that influenced their decision to leave teaching because they wanted to take care of their families and believed that remaining in teaching would limit them from doing so. Some needed to make more money to support their families financially, while others wanted to spend more time with their families. Though they were all satisfied with their teaching experiences and thought they were effective teachers, they believed the workload and low salaries of teachers would not allow them to provide for their families. Peter provides an example of participants who experienced a life change and decided to leave teaching.

Peter entered teaching with a short-term commitment; "I didn't go into [teaching] thinking it was a career" (Interview I). He wanted to be of service and had considered going into the Peace Corps. Instead, Peter entered a teacher corps program designed to provide teachers for high-needs schools in a large urban school district. In exchange for a 4-year commitment to teaching in inner-city schools, Peter earned his master's in teaching, taking courses during his first two years in the classroom. He taught for 2 years as

the fourth and then the third grade teacher at an elementary school serving 500 students, all of whom were African American and receiving free- or reduced-lunch. Peter described the school as “a dismal place” with bullet holes in the chalkboards and broken glass on the streets. Pressure from the school board to perform on standardized measures only made matters worse. Peter explained that he was exhausted from working so hard and it was not only frustrating to hear that they were failing despite all their efforts, but it also “impacted everybody’s sense of self-esteem” (Interview I). In his second year at the school, Peter began looking for another teaching position and was offered a split teaching and administrative job in a school that served a much more diverse student body from low-income families in a better neighborhood. Peter taught two periods of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade math and science a day and worked as the administrator for curriculum, planning professional development for teachers, working to articulate the curricula for the school, and writing grants for school improvement.

Peter was invigorated by both aspects of his new job, but found it difficult to balance his desire to teach with his desire to “run the show and take on all these programs that I was charged with” (Interview II). It was “impossible to do both things well”; he did not have the time to prepare lessons and believed he was “shortchanging the kids,” but if he took the time to prepare, he would be neglecting his administrative obligations (Interview II). “It’s like the kid with the hand in the cookie jar: I wasn’t willing to let go of any of the cookies” (Interview II), which made his workload particularly intense. This had a detrimental effect on Peter’s marriage. Peter had aspirations to begin a new school, and his wife also had exciting career opportunities, but both realized that if they pursued these career ventures their marriage would suffer: “We realized that if we did these things that we wanted to do that our careers would be awesome, but then our marriage would not be much. So what’s the point?” (Interview I). They also wanted to have children and Peter explained his wife “didn’t want to have a kid and me starting a school. I was already

working 70 hours a week; I would just end up working 90 hours a week” (Interview II). In addition, Peter began to feel a “real disconnect between who I thought I was and who I was actually being at that moment” (Interview II). Peter had planned to take over his father’s construction business and wanted to return to the rural area where he grew up. Instead, he was in one of the largest cities in the United States, becoming increasingly disillusioned with the school system because, despite all his efforts to improve the school, he kept “butting [his] head against a wall” (Interview II). Even though he was making more money teaching than he would taking over his father’s business, Peter believed leaving teaching was the right decision. He explained,

I think there are very simple reasons and also complex reasons [why I left teaching]. I mean, from a broad standpoint, I did not have the intention of staying in teaching forever. So I think just from that, the basic foundational level, it wasn’t a plan of mine. And then I think just personally, and there are a lot of personal things, I think the fact that my self-concept did not include me being a career teacher was big and living in the city, which I didn’t want to do, was big. (Interview II)

Factors in Peter’s personal and professional contexts as well as school and district contexts interacted and influenced his commitment to teaching and decision to leave. While Peter enjoyed teaching, district pressures and an emphasis on performance along with an overwhelming workload were sources of dissatisfaction. The workload in particular had an effect on his personal context: He was worried about the impact his career was having on his marriage. He and his wife wanted to have children and did not see how that would be possible if Peter continued on his professional path. In his school context, Peter explained that he “wanted to have more quality interactions with people and I wasn’t getting them...the level and tenor of conversation in the staff room and at staff meetings was pretty low” (Interview II). Professionally, Peter had trouble identifying as a teacher and he entered teaching knowing he would eventually leave to take over his father’s business.

Peter's story illustrates several themes among participants who experienced a life change that pulled them out of the classroom. The 3 participants in this group were all satisfied with their teaching experiences and all entered with short-term commitment. Peter knew that he wanted someday to take over his father's construction business, and Brenna and Brett, the other 2 participants who experienced a role change, both planned to go into school administration. Peter got married and wanted a strong marriage. Brenna and Brett had children after they entered teaching. These life changes redefined their priorities and influenced their decisions to leave teaching. Brett explained,

I went from wanting to save the world to, "Wait a minute, my job is a means to an end." The end is taking care of my family. So, I love teaching, I love a lot of aspects of it. I think it's a more important job than almost anything I can do—except my family. So it's not worth that sacrifice. (Interview II)

While workload limited Peter's ability to meet his family's needs, for Brenna and Brett, salary was an issue. Brenna explained, "I have to say that had I thought that I would be making money with [my son] in childcare, we would have thought about [me staying in teaching] more" (Interview II). Brett wanted his wife to be able to stay home with their children. He entered a corporate job in order to earn enough to ensure that his family's needs would be met. Brenna planned to return to teaching when her son got older, but both Peter and Brett left education altogether and did not have plans to return to teaching or education.

The findings from these 3 interview participants concur with previous research indicating that as contexts change, teachers' opinions about factors, like salary, also change (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Day, et al., 2007; S. M. Johnson, 2004; Woods, 1983). For example, Brenna and Brett were both satisfied with their teaching salaries when they entered teaching. However, when they started to have children, teaching did not allow them

to take care of their families financially. Becker's (1960) theory of "side bets" also helps to understand why these participants left. For these participants, their families became an interest that took precedence over their interest in teaching. They experienced familial obligations that changed their identities, becoming husbands, wives, fathers, and mothers. This change in identity shifted their commitment, as it brought new demands of time and finances. These circumstances had an impact on their commitment to teaching and their decision to leave teaching early.

Results from my analysis of the SASS and TFS indicate that many left teaching early for family reasons. About 48% of public and 28% of Catholic school early leavers reported that pregnancy or child rearing was somewhat, very, or extremely important in their decision to leave teaching (see Table 6.5). About 27% of public and 21% of Catholic early leavers reported pregnancy or child rearing as the most important reason in their decision to leave early (see Table 5.2). In addition, about 36% of public and 35% of Catholic early leavers responded that "other family or personal reasons" were either somewhat, very, or extremely important in their decision to leave teaching (see Table 6.6), with almost 6% of public and 10% of Catholic early leavers rating it as the most important reason for leaving (see Table 5.2). This suggests that the interview participants who experienced a life change and left teaching as a result were not unique, but reflect the overall population of early leavers. In fact, pregnancy or child rearing was most often cited as the most important factor in deciding to leave among public and Catholic respondents on the SASS and TFS.

Life changes, including getting married and having children, had an impact on 3 participants' commitment to teaching and decision to leave teaching. These life changes changed their priorities and perceptions of factors like salary and workload. For example, these participants explained when they were single, teaching salaries were adequate, but as their families began to expand, new financial obligations led to dissatisfaction with

Table 6.5

The Importance of Pregnancy or Child Rearing on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13B)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Not at all important	32,576	50.9	3,054	69.6
Slightly important	791	1.2	86	2.0
Somewhat important	6,887	10.8	46	1.0
Very important	3,588	5.6	187	4.2
Extremely important	20,115	31.5	1,017	23.2

Table 6.6

The Importance of Other Family and Personal Reasons on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13L)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Not at all important	37,981	59.4	2,645	60.3
Slightly important	2,713	4.2	210	4.8
Somewhat important	4,545	7.1	140	3.2
Very important	4,877	7.6	505	11.5
Extremely important	13,840	21.6	889	20.3

salary. These findings underscore the need to take a comprehensive approach to examine why teachers leave.

Decision to Leave Teaching in Catholic Schools

Many of the 10 Catholic school participants in this study left teaching in Catholic schools because they experienced goal changes, role changes, school changes, or life changes that had an impact on their decision to leave. Their decision to leave teaching in

Catholic schools had very little to do specifically with Catholic schools. For others, the decision to leave teaching in Catholic schools was not only influenced by career and life changes, but also by changes in Catholic identity, as they either became disengaged with the Catholic Church or disengaged with Catholic schools. Several participants entered teaching in Catholic schools with strong Catholic identities, but became increasingly disengaged with Church teachings and found they were no longer comfortable teaching in Catholic schools. Another participant maintained her Catholic identity, but became disengaged with Catholic schools when they did not convey or emphasize Catholic values and teachings. These changes in Catholic identity are represented in Figure 4.3 under “Decision to Leave” as “Catholic Identity Change” and “Catholic School Change.”

As with the decision to leave teaching in general, Catholic school teachers’ decisions to leave teaching in Catholic schools were influenced by multiple factors in their personal and professional lives, as well as their school and societal contexts. Parish, diocesan, and Catholic Church contexts also had an impact on these teachers’ decision to leave (represented in Figure 4.4). For those who experienced a Catholic identity change and became disengaged with the Catholic Church, for instance, the Catholic Church context was particularly influential in their decision to leave teaching in Catholic schools. This section details the experiences and changes that influenced the 10 Catholic school participants in this study and their decision to leave teaching.

Career Change

This job came along and it really, at that point in time, was a hard job to turn down.
-Lindsey

Some teachers left teaching in Catholic schools because they left teaching in general. For 7 of the 10 Catholic school teachers in this study, the decision to leave teaching in Catholic schools had very little to do with the Catholic settings in which they taught

or with their commitment to teaching in Catholic schools. Most of these teachers entered teaching in Catholic schools with vested commitment or with a strong desire to teach in these schools and were satisfied with their teaching experiences. The decision to leave Catholic schools, therefore, had more to do with their commitment to teaching in general. Brett exemplifies the experiences of the 7 participants in this category.

As detailed in chapter 4, Brett entered Catholic schools with vested commitment. Brett knew that he wanted to teach only in Catholic schools because it was an educational system in which he believed and presented opportunities for students to succeed, providing them with appropriate boundaries in which to explore, learn, and excel. According to Brett, Catholic schools offered students “the space in which they know they can be good or they can succeed” (Interview I). Brett entered teaching with short-term commitment, planning to go into school administration, not because he was interested in becoming a principal, but because he knew salary would become an issue. “The reason I was thinking about going into administration was more a concern of dollars than it was around the preference to teach, to be quite honest” (Interview I). Brett began teaching English literature at the Catholic high school from which he had graduated. He thought he was an effective teacher and was satisfied with his teaching experiences. Brett reported, “I really, really liked teaching. I had a great time. It was hard as hell. I’m a highly emotional person; I get stressed out a lot. So it was hard for me in that way, but I enjoyed it” (Interview I). Brett formed positive relationships with his students and had collegial relationships with other teachers at the school. Brett described the school as a strong community with

a lot of dedicated teachers, a lot of teachers who were there for a long time. I always felt good that the parents were pretty involved and I think the school did a good job of catering to different interests of the kids. (Interview I)

Brett taught at the school for 3 years. He entered his fourth year at the school with every intention of staying until the end of the school year, but he and his wife had just had their first child and Brett had started to apply for corporate jobs. Brett remembered,

I have a very clear memory of sitting on the couch with [my son] and he was a few months old and thinking, “Oh my God, what am I going to do? I want more kids.” And I’m like, “I’m worried about paycheck to paycheck now.” (Interview I)

Brett realized that his responsibility was to take care of his family, “so if there is something else that I need to do to take care of my family better, to make sure that they are cared for, then I need to do that. So that was a huge motivation for me” (Interview II). Though Brett loved teaching, it did not allow him to take care of his family financially. He decided to leave teaching when he was offered a position at an advertising company in December of his fourth year at the school.

Brett never considered leaving Catholic schools for public schools in order to earn more money. He knew that public schools offered higher salaries, but explained the difference in salary between Catholic and public schools “was small enough that the quality of the teaching experience in Catholic schools more than made up for the 3,000 to 4,000 extra dollars I could make at a public school” (Interview II). Furthermore, he knew that in teaching there was a maximum amount he could earn, whereas in the private sector “the sky is the limit” (Interview II). The decision to leave Catholic schools, therefore, was more about a decision to leave teaching in general because it did not offer the means necessary to take care of his family. Brett explained that teaching did not offer teachers the incentives to stay in the field. He would have been willing to stay in teaching if he felt that the payoff would have been beneficial to his family. He explained,

It doesn't have to be that you pay \$100,000 salaries, but you have to do something that makes it worth their while. Free education, free healthcare, whatever it is that makes it worth their while. You have to think about the benefits from a full perspective and we don't. We don't think about it from a full perspective. (Interview II)

Brett's decision to leave teaching in Catholic schools was influenced by his commitment to teaching in general. Brett experienced a life change that had an impact on his commitment to teaching. Circumstances in his personal life required that he provide for his family. Teaching, in either public or Catholic schools, did not provide the means with which to do that. This, in turn, had an impact on his decision to leave teaching in Catholic schools. Brett was satisfied with his teaching experiences and thought the school provided a collegial, supportive community where he experienced success as a teacher. Salary and benefits, factors in his personal life, and his entering commitment all influenced his decision to leave teaching in Catholic schools early.

Like Brett, the 6 other Catholic school teachers in this group liked teaching, and most were satisfied with their teaching experiences in Catholic schools. Even those who experienced frustration during their teaching experiences liked teaching and thought they were effective teachers. Similar to Brett, most entered with vested commitment to teaching in Catholic schools and found their schools to be a good fit. These participants all described good collegial relationships with other faculty and the administration, positive relationships with students, and a sense of community within the school. Goal, role, school, or life changes led them out of teaching in general, and, therefore, led them out of teaching in Catholic schools. For example, two participants experienced goal changes and decided to leave teaching to pursue graduate degrees. They both explained that their decisions to leave teaching in Catholic schools were more about timing than a commitment to teaching in these schools. As one participant reported,

I think all the factors that were informing my decision really fed into each other so there was a personal element that was always lingering [wanting to go to graduate school], but the fact that my class was graduating and the fact that other colleagues that I was close to were leaving, they all made it feel like this was the right moment to leave. (Reid, Interview II)

The findings reported here are consistent with the literature on Catholic school teacher job satisfaction. Studies indicate that Catholic school teachers report high levels of job satisfaction (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Liu & Meyer, 2005; Schaub, 2000). For example, like teachers in Bryk and his colleagues' study, Catholic school teachers interviewed for this study reported strong relationships with colleagues, including not only professional, but social interactions between teachers. For many, life and career changes presented a change in identity. Brett, for example, became a parent. This shifted his identity and his commitments changed: "When I had kids, my thought was, 'Is it my job to take care of my kids or take care of other people's kids?'" (Interview I). Brett concluded that taking care of his family was more important. These changes in identity influenced participants' decisions to leave teaching.

Results from analysis of the SASS and TFS indicate that many Catholic early leavers were satisfied with their teaching experiences. About 41% of Catholic school early leavers reported that they were more satisfied in teaching than in their current position and only about 32% of public early leavers reported that they were more satisfied in teaching (see Table 6.7). Almost 88% of Catholic and 84% of public early leavers reported that they either somewhat or strongly agreed that they were generally satisfied with teaching at their schools (see Table 6.8). This suggests that the experiences of the 7 Catholic school teachers interviewed for this study are not unique. Rather, they are consistent with the overall population of Catholic early leavers: Many were satisfied with their teaching experiences, yet left teaching in Catholic schools early.

Table 6.7

TFS Respondents' Reports on Overall Satisfaction with Current Position Compared to Teaching (TFS Question 21)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
More satisfied in teaching	9,166	31.9	798	41.3
More satisfied in current position	14,977	52.1	801	41.4
No difference	4,600	16.0	334	17.3

Table 6.8

SASS/TFS Respondents' Reports on General Satisfaction with being a Teacher at the School (SASS Question 63/64U)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Strongly agree	22,080	34.5	2,508	57.1
Somewhat agree	31,516	49.3	1,353	30.8
Somewhat disagree	7,122	11.1	218	5.0
Strongly disagree	3,238	5.1	311	7.1

Some teachers left teaching in Catholic schools because they left teaching in general. They experienced goal, role, school, or life changes that influenced their decision to leave teaching, which then had an impact on their decision to leave teaching in Catholic schools. These teachers decided to leave teaching in these settings not because they were dissatisfied with their experiences, but because multiple factors and circumstances in their personal and professional lives led them out of the classroom. This provides a more nuanced understanding of why teachers leave Catholic schools and helps to explain how those who were generally satisfied with their Catholic school teaching experiences left

early: Their lives and goals changed. These findings contradict Ingersoll's (2001) hypothesis that teachers leave small, faith-based private schools at higher rates because the tight-knit communities in these schools make it difficult for teachers to find like-minded colleagues. These 7 teachers valued the communities in which they taught, and they left despite their overall satisfaction with their teaching experiences in these schools.

Catholic Identity Change

*It wasn't as life-giving working for the Church per se.
-Victor*

Two Catholic school participants in this study became disengaged with the Catholic Church. These teachers began to question their Catholic faith and the mission of the Catholic Church. Their Catholic identity shifted as they became increasingly distanced from the Church. As a result, their commitment to teaching in Catholic schools declined. Teaching in these settings was no longer "life-giving" and they decided to leave teaching in Catholic schools. Victor exemplifies the 2 participants in this group.

Throughout Victor's undergraduate studies he was active in service learning and campus ministry. He had a strong Catholic identity and wanted to engage in service activities after graduation. He considered the Peace Corps and the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, but enrolled in a faith-based ecumenical program that trained teachers for their credential while teaching in high-needs, inner-city Catholic schools. Teachers in the program lived in community and committed 2 years of service to the schools in which they taught, taking classes while they were teaching to earn their teacher certification. Victor explained, "Ultimately, I picked the program because I wanted to do service and I wanted to learn a skill. [Teaching corps] was going to do both" (Interview I). Victor entered with a short-term commitment to teaching, planning to leave the classroom to do volunteer work in other countries and entered Catholic schools with neutral commitment. He was uncertain how

long he wanted to teach in Catholic schools and was open to teaching in other settings.

In his first year, Victor taught fifth grade at a school serving students from low-income and African American families. Victor described his first year as a “dog fight”: “It was a thousand times more failures than successes. I carried each one from the day before with me everyday” (Interview I). He was open to suggestions on how to improve his teaching from his principal and the professors in his teacher corps program, and tried everything he could to be successful that first year, but still believed he was a “bad teacher” (Interview II). After his 2-year commitment in the Catholic teaching corps program, Victor continued to teach in Catholic schools, but, he explained, “that choice was made more based on personality than a career choice” (Interview I): His girlfriend, who later became his wife, was working in the teaching corps program and Victor decided that rather than pursuing his plans to volunteer overseas, he would find a job locally in order to be with her. Victor accepted a campus ministry position at a Cristo Rey school, serving Mexican-American, low-income families. He also taught a senior English course throughout the year. He loved the school, its social justice mission, and the passion his colleagues had for education. Despite loving the school and not wanting to leave, Victor moved to the East Coast to be with his girlfriend, where again he accepted a teaching position in a Catholic school because, as Victor explained, “I needed a job to come home to, so I just took this job at the school” (Interview I). He taught at the school for 1 year before becoming the vice principal of the school, despite having no training in administration. Victor was willing to teach in Catholic schools, but was not drawn to them like those with vested commitment or those who planned to stay in Catholic schools their entire careers.

In Victor’s teaching experiences in general, he developed a sense of low self-efficacy. He explained, “For me, why I left is that I just didn’t feel like my work was good. I felt like I sucked at [teaching]” (Interview II). This influenced his commitment to teaching in general. However, it was his Catholic identity that had an impact on his com-

mitment to teaching in Catholic schools. He considered going into campus ministry and was accepted into a master's program in pastoral ministry, but decided against the program "because I felt like that degree was a little bit limited to me. I didn't really want to be a religion teacher and I wasn't so sure I wanted to work for the Church" (Interview II). Instead, Victor got a master's in guidance counseling and accepted a position in a public school. Victor explained that his commitment to teaching in Catholic schools was influenced by a change in commitment to the Catholic Church.

I'm not as profoundly expressive of my faith as I once was. I'm a little more cynical about all that. So, the draw, it wasn't as life-giving working for the Church per se. I wasn't as mission driven—probably a confluence of many events rather than one thing. (Interview II)

Victor also left Catholic education due to changes in his personal life: He got married and had a daughter. He believed that public schools offered more opportunities for advancement and better salaries that would allow him to provide for his family. Victor never had a strong commitment to teaching in Catholic schools and when his sense of Catholic identity declined, there was little reason to stay in these schools, especially when public schools paid more and Victor needed to provide for his expanding family.

Another participant in this group, Izel, who was profiled as an example of professional commitment, had similar experiences. Like Victor, Izel had been active in social justice initiatives at the Jesuit university he attended for his bachelor's and master's degrees. Over time, however, his commitment to the Catholic Church began to decline. He explained,

I read through our mission statement and I read about Catholic school missions and I really got into it and I thought, "I don't like this. I just don't like it any-

more.” It was probably at that point that I made the decision to leave. (Interview I)

His Catholic identity, which he admitted was never that strong to begin with, began to decline to the point that he reported, “I’m not a religious person. I wouldn’t identify at this point of my life with any religion” (Interview I).

These findings reflect a growing trend among Catholics: declining commitment and decreasing participation in the Catholic Church (D’Antonio, et al., 2001; Dolan, 2002; Gibson, 2003). It seems that declining commitment to the Catholic Church may also have an impact on Catholic teachers. Kanter’s (1972) theory that commitment is dependent on how individuals “orient” themselves to the morals and belief systems of a group helps to understand why these 2 Catholic school participants left. When cultures require upholding norms and values that individuals deem are inconsistent with their own, commitment declines. In this case, Victor and Izel’s belief system changed over time and they found the values in Catholic schools were no longer consistent with their own.

Catholic identity and leaving teaching in Catholic schools seem to be related. Those who experienced a decline in commitment to the Catholic Church found it difficult to remain in Catholic schools where they were required to be role models of Catholic faith for their students. Though they left teaching because they experienced role and goal changes, they specifically left Catholic schools due to a change in their Catholic identity. This further underscores the complex nature of retention in Catholic schools. Not only do Catholic school teachers experience complicated, interrelated factors and experiences that influence their commitment to teaching in general, but they also experienced factors within the Catholic Church context, including their own Catholic faith, that influence their commitment to teaching in Catholic schools.

Catholic School Identity Change

*I stopped looking [for jobs] in the Catholic schools.
-Nicole*

One Catholic school teacher, Nicole, left Catholic schools because she was frustrated that the Catholic identity and mission of these schools were not emphasized. Nicole believed Catholic schools had changed from when she had attended them herself, and she no longer wanted to teach or work in these schools. She maintained a strong Catholic identity, unlike those in the previous group who experienced a Catholic identity change, but believed the Catholic identity of the schools had changed: They no longer emphasized a strong Catholic identity. Unlike those who left teaching in Catholic schools because they left teaching in general, Nicole left teaching in general because she left teaching in Catholic schools.

Nicole entered teaching after a career in business. She worked as a finance analyst and then as a trainer, helping employees learn the company's new system. She liked training, but when the company announced a huge layoff, Nicole decided to look into master's programs. Since she enjoyed her training experiences, she entered a master's in teaching program, hoping to make teaching her new career. While she liked the program, she explained, "I am a real hands-on learner and I was doing some volunteer work at my son's preschool, and I was like, 'I need more of that'" (Interview I). She called schools in the area looking for a part-time position to gain some "hands-on" experience, but they were not interested in hiring her because she was not yet certified. Upon the suggestion of one of her classmates, Nicole looked into Catholic schools and quickly found a job. She was raised Catholic and had gone to Catholic schools herself, but she was open to teaching in other settings, entering Catholic schools with neutral commitment. A principal at a Catholic elementary school got special permission from the archdiocese for Nicole to teach despite the fact that she had not finished her teaching credential, because the school was

closing at the end of the year. Nicole subsequently worked in Catholic schools for 3 years at three different Catholic schools, two of which closed.

While Nicole enjoyed teaching and helping her students succeed, overall, she was frustrated with her teaching experiences. She found that despite the fact that she was teaching in Catholic schools, no one emphasized the Catholic mission of these schools, from the parents, to the priests, to even the principals and teachers. Nicole explained, “We want the kids to become Catholic and then, unfortunately, most of the parents and the kids don’t go to Mass” (Interview II). This made it difficult to teach religion. Nicole explained she taught values, the 10 Commandments, and the Beatitudes,

but I am sure the parents thought I was nuts with some of the stuff that I did, but I was like, if I do not expose them to it, like taking them to confession and all those things—I felt it was my job. (Interview I)

Nicole found that parish priests wanted little to do with the schools. When she tried to take her students to confession, the priest made her get parents’ permission. Nicole explained, “I think [the priest] just didn’t want to [do confession]. He told me that he needed parents’ permission, but I didn’t believe him. I pushed it” (Interview I). The priest at the second school was not involved in the life of the school. Nicole reported, “He did not even come to the school. We did once-a-month Mass and half the time we had a visiting priest” (Interview I). Nicole reported that the priest closed the school unexpectedly, citing finances despite having pledged to the teachers that he would be getting more resources for the school. Things did not change at the third school. Nicole explained, “It was so weird and you could see [the priests] did not care. How are you supposed to tell kids that they should respect priests and this and that when they were not even visible?” (Interview I). The principals did not emphasize the Catholic identity of the schools either, though Nicole

admitted that the principal at her first two schools “had her hands tied because the two pastors did not want the kids at Mass” (Interview II). At her third school there was much more emphasis on Catholic identity, but Nicole believed that it was insincere. She explained, “We prayed in the classroom and the kids could have cared less. It came over the loudspeaker. The teachers most of the time were not even paying attention” (Interview II).

Nicole decided to leave teaching after her third year, which was a particularly tough year. The principal of the third school had “no backbone” when it came to the parents and when the principal was fired halfway through the year, Nicole explained, “It was like having no boss and letting [the parents] run wild. The priest didn’t do anything to help. He pretended he didn’t know anything was going on” (Interview II). Parents yelled and berated teachers and several students started a rumor that Nicole had physically scratched a student. Nicole explained there was no respect for teachers and she had had enough. She was burned out after the year and left teaching, going back to the business sector as a finance analyst. She contemplated going into school administration and even searched for positions, but she reported, “I stopped looking in the Catholic schools. I had my 3 years, my three school experiences that I was just like, I don’t even think I’m going to go that route at all” (Interview II).

Nicole’s commitment to teaching in Catholic schools and decision to leave these schools were influenced by her entering commitment and teaching experiences as well as factors in her personal, professional, school, and Catholic Church contexts. Nicole was raised Catholic and had attended Catholic schools herself. She found the lack of emphasis on the Catholic mission and identity in her schools among the parents, teachers, principals, and especially the parish priests frustrating and inconsistent with her own upbringing. She entered Catholic schools with neutral commitment, open to teaching in other school settings, but accepting positions in Catholic schools because there was easier access to jobs in these schools. In her professional context, Nicole found that teaching did

not offer job security.

All I heard was that we need teachers, we need teachers. But yet there is no security. So why would somebody leave a corporate job that has better benefits and better money in it, shorter hours for something that is not stable? (Interview II)

Nicole believed job security was especially an issue among Catholic schools, as so many were struggling to stay open. She wanted a stable career where she would not have to keep moving to different schools. All of these factors influenced her commitment to teaching in Catholic schools and her decision to leave teaching.

Nicole's experience is different from that of most Catholic school teachers who generally report high job satisfaction (Bryk, et al., 1993; Liu & Meyer, 2005; Schaub, 2000). Nicole was frustrated, both with aspects of teaching in general and with specific aspects of teaching in Catholic schools. Nicole's experience confirms Ingersoll's hypothesis that small, faith-based private schools experience higher attrition rates due to the close communities these schools promote. These communities make it difficult for some to fit in. Nicole held different views and expectations of Catholic schools than the parents, teachers, and priests in the schools in which she worked. Thus, moral compellingness, one of the factors in commitment according to Kanter (1972), had an impact on Nicole's commitment to teaching in Catholic schools.

In many ways, Nicole typifies what many assume when they think of Catholic school early leavers: Catholic school teachers leave because they are dissatisfied and frustrated with these schools. Unlike those in the previous group who experienced a change in Catholic identity and were no longer comfortable promoting Catholic values, Nicole believed the Catholic identity of these schools had changed and was frustrated with the lack of emphasis on the Catholic mission of these schools. As discussed previously, there

is growing concern over the Catholic identity of Catholic schools, as they increasingly rely on lay teachers who do not have the strong religious backgrounds of the sisters, brothers, and priests who used to serve these schools. Catholic identity seems to be related to teacher retention as a force pushing those out who become disengaged with the Church, but also pushing those out who become disengaged with Catholic schools when they cease to promote a strong Catholic identity.

What about Salary?

No retention study is complete without a discussion of the role of salary. Many assume and some research indicates that teachers leave because they are dissatisfied with salary. Many policy initiatives, like merit pay, are predicated on the theory that increasing salary will increase retention. But not all participants interviewed for this study were dissatisfied with their salaries. In fact, some made more money teaching than they did in any other job they had held. As one would expect, some participants were dissatisfied with salary, particularly the Catholic school teachers, and decided to leave. But as my analyses reveal, understanding dissatisfaction requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. Several teachers reported that while they thought teaching did not offer good salaries, it was not a factor in their decision to leave. For some participants, changes in their personal and professional lives influenced their satisfaction with salary. Those who had children after they entered teaching, for example, were satisfied with salary when they started their teaching careers, but quickly found that the salary could not meet their growing financial needs. Some were dissatisfied with salary, but salary was only one factor among many that influenced their decision to leave early. In the following pages, I discuss the role of salary in the decision to leave teaching among the 25 participants in this study.

Some participants were satisfied with their salary. Several reported that they thought their salaries were sufficient for their needs. One participant explained, “I have a

pretty simple lifestyle and I'm fortunate because I don't have any college loans. I'm certainly not independently wealthy by any means, but I have enough money to pay rent and I'm happy enough with that" (Asher, Interview II). For others, teaching offered a great salary. For example, Daniel, who entered teaching after earning his undergraduate degree in biology, taught fifth grade for 2 years before returning to school to get his doctorate in biology. When he was finished with his graduate degree, he returned to the classroom, teaching middle school science and social studies at a suburban public school. For Daniel, salary was simply not a factor in his decision to leave. Daniel explained, "It was the most money I've ever made in my life. To this day I got paid more [teaching]. It was the only thing keeping me in at one point, which is ridiculous" (Interview II). Although clearly only one person, Daniel's experience conflicts with the findings of research reviewed earlier, indicating that math and science teachers are more likely to leave teaching because they can find more lucrative job opportunities outside the classroom (Hansen, et al., 2004; Stinebrickner, 1998). Six of the participants interviewed for this study had math and science undergraduate degrees, and Daniel had his doctorate in biology. Five of these 6 participants left teaching and entered jobs where they made less money than they had when they were teaching, further contradicting previous research.

For some participants, salary was not a factor in their decision to leave teaching, even though they clearly thought that teachers should be paid more. Many reported feeling "undervalued" by their low teaching salaries. For instance, Colleen entered teaching knowing it did not pay well. She explained, "Usually if you go into teaching, you are an idealist; you want to help. You enjoy working with people" (Interview II). Salary, for Colleen, was indicative of low respect for teachers: "I think that teachers are really poorly treated given the influence they can have on children's lives" (Interview II). Colleen explained, "I think salary should be such that if you are a single person you could really live off of it in the community and right now that is not the case for a lot of teach-

ers” (Interview II). These findings are consistent with Johnson’s (2004) research indicating that teachers do not enter teaching expecting “to get rich” (p. 58). Smithers and Robinson’s (2003) and Johnson’s (2004) research suggests that many teachers were frustrated with salary because it reflected low worth and status of teachers, rather than for actual financial reasons.

Among those teachers in this study who were dissatisfied with salary were those who experienced a life or career change and, as a result, had new financial demands and considerations. Brett, for example, found that after he had a son, he could no longer afford to teach. Like many other participants who initially entered teaching knowing the salary was lower than that of many other professions, Brett had been willing to make less. The intrinsic rewards of having an impact and making a difference made up for the lack of monetary compensation. As personal, professional, school, and societal contexts changed, however, Brett found his salary was no longer sufficient. These findings concur with previous research indicating that as life circumstances change, teachers’ satisfaction with factors, including salary, also changes (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Day, et al., 2007; S. M. Johnson, 2004; Woods, 1983). Among those dissatisfied with salary were also those who reported that salary was one among many factors that had an impact on their decision to leave. Julien, for example, left teaching in part because he realized that he could not reach his financial goals working as a teacher. Despite earning advanced degrees in educational administration, he was still not earning a sufficient salary. But, Julien explained, “Salary was a factor. I think the structure and the inefficient feedback system, [the] inability to have any control over what’s happening, was more the issue” (Interview II). Salary, therefore, was one of a number of factors that influenced his decision to leave teaching early. Another participant reported that his salary had an indirect effect on his decision to leave. His salary did not motivate him to stay. He explained,

The reason I left wasn't salary...but had the salary been one that demanded me to stay, I would've stayed....[Teaching is] more of a transient position: You don't become dependent upon that paycheck because it's not enough to become dependent upon. (Interview II)

This is consistent with Johnson's (2004) findings that for some teachers salary alone was not a reason to leave, but when compounded with other "aggravating factors," including working conditions and low status, it led them out of teaching.

Salary was a source of dissatisfaction especially among Catholic school participants interviewed for this study. Six of the 10 Catholic school teachers in this study reported dissatisfaction with their teaching salaries. For example, one participant explained, "I mean, there's no other way to say it than the pay sucks. It's just not a livable wage" (Connor, Interview II). Another participant who left teaching and accepted a position at a Jesuit university, reported, "It's not about the money and it's not as if—[Jesuit university] is still a nonprofit and I'm still not making a ton of money, but it is livable money" (Lindsey, Interview II). This participant found that teaching in Catholic schools did not offer a living wage for a single-income household. Many went into Catholic schools knowing they paid less than public schools, but as one participant explained, "I don't get the sense it's because [Catholic schools] don't want to. I think it's because some of them just can't, which is part of the reason I think I'm drawn to Catholic schools, because it's like that St. Jude-like hopelessness" (Brenna, Interview II). While these 6 participants expressed dissatisfaction with their teaching salaries, only two left teaching in Catholic schools for salary reasons. Both of these participants experienced a life change that placed new demands on their time and finances, which led them out of teaching. These findings that many Catholic school teachers were dissatisfied with their salaries are consistent with previous research. Catholic school teachers have a history of reporting greater dissatisfaction with salary than public school teachers (Bryk, et al., 1993; Schaub, 2000).

Examining the larger population of public and Catholic early leavers represented in the SASS and TFS confirms that salary was a source of dissatisfaction among many early leavers, but was not necessarily a reason to leave. About 80% of public and 77% of Catholic school early leavers reported that they either somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement “I am satisfied with my teaching salary” (see Table 6.9). Interestingly, however, while many early leavers reported dissatisfaction with salary, they did not necessarily select this as the most important reason for leaving. Almost 30% of public and 23% of Catholic school early leavers reported that salary was somewhat, very, or extremely important in their decision to leave early (see Table 6.10). Only 9% of public and 5% of Catholic early leavers selected salary as the most important reason for leaving teaching (see Table 5.2). Among public early leavers, salary was fourth among 11 factors as the most important reason for leaving, whereas among Catholic early leavers salary was tied with health for eighth as the most important reason for leaving. These findings suggest that the participants in this study are more or less representative of the population of early leavers. While salary may have been a source of dissatisfaction among many teachers, it was not always a significant factor in the decision to leave teaching early or in the decision to leave teaching in Catholic schools early.

Table 6.9

*SASS/TFS Respondents' Reports on Satisfaction with Teaching Salary
(SASS Question 63/64C)*

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Strongly agree	4,736	7.4	363	8.3
Somewhat agree	8,151	12.7	650	14.8
Somewhat disagree	3,1335	49.0	2,122	48.3
Strongly disagree	19,735	30.9	1,255	28.6

Table 6.10

The Importance of Salary on the Decision to Leave among TFS Respondents (TFS Question 13F)

	Public Early Leavers		Catholic Early Leavers	
	N	Percent of Public	N	Percent of Catholic
Not at all important	42,441	66.4	2,853	65.0
Slightly important	2,577	4.0	523	11.9
Somewhat important	5,464	8.5	106	2.4
Very important	7,752	12.1	522	11.9
Extremely important	5,723	9.0	386	8.8

What became clear after talking with these 25 teachers was that they considered salary as a component of rewards in teaching, incentives that included recognition, success, and quality of life, as well as monetary compensation. As one participant explained, “It can’t be all about salary because people are only willing to put up with bad work situations for so much money” (Brett, Interview II). Rewards as a whole had an effect on participants’ commitment to teaching and decision to leave. This presents a broader and different definition than commonly used in the literature. Some teachers, like Peter, left for other jobs making less money than when they were teaching, but these jobs offered a better quality of life. Other teachers, like Julien, left teaching because they were not able to achieve the intrinsic rewards they were hoping to accomplish in teaching. The findings presented here offer a more nuanced understanding of the effect of salary and rewards on teachers’ decisions to leave early.

The Emotionality of Leaving

Hargreaves (1998) suggests that “emotions are at the heart of teaching” (p. 835). It seems that they are also at the heart of leaving teaching. Every participant interviewed

for this study described an emotional response to the decision to leave teaching. This was an unanticipated finding in the study that was not the focus of the initial research design. Listening to the teaching experiences of these participants, however, it became clear that leaving teaching was a highly emotional experience. Many teachers described the emotions of teaching, including joy, guilt, frustration, and excitement. This is consistent with previous literature that “teaching cannot be reduced to technical competence or clinical standards. It involves significant emotional understanding and emotional labor” (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 845). Furthermore, “as an occupation, teaching is highly charged with feeling, aroused by and directed towards not just people, but also values and ideals” (Nias, 1996, p. 293). Day and his colleagues (2007) also found that commitment to teaching “represents a significant emotional as well as cognitive investment” (p. 215). Although the emotions of teaching have been researched and documented, very little, if any, has been written about the emotions of leaving teaching. Given the intense nature of teaching, however, it is not surprising that the decision to leave would be an emotional experience. This study found that teachers experienced different emotions when they left teaching. Some experienced a sense of relief, while others expressed guilt. Many of the interviews were charged with emotion, as the following excerpts make clear. This section highlights findings on the emotionality of leaving teaching among the 25 participants in this study.

Some participants felt a sense of relief when they left teaching. This was especially true for those who found teaching frustrating and those who had developed a sense of low self-efficacy. For example, one participant entered teaching with professional or long-term commitment but came to the conclusion that she was not a good teacher. This was extremely difficult for this participant who had experienced nothing but success in the past. In an especially emotional moment during the interview, this participant explained,

I was so glad to walk out of that door. I was so relieved because I knew in January or February that I was done; that I was not coming back....I was just finishing out the year and it was like every day I made myself go. It was just this feat of will to get through the year and I did it. And that was huge, that was huge. I was so, so glad to be done. Tears of relief. I walked out and was so, so glad to be done. I can't even express it—I was so glad to be done! (Clara, Interview II)

Even participants who thought they were effective and were satisfied with their teaching experiences sometimes expressed relief. For example, Peter, who thought he was an effective teacher but had a particularly intense workload, reported, “[Leaving teaching] was great. It was like I basically went on vacation” (Interview II).

For many other teachers, however, leaving teaching was difficult emotionally. Many had a difficult time leaving the students with whom they had formed positive relationships. One participant explained that some students were upset they would not have her as a teacher, which made her feel guilty.

I felt really bad. I actually really liked those students and felt sort of, “Well, maybe I should stay with them.” But then I realized, I needed to have an endpoint. I would feel that way probably about every class I taught. (Reid, Interview II)

For those teachers who worked in high-needs schools, there was often a sense of guilt about leaving their students. For instance, one participant explained,

The kids, you tell them that you're not coming back and they're upset and feel like another person's abandoning them and you wonder whether, I mean, you know you did good when you were there, but you almost feel like you've undone it by being another person that's an example in their life of how they're not important and people leave. (Julien, Interview II)

Many teachers who worked in high-needs schools explained how difficult it was to see

the conditions in which their students were living. They had to create “healthy boundaries,” realizing the support they could provide their students was limited to what they could accomplish in the classroom. Leaving these students, who had so many academic and non-academic needs, was particularly difficult. As another participant reported, watching the students’ reactions to the news that he would be leaving was not easy.

It was extremely difficult [to leave]. I mean, there are some images that when the students knew that I wasn’t coming back that I will be remembering for the rest of my life I’m sure... So even though I had all these reasons I felt were extremely rational for leaving, just that sheer emotional side of it was tough to overcome in that last week [of teaching]. (Asher, Interview II)

For other participants, the decision to leave teaching was difficult emotionally because they were leaving their colleagues who had been a source of support. One participant explained,

My experience in that community was the part of it that made it hardest for me to leave to be quite honest. There was a lot of guilt... I almost felt like I was abandoning [my colleagues] when they had been very supportive of me... I went to a lot of teachers and talked with them personally about my decision. I felt like I had to defend myself in person. (Brett, Interview I)

Another participant who left teaching because she believed she was ineffective explained, “I was sad to leave the colleagues, because I really did like them quite a bit. They were great. Maybe I felt like I ended up taking advantage of their support” (Clara, Interview II).

Participants who left because of a staffing action described a complex range of emotions. They described emotions of anger and confusion at being laid-off as well as emotions of guilt for leaving their students and relief or a sense of “liberation” from the workload of teaching. One participant, who struggled and thought he was an ineffective teacher, ex-

plained, “I just had these strange emotions after [being laid-off] because I’d been let go. But at the same time I felt so free finally because it wasn’t a good, the whole thing [teaching] was very tough” (Colin, Interview I). Another participant similarly explained,

Oh, [leaving teaching] was...oh [sighs]...it was surreal. It was like being in a fog, because it was liberating on one hand. It was a huge amount of work. It was really weird to wake up the next day and to feel like all that burden is off me. (Olivia, Interview II)

Each of the participants who had a staffing action was surprised by the school change. This also had an impact on the emotions they experienced as they left classroom teaching. For example, one participant explained,

I definitely shed a few tears in front of the classrooms I was close to, especially since [leaving] wasn’t my choice. It was a surprise for all of us and I had to explain it. They were all sad. And I was hurt. So I was a little angry, little pain, confused, wondering why and then the limbo, like where do I go? What kind of security do I have now and where am I headed? So that sort of emptiness and limbo and feeling a little bit down, depression. (Connor, Interview II)

For those participants who experienced staffing action, not only were there emotions about leaving their students and colleagues, but also emotions tied to the act of getting fired, which challenged their identities and left them wondering what would happen next. As reported earlier, many of the teachers who experienced a staffing action entered with professional commitment. They planned to teach until they retired, but when they were laid-off these participants were forced to reconsider their identities as teachers, which was an emotionally difficult process.

The emotions of leaving did not end when teachers left the classroom. One participant explained that at first she felt relieved to leave teaching since she believed she was

not a good teacher. But afterwards she started to feel guilty. She reported she felt guilty

in terms of just bailing out and leaving the school and not fulfilling my two year commitment [with TFA]. And you know how it is, the farther you get away from things, the easier they seem. So when I started to get a few months away from teaching and my life was just so easy and I was getting paid well and I was applying to law school, that's when I was like, "Was it really that bad that you had to bail? You couldn't even handle it?" And then I started to feel guilty. But I still think it was the right decision for me, but I think it was guilt from failing. (Erika, Interview II)

Writing about the emotions of teaching, Nias (1996) explains, "Teachers invest their 'selves' in their work, often so closely merging their sense of personal and professional identity that the classroom...becomes a main site for their self-esteem and fulfillment, and so too for their vulnerability" (Nias, 1996, p. 300). This helps explain why teachers had different emotional responses to leaving the classroom. Leaving teaching was difficult for those who experienced the classroom as a source of self-esteem and fulfillment. For those for whom the classroom was a source of vulnerability, leaving teaching often resulted in emotions of relief. The findings presented here indicate that leaving teaching was an emotionally intense experience that stayed with the participants long after they decided to leave the classroom. As one participant reported, "I have a good memory of the feeling that I had when it happened and it doesn't leave you" (Trevor, Interview II). These findings also indicate that no matter what type of entering commitment teachers had, exploratory, short-, or long-term commitment, leaving was an emotionally intense experience. It also did not matter whether participants experienced success or frustration, effectiveness or ineffectiveness; the decision to leave was emotional. Given that many are drawn to teaching by the intrinsic rewards the profession offers, including a sense of giving back and making a difference in the lives of others and society

as a whole, it is not surprising that teachers form strong relationships with administrators, teachers, students, and parents in order to achieve these intrinsic rewards. These relationships can make it difficult to leave. This was especially true for those who taught in high-needs schools where students were often even more dependent on schools and teachers to provide for not only their academic needs, but other nonacademic needs as well.

The Decision to Leave and Leaving Teaching Early

Once again, my analysis of the 25 participants interviewed for this study and of early leaver responses in the SASS and TFS both contradicts and confirms stereotypes about early leavers. Many people assume that those who leave teaching leave to take higher-paying jobs. But many teachers in this study left due to changes in their lives and careers as well as multiple factors in various contexts. Furthermore, many accepted jobs that paid less than what they were making as teachers, contradicting common assumptions about those who leave teaching. While many reported that they were dissatisfied with their teaching salary, it was not necessarily a major factor in the decision to leave teaching. Some teachers did leave for financial reasons, as many expect. Thus, examining issues like salary can help to explain why teachers leave early, but this provides an incomplete understanding of why teachers leave. For example, for many participants dissatisfaction with salary resulted as circumstances in their lives changed. Many entered teaching satisfied with their teaching salaries. As their life circumstances changed, however, they realized that their salaries did not allow them to provide for their families.

For most participants in this study changes in their goals, roles, schools, and lives had an impact on their decision to leave. One participant explained, “The reason I left [Catholic high school] was because I was going to have a kid. Had I not gotten pregnant and if we still lived in [the city] and I didn’t have a child, I would probably still be teaching” (Brenna, Interview II). But simply examining the life and career changes of teach-

ers does not provide a complete understanding of why these participants left. Entering commitments, teaching experiences, and multiple factors in teachers' personal, professional, school, district, and societal contexts, and, among Catholic school teachers, parish, diocesan, and Catholic Church contexts, also had an impact on teachers' decision to leave early. Some decided to leave teaching because they were frustrated with schools and found they were unable to achieve their goals in traditional school settings. Others knew they were ineffective teachers and decided to change roles. Some knew when they entered teaching that they would be leaving to pursue graduate school. Participants experienced a range of emotions that had an impact on their decision to leave teaching. In order to understand why teachers leave early, therefore, it is important to examine their experiences throughout their short time in the profession. This study provides a framework with which to examine these experiences using a complex approach. The results of using this framework to analyze the experiences of the 25 early leavers in this study revealed a much more nuanced understanding of why teachers left early. The mixed methods approach further adds to our understanding, indicating how prevalent certain factors are in the decision to leave teaching among early leavers, but also a more detailed explanation of how these factors impact teacher commitment and the decision to leave. These findings reveal important implications for research, policy, and practice, the focus of the next and final chapter.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Retaining teachers is vitally important for improving schools (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003; OECD, 2005). Experienced teachers are more effective at raising student achievement (S. M. Johnson, et al., 2005; Wilson, et al., 2004) and schools that are able to retain their teachers can engage in sustained school improvement efforts, rather than using their resources to recruit and support new teachers (Guin, 2004; S. M. Johnson, et al., 2005). Our understanding of teacher retention has thus far been somewhat limited because research often focuses on discrete reasons for leaving rather than more complex approaches that take into consideration the cultures and contexts within which teachers operate and how changes in these contexts have an impact on teacher identity, commitment, and the ultimate decision to stay or leave. Drawing on sociocultural and commitment theories and using a framework that examined teachers' entire experiences during their short time in the classroom, my analysis suggests that the problem of teacher retention is extremely complex. Simple explanations of this phenomenon that do not accommodate for these complexities are unlikely to solve the problem of retention. This perspective is not entirely new. In fact, in 1971 Sarason declared that the problem of teacher retention could not be understood in terms of cause and effect:

[Teachers'] inadequate formal training for the realities of the classroom, their sheer ignorance of and lack of preparation for what life in a school would be, the demands and willingness to give and the consequences of sustained giving in a context of constant vigilance, the absence of meaningful helping services all of these and other factors interact in ways that should make simple explanations suspect. (p. 172)

This study provides empirical evidence consistent with Sarason's observation. Every participant interviewed for this study attested to the complexity of the decision to leave. Even those who were frustrated or believed they were ineffective teachers indicated that

leaving teaching was not an easy decision; rather, leaving was an emotional experience that required careful consideration of multiple factors within and outside the school context. As one participant explained,

I think for people who are truly committed to the idea of teaching as a profession, it has to be many factors that kind of compile onto each other, and they contribute to each other. But I definitely think that one may raise the question, another one just gives you further proof and so builds the case of why it might be a better option for you to find something outside the classroom. (Asher, Interview II)

Using rich interview data and statistical analyses of survey responses from early leavers, this study provides insight into the problem of early leaving and adds to current research on teacher retention by examining not only factors and circumstances within the context of the school, but teachers' various contexts outside the school, including personal, professional, societal, and religious. This chapter highlights the major findings of this study and how these findings relate to and expand upon our understanding of the phenomenon of early leaving as well as sociocultural and commitment theory, the two theoretical frameworks that guided this study. Implications for future research, policy, and practice are also outlined.

The Phenomenon of Early Leaving

This study adds to the current research base on teacher retention by providing a framework with which to explore the problem of early leaving, using a complex approach to examine teachers' experiences and ultimate decisions to leave. This framework is informed by sociocultural theoretical perspectives and commitment theory, prior research on teacher retention, and data analysis of 50 interviews with 25 early leavers and of responses of public and Catholic early leavers in the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)

and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). The framework presents three aspects of the phenomenon of early leaving: entering commitment, teaching experience, and the decision to leave as well as the multiple factors in teachers' various personal, professional, school, district, societal, and, among Catholic school teachers, parish, diocesan, and Catholic Church contexts. These contexts were not static, however, even within the short time periods of 1-5 years. Rather, these contexts were constantly changing as individuals got married, changed schools, and experienced events within larger society. These changes had an impact on teacher identity, commitment to teaching, and the decision to leave. For Catholic school teachers, the decision to leave teaching was even more complicated, with the added influence of developing and changing commitment to the Catholic Church, their identities as Catholics and religious individuals, and their philosophies about the role of schools in instilling the values and teachings of the Church.

My analysis of interview and survey data indicates that there were many different paths into and out of teaching. Participants entered teaching with different expectations about how long they would stay in the profession, characterized their overall experiences as either effective or ineffective and satisfied or frustrated, and made career decisions influenced by different changes, including goal, role, school, or life changes. There were no consistent pathways or relationships between entering commitment, teaching experience, and the decision to leave. For example, there were no clear links between entering commitment and how participants characterized their teaching experiences. Those with professional commitments were not any more likely to experience success and effectiveness in the classroom as those with exploratory or long-term commitments. No clear relationships emerged between entering commitment and the decision to leave. Those who entered with short-term commitments, for instance, did not necessarily report the same life and career changes that influenced their decisions to leave early. As with entering commitment, there were no clear links between teaching experience and the decision to

leave. Those who experienced ineffectiveness, for example, were no more likely to experience role changes as those who were effective and satisfied or effective and frustrated. Among the 25 participants in this study, there were 18 different pathways through the three aspects of leaving teaching early, though ultimately they all took the same pathway by leaving the classroom (see Figure 7.1). The fact that there were no clear pathways among these three aspects of early leaving provides further evidence that the problem of early leaving is complex and multifaceted.

My analysis also suggests that many of the stereotypes and common assumptions people hold about why teachers leave do not necessarily explain early leaving. For example, people commonly assume that teachers who leave early entered with lower levels of commitment, became dissatisfied with the work of teaching, or left to pursue more lucrative career opportunities. While that may hold true in some cases, this study found that some early leavers entered with professional commitment, planning to teach long-term. Many early leavers perceived themselves as effective teachers and were satisfied with their teaching experiences. Many early leavers were satisfied with their salaries, and, after leaving teaching, even accepted positions where they earned less money than when they were teaching. Certainly there were also teachers in this study who entered with short-term commitments, knowing they would eventually leave the classroom, and there were those who were frustrated with teaching or thought they were ineffective. Some thought that teaching salaries did not offer a livable wage. While all these factors influenced some participants' decisions to leave teaching early, none of these explanations alone adequately captures why teachers leave. For example, my analysis of the interview data suggests that salary was a consideration among many teachers, especially Catholic school teachers who expressed dissatisfaction more so than public school teachers. While many of the teachers in this study believed that salaries should be better for teachers, most of them did not consider salary a major factor in their decision to leave. My analysis points to a

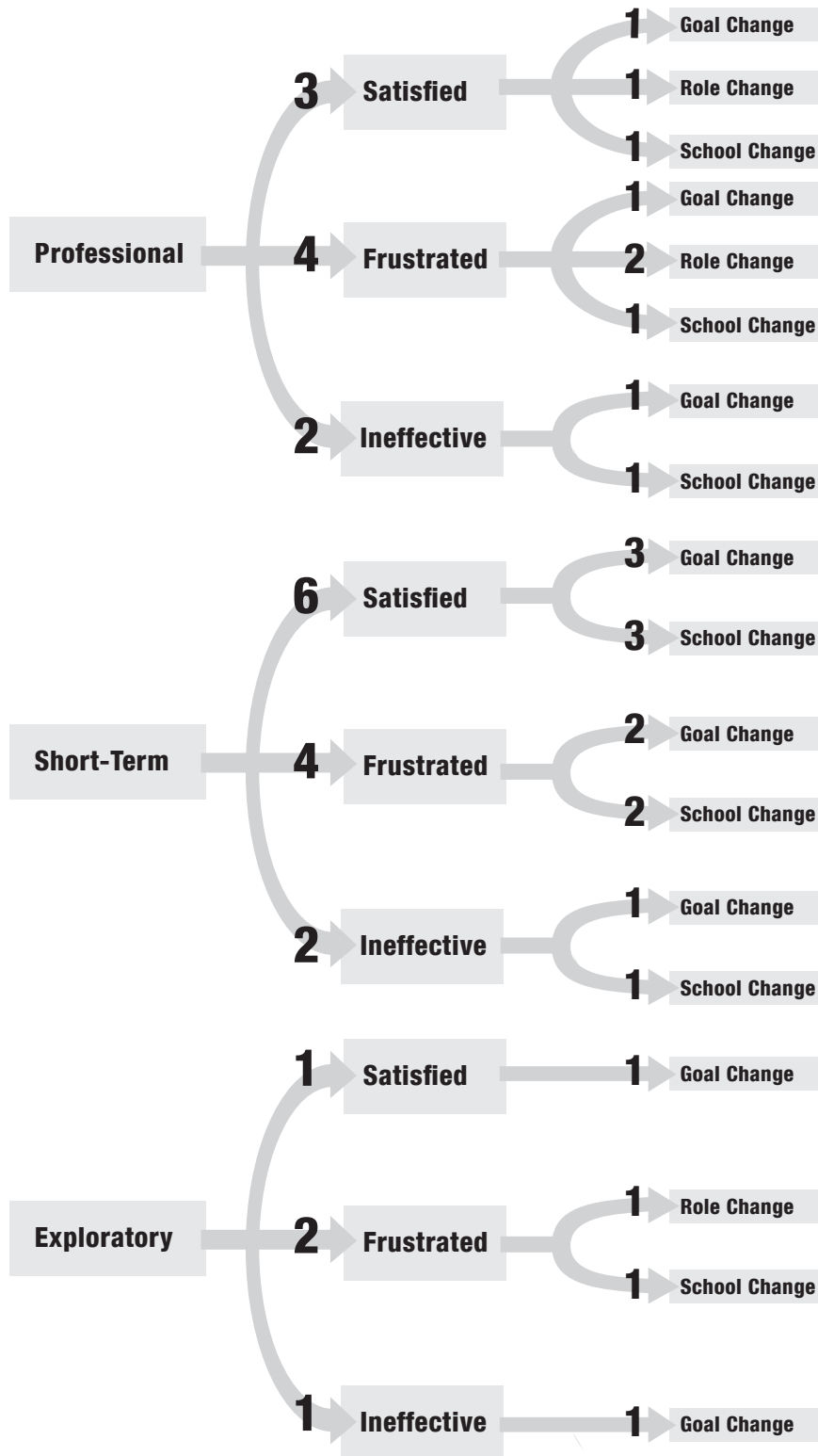


Figure 7.1. Participant pathways through the framework.

much more nuanced understanding of how salary and rewards influence career decisions. Teachers consider salary as a component of the rewards in teaching, but rewards also include recognition, success, and quality of life. Rewards, as well as entering commitment, experiences in the classroom, and multiple social and personal factors all converge to affect teachers' decisions to leave early.

In this study, the middle range theory of commitment was used to examine participants' decisions to leave, making abstractions close to the interview data and capturing a more complex explanation of why teachers leave. Becker (1960) and Kanter's (1972) work on commitment theory was used throughout this study. Kanter's (1972) theory of commitment to social groups was based on her study of utopian societies. Her work never ventured into the field of education or specifically schools and teacher careers. Becker's (1960) theory of commitment was applied to school teachers, although not to their decisions to leave teaching. Becker (1952) studied teachers and school placements, noting that many teachers wanted to teach in more desirable schools, but were constrained by bureaucratic regulations that created long wait lists for the most desirable schools. Thus, Becker used commitment to understand why teachers moved to different schools or stayed in their school placements, but he did not use commitment to explore leaving teaching.

This study uses Becker (1960) and Kanter's (1972) theories of commitment in new ways by examining the experiences of early leavers. My analysis confirms their concepts of commitment help to explain the choices teachers make and elaborate the types of side bets, rewards and costs, emotional attachments, and compelling moral principles that have an impact on commitment to teaching and the decision to leave. For example, Becker (1960) explained that decisions have "consequences for other interests and activities not necessarily related to it" (p. 35-36) and, therefore, are influenced by what he termed "side bets" or "interests created by one's prior action" (p. 35). Committed individ-

uals recognize that acting inconsistently with their prior actions will have ramifications beyond single decisions and could limit their choices in the future. This study found that among early leavers, common side bets were graduate school and family. Using Becker's analogy, some teachers placed a side bet that they were committed to entering graduate school or supporting a strong family life. This side bet was a "stake" in the "bargaining session" of the decision to leave teaching. Participants in this study valued graduate school and family and in bargaining between these commitments and the commitment to teaching, they found that they could not continue to teach because doing so would inhibit their ability to pursue these other interests. In many ways, this is not surprising given that, in general, teachers value learning and also care about young people. Kanter's (1972) concept of moral compellingness was especially helpful for understanding the decisions of Catholic school teachers. Some Catholic school teachers became disengaged with the Catholic Church. Upholding the norms and values of Catholicism in these schools was no longer consistent with their own value systems and these teachers decided to leave. For other public and Catholic school teachers, the decision to leave teaching was influenced by the rewards and costs of staying in teaching. Many found the rewards of teaching were not sufficient. Others found they were not able to establish positive relationships with colleagues and administrators, thus lack of emotional attachments influenced their commitment to teaching and decision to leave.

Identity theory provided another way in which to interpret participants' decisions and to explain and understand how the multiple decisions they made throughout their time in the profession had an impact on their commitments and decisions to leave. Identity theory has been widely used in educational research, including Day, et al.'s (2007) study on teacher effectiveness, where researchers found that commitment was "affected primarily by teachers' sense of identity," how long they had been in the profession, the influences upon teacher commitment and identity, such as policy changes, workload, and personal

health, and the ways in which teachers managed these influences. Identity theory was applied to the experiences of the 25 participants interviewed for this study to help understand why teachers decided to leave early. Identity helped explain commitment to teaching and the decision to leave, similar to the findings of Day and his colleagues. For example, teachers who were laid off experienced a threat to their identities as successful individuals. They were perceived by others, namely their administrators, as ineffective, which also challenged their identities as teachers. These teachers decided to leave teaching, seeking careers both within and outside the field of education where they could be successful.

Sociocultural theory was used to make broader abstractions of the interview and survey data, taking into consideration not only the choices and identities of teachers throughout their time in the classroom, but also factors within their various contexts. In keeping with broad sociocultural theories, this study found that among early leavers, five social contexts had a particular influence on participants' commitments to teaching, teaching experiences, and decisions to leave early: personal, professional, school, district, and societal. Catholic school teachers were also influenced by parish, diocesan, and Catholic Church contexts. Embedded within the descriptions of teacher experiences presented in this study were examples of how these different contexts influenced the commitment and career decisions of participants. For example, as explained in chapter 5, Reid entered teaching with an exploratory commitment and was satisfied overall with her teaching experiences, believing that she was an effective teacher, but she left teaching to pursue her master's degree. Her entering commitment, teaching experience, and decision to leave were influenced by her personal, professional, and school contexts. In her personal context, her family was supportive of her career decision. In her school context, Reid developed positive relationships with her students and collegial relationships with other teachers that led to a sense of success, influencing her professional identity and self-efficacy. Despite her positive experiences, Reid was still interested in graduate school, a side bet

that eventually led her out of the classroom. This study found that within the various personal, professional, school, district, societal, and, among Catholic school teachers, parish, diocesan, and Catholic Church contexts, teachers made multiple decisions that had an impact on their commitment to teaching and decisions to leave.

Implications

This study has several implications for research, policy, and practice. Specifically, it suggests that more research is needed on the emotionality of leaving teaching, that new categorizations and terminology are needed to better capture teachers' career trajectories into and out of teaching, and that more comparative research is needed to understand better the problem of teacher retention. Policy and practice need to focus on preparing and supporting teachers throughout their careers, providing sufficient challenge, recognition, and accomplishment for teachers throughout their time in the classroom. This will require changes in the culture of schools and how teachers and society view the job of teaching.

Implications for Research

It has been suggested that teaching involves emotional investment, is "charged with feeling" (Nias, 1996, p. 293), and is an "emotional practice" (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 838). This study reveals that leaving teaching is an equally emotional experience, an aspect of attrition that has not been documented in previous literature. Examining the emotionality of leaving in more detail would allow greater insight into the decision to leave teaching and provide a more complete understanding of why teachers leave and stay. Not every decision is based on pragmatic or logical reasoning. Decisions are often based on emotion. To understand better why teachers are leaving, therefore, requires not only examining factors and circumstances that influence teacher career decisions, but also how emotions influence or even reinforce practical reasons for leaving the profession.

The emotions of leaving, therefore, are important aspects in understanding the phenomenon of leaving teaching early. Researching the emotionality of leaving would initially require qualitative methodologies that allow leavers to fully express their thoughts and emotions as they made the decision to leave. Qualitative approaches are often used to explore new topics and guide the development of broad-based quantitative research methodologies with larger samples (S. M. Johnson, et al., 2005; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Since this aspect of leaving has not been researched, qualitative approaches are needed to examine this topic further to help build a theoretical understanding of the emotionality of leaving and later develop broad-based survey instruments that could examine this concept among the population of early leavers.

The decision to leave teaching early was not easy for most participants in this study, and many were grateful for the opportunity to reflect on their experiences through the interviews. One participant explained that the interview process was “therapeutic,” allowing him to process his experiences in the classroom and the circumstances in which he left. He explained, “I’m still processing what happened” (Colin, Interview I). Another participant reported, “I think I got a lot off my shoulders just being able to talk about [my experience]. [Leaving teaching] has been a huge, very upsetting and challenging experience” (Emily, Interview II). These reflections further highlight the emotionality of leaving, and suggest that allowing teachers more and greater opportunities to express their own emotions might help to understand this problem. During these interviews teachers also touched upon possible solutions to the problem of teacher retention. The participants in this study had many suggestions for how to improve schools and were extremely passionate about student learning even after leaving the classroom. Very few studies focus explicitly on leavers. Most studies seek to capture why teachers leave, but another needed approach is asking early leavers to reflect on their experiences by considering how schools and policies need to change to retain teachers. Studying early leavers may

provide an important perspective into the problem of retention that is currently lost in research and policy.

Previous research has time and again called for more longitudinal studies on retention to understand teachers' career decisions, but also to capture better teachers' career trajectories as many leave but later return to teaching (S. M. Johnson, et al., 2005; Quartz, et al., 2008). Currently the terms "stayer," "mover," and "leaver" do not explain the different career paths of teachers. For example, 6 teachers in this study entered teaching, left, returned, and left yet again. Brenna initially entered teaching with no training, left and pursued her master's in teaching, came back to the classroom, and left when she gave birth to her son. She planned to return to teaching. The label of "leaver" does not adequately describe the career paths of teachers like Brenna. Interestingly, the NCES plans to begin new data collection procedures with the SASS and TFS, following teachers longitudinally through annual surveys rather than administering surveys in two consecutive years. New terms will be needed to categorize and identify the different career paths of teachers as they enter, leave, and return to the profession multiple times. Another avenue for future longitudinal research includes a follow-up to this study, interviewing these same participants 5 years from now, getting an update on their career paths, including whether or not any of these 25 early leavers returned to the classroom, and to determine whether these participants' opinions about their decisions to leave teaching have changed.

Comparison studies are needed to provide further insight into the problem of retention. More research is needed mining the SASS and TFS datasets to provide more information on teacher retention, comparing those who stay in their teaching placements and those who move to different schools with those who leave, especially among Catholic school early leavers where little research of this kind has been conducted. These types of comparisons could provide a deeper understanding of what factors and interaction between factors influence teachers' career decisions. Perhaps a similar study to this dis-

sertation could be conducted interviewing not only teachers who left early, but also those who worked in similar professions and left early, including nursing and campus ministry, expanding on previous research comparing retention in teaching with other professions (see Harris & Adams, 2007; Henke, et al., 2001). This would allow comparisons across professions to determine if there are similarities and differences in the career decisions individuals make and what factors and interaction of factors have an impact on the decision to leave these professions. More cross-national studies are needed, similar to the OECD report, to help countries learn from one another, comparing cultural contexts to reveal important similarities and differences that could improve retention efforts. Qualitative cross-national studies that capture the perspectives of teachers are particularly needed.

Systematic, complex, and comprehensive research methodologies are needed to gain a better understanding of why teachers leave early. Approaches such as these build on previous research, finding ways to organize and explain how multiple factors and circumstances influence teacher career decisions leading to more meaningful explanations of why teachers leave. Day, et al.'s (2007) study provides an example of such an approach. This dissertation study also attempts to offer a more complex approach that considers these multiple factors and circumstances with an analytic framework, examining teachers' entire time in the classroom, including entering commitment, teacher experience, and the decision to leave. This framework needs to be further expanded and more research is needed in order to continue to respond to the changing dynamics in the culture of schools.

Implications for Policy and Practice

One important and somewhat surprising finding of this study was that many early leavers were satisfied with their overall teaching experiences. They believed they were effective teachers and experienced success in the classroom, yet left within 5 years. Many

of these teachers left, however, because they found that teaching did not offer sufficient rewards to stay. For teachers in this study, rewards included not only salary, but also acknowledgement, gratification, and intellectual engagement and challenge. Many of the participants, both those who were satisfied and those who were frustrated or thought they were ineffective, reported that their school environments did not acknowledge their talents, provide adequate support and resources to successfully teach students, or allow teachers to engage in meaningful and important conversations about teaching and learning. These realities of the culture of schools clashed with participants' idealistic notions and expectations about teaching and influenced the decision to leave early. For example, one participant explained,

One of the things that stands to benefit the profession in the future, as far as teacher retention and happiness, is a lot less of this rigidity and letting teachers do what they think they need to do with their students. I think that when the principals begin to give that kind of leeway and teachers are able to spread their wings around ideas that they have and make discoveries in the classroom, I think that is a huge part of bringing some of the idealism back again. Listen to the teachers about how to discipline properly in the classroom and what do they want to see in a disciplined classroom in an urban setting. Involving teachers in this kind of decision-making and that kind of thing would bring back some of the idealism that teachers naturally have. (Thomas, Interview II)

Teachers want to be engaged intellectually with the profession of teaching, and while every participant interviewed for this study admitted that teaching was challenging, for some teaching was not necessarily intellectually stimulating. One participant explained, "I always felt challenged by teaching but I no longer felt challenged in an intellectual way. I felt challenged to improve X, Y, Z of my teaching but I just—I felt myself going a little bit brain dead" (Izel, Interview II). Success and feeling rewarded, therefore, include not only positive experiences in the classroom, but also involvement in school decision-

making and discussions on the practice of teaching.

Understanding teaching as a profession challenges how we typically think about the job of teaching and would require a new conceptualization of the profession of teaching, both from within the field of education and within society as a whole. Many teachers are talented, smart individuals who love and value learning. For example, 9 of the 25 participants interviewed for this study left teaching and eventually pursued graduate coursework. Too often, however, schools, society, and even teachers themselves do not acknowledge teaching as a profession. Teaching becomes a scripted or prescribed task, which “circumscribes [teachers’] opportunities to make professional decisions, question common practices and develop responsible critiques” about teaching practice (Cochran-Smith, 2001, p. 4). As one teacher explained, “I feel that teaching is looked down upon and part of that is because teachers have a very narrow view of what constitutes teaching and learning that puts them in the position of being looked down upon” (Aaron, Interview II). This teacher argued for an expanded understanding of the job of teaching, where teaching involves instruction integrated with research on theory and practice and where teachers “do not necessarily look at [research] as an add-on, but reconfiguring the nature of teaching and how to do that so they’re not working as two separate things” (Aaron, Interview II). School policies need to be put in place that provide structures for teachers that allow them to engage with their colleagues and the administration on important school improvement issues, but also perhaps, as this participant suggests, with universities and educational researchers, examining instruction and student learning. This type of sustained engagement with theory and practice at the classroom, school, and broader research levels could provide teachers with a sense of acknowledgement, reward, and intellectual challenge while presenting researchers with needed research sites and connections to classroom practice, mutually benefiting research by bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Conceptualizing teaching as a profession that includes delivering instruction and engaging in school-wide efforts and research to improve student learning is similar to efforts to professionalize teaching. The professionalism movement is focused on defining a knowledge base for teaching, with standards that address “the cognitive and dispositional aspects of teaching in addition to the technical dimension” (Zeichner, 2003). The argument presented here focuses on the perception of teachers and changing the practice of teaching and culture of schools by finding ways to engage and utilize the talents and skills of individuals who are drawn to teaching. Opportunities to engage in important decisions about instruction and learning are often limited and teachers’ ability to do so is often underestimated (Ingersoll, 2003b). Understanding teachers as professionals who are expected to work in collaboration with their colleagues, sharing their expertise and professional knowledge in order to provide solutions for teaching’s challenges could not only help improve student learning and teaching practice, but teacher retention as well.

As I have demonstrated, some early leavers perceived that they were ineffective and left teaching as a result of their own perceived failure. Day and his colleagues (2007) argued that retention strategies should focus on “building and sustaining teacher quality and effectiveness over the whole of their careers....It is the retention of teachers’ hearts and minds, enthusiasm and morale” (p. 254) that are instrumental in terms of teacher effectiveness and teacher retention. This study revealed similar findings that retention is closely related to teachers’ sense of effectiveness and success in the classroom. If schools can find ways to sustain teacher quality and effectiveness, they stand a better chance of retaining teachers. Initial teacher preparation is an important first step in supporting teachers, but it is not enough. As teachers enter the classroom and continue in their careers, ongoing and continual scaffolding is needed. For example, one participant explained that her student teaching experience was extremely helpful, but she took for granted that the classroom structures and management strategies that made the classroom

run efficiently were already put in place. In many ways, her student teaching experience provided a false sense of what teaching was really like.

The teacher that I had [student teaching] was no nonsense. She had her kids trained, so I'm going into this class that's already trained to be good. I just sort of got to plan the lessons and do the creative stuff and interact with the kids and all that structure was already there, which you don't realize at the time. You sort of take that for granted. (Kaylie, Interview I)

This teacher had a difficult time when she entered the classroom, unsure how to develop those structures and management techniques. She came to believe that she was an ineffective teacher and decided to leave. Many participants interviewed for this study argued for a longer training period or at least sustained support to help them as they transitioned into the classroom. Several suggested that teacher education programs follow a more medical model with longer internship requirements that offer opportunities for teachers to develop and hone their skills with the support of skilled and experienced teachers over a longer period of time. Researchers have argued for similar notions of ongoing teacher development. For example, Cochran-Smith (2003) argued for conceptualizing

teacher preparation and teacher development across the lifespan as a learning problem rather than a training problem and creat[ing] the professional norms and school conditions that support teachers' learning over the long haul. When teacher development is understood as a learning problem, part of the goal is to recruit and support teachers who know subject matter but also know how to pose and solve the new problems that continuously emerge in classrooms and schools, who know how to provide rich learning opportunities for all of their students, and who know how to work together with other teachers in learning communities. (p. 373)

These ideas are closely related to the argument for an expanded and new conceptualization of the profession of teaching involving not just delivery of instruction, but working

with other teachers, administrators, and even researchers to improve learning.

Schools have an important role in ensuring continual teacher development to sustain their effectiveness and enthusiasm. Schools must be “responsive to [teachers’] talents and needs” (S. M. Johnson, 2004, p. 254). Teacher educators and school administrators need to take an active role in identifying teachers’ strengths and weaknesses, providing adequate support for teachers throughout their time in the profession, and helping them establish realistic goals and adjust those goals as they continue in their careers. Four participants entered with professional or long-term commitment and experienced staffing action decisions that led them out of the classroom. These teachers reported that they knew they were not perfect teachers, and indeed were motivated and driven to improve their teaching, but they were unaware they were not meeting expectations. Providing ongoing support would help improve and perhaps retain more who enter with professional commitments but struggle initially.

Schools need to provide sustained professional development for teachers that engage teachers in intellectual work, rather than the half-day practically-based type of professional development currently offered in most schools. Professional development is needed that establishes communities of teachers who share their practice and engage in important questions about theory and practice. Many teachers in this study went through alternative certification programs, taking courses while they were teaching to gain their teacher certification. For those who believed their alternative teacher preparation offered a quality program, this experience was positive because they could immediately apply what they were learning in their teacher preparation programs to the classroom. One teacher explained, “I think sometimes the classroom experience informed what you got out of class or the kinds of questions you asked in class. It’s hard for me to say how much I got from the actual graduate course and how much I got from the fact that I was doing it at the same time” (Lindsey, Interview I). Many also valued the experience of getting

together with other early career teachers to discuss what they were struggling with and to engage in conversations about those challenges with professors and skilled professionals.

As the OECD report (2005) argued,

Able teachers are not necessarily going to reach their potential in settings that do not provide appropriate support or sufficient challenge and reward. Policies aimed at attracting and retaining effective teachers need both to recruit competent people into the profession, and also to provide support and incentives for professional development and ongoing performance at high levels” (p. 19).

Universities and teacher preparation programs play an important role in this expanded understanding of teacher development and assisting schools in providing sustained professional development for teachers. Partnerships between K-12 schools and universities could help offer not only the needed supports for teachers to achieve success with their students, but also aid in the new conceptualization of teaching as a profession, providing opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful work and even research examining teacher practice. Conceptualizing teacher development across the entire career would create norms of engaging in theory and practice not only before teachers enter the classroom during initial preparation, but throughout their careers. Teacher education programs need to provide continued involvement in teacher development; training and preparing teachers for the classroom should not end after teacher candidates graduate from the program. Rather, teacher preparation programs need to provide sustained training, mentorship, and development opportunities. Developing new understandings of teaching and teacher development is a two-way street; not only must schools, districts, policymakers, and society as a whole rethink the profession of teaching, but teachers as well. The culture of schools needs to be adjusted, establishing communities of learning and norms of ongoing development and engagement with colleagues. Teachers must embrace an expanded

notion of the job of teaching and characteristics of a career defined by constant learning and involvement beyond the classroom walls.

Another important way to continue to engage teachers is to offer easier access to the classroom for those who have left teaching and could return. Many of the participants who left teaching reported that they would consider returning to the classroom, but were frustrated by recertification requirements that entailed costly training. For example, one teacher explained,

I almost think if they want to recruit former teachers back, then it should be free to recredential. Maybe it requires you commit to teaching and you recredential and then if you don't end up teaching you pay—that seems fair to me....If [going back into teaching] requires recertification, I'll probably go find something else to do because I don't want to spend my time recertifying. (Colleen, Interview II)

States need to offer alternative recertification, making it easier for those who have left teaching to return to the classroom, perhaps offering incentives for those who commit to teaching for a number of years. Making it easier for teachers who move out-of-state to gain their certification is another policy initiative that could help improve teacher retention.

Implications for Catholic Schools

This study explored a specific subset of early leavers: Catholic school teachers who left teaching early. While previous research suggests that Catholic school teachers report greater autonomy than public school teachers (O'Keefe, 2001), this study found that, similar to public school teachers in this study, many Catholic school teachers would have welcomed structured opportunities to engage with other teachers and more opportunities for support and professional development. Several Catholic school teachers who entered with limited preparation were disappointed by the lack of support in their

schools. Since studies indicate that some enter Catholic schools to circumvent training and certification requirements (e.g., Schuttloffel, 2001), conceptualizing teacher development as ongoing is not only beneficial for teaching in general, but may be particularly crucial for Catholic schools in retaining teachers. If many of these teachers enter the profession with expectations that schools will provide the tools and training necessary to achieve success, then ongoing teacher development would help provide these needed opportunities for Catholic school teachers to gain the preparation that they may be lacking as they enter the classroom.

This study suggests that some factors unique to the culture of Catholic schools were important in Catholic school teachers' decisions to leave teaching, including declining commitment to the Catholic Church and changing Catholic identity of Catholic schools as they grapple with the loss of religious men and women who once were the bedrock of these schools. Current trends in Mass attendance and participation in the sacraments indicate that "many people have walked away from the Catholic Church; others simply have defected in place, becoming Catholic only in name" (O'Keefe, 2008, p. 4). Research has generally not examined how these trends of declining commitment among Catholics are related to teacher attrition in Catholic schools. This study suggests that declining commitment to the Catholic Church had an impact on the decision to leave teaching for several of the participants in this study. As teachers began to question their faith, they also began to question their role in Catholic schools and whether or not they should be teaching in these settings. More research is needed to determine the extent to which this is influencing the career decisions among the larger population of Catholic school teachers, but the findings presented here indicate that this is one plausible explanation for why Catholic schools experience high attrition rates. Many of today's young adult Catholics—the very population that Catholic schools rely upon to fill teaching positions—are becoming increasingly disengaged with the Catholic Church.

While some may question their faith, other participants in this study were disappointed with the lack of emphasis on Catholic identity and mission in Catholic schools, an emphasis they had expected to find. Several participants were frustrated in what they saw as a lack of engagement among teachers, administrators, parents, and even priests in the Catholic mission of Catholic schools. It is important to note here that none of the participants in this study described themselves as conservative Catholics. They were not searching for Catholic school cultures that promoted strict adherence to Catholic doctrine; rather, the Catholic teachers in this study found that the Catholic identity of their schools was almost non-existent. The mission of these schools had initially enticed many of the Catholic school teachers interviewed for this study to enter these schools, but they found little emphasis on this once they were there. Perhaps Catholic schools are not doing enough to maintain Catholic mission, a topic frequently explored in the literature on Catholic education (Cuypers, 2004; Grace, 2002; Grace & O’Keefe, 2007; Groome, 1996). The literature on Catholic mission and identity has never examined the relationship between Catholic identity and teacher retention in Catholic schools. This study’s findings suggest that research is needed on how the changing identity of Catholic schools is affecting teacher retention. The Catholic identity of these schools is a unique feature that attracts many teachers to Catholic schools. It seems the more robust the religious and Catholic identity of schools, the more these schools may be able to retain teachers. My findings indicate that Catholic schools that fail to maintain a strong Catholic identity may stand to lose not only the very purpose of their existence, but also lose the very teachers they rely upon to keep these schools running.

Leaving Teaching Early

Leaving early is not inherently negative for schools and students. Some attrition is good and necessary. For example, schools should not seek to retain early career

teachers who believe they are ineffective if indeed they are not reaching their students. Leaving early is not necessarily a normative judgment either, especially among today's generation where many pursue several different careers rather than entering professions as lifetime careers (S. M. Johnson, 2004; Olson & Anderson, 2007). Still, teachers leaving the profession early is a problem that has a deep impact on schools and their ability to improve student achievement. Research on teacher retention has evolved from exploring how the characteristics of teachers, including age, race, gender, and preparation, influence attrition, to examining how the culture of schools interact with teacher characteristics to affect teacher career decisions. This study suggests that we need to continue to expand the scope of our research. These methods do not adequately capture why teachers leave early. They do not consider the logical and emotional decision-making in which teachers engage. They do not capture how commitment develops and changes throughout a teacher's career. Most importantly, they do not take into account the larger contexts outside the school itself in which teachers operate, including personal, professional, societal, and, among Catholic school teachers, Catholic Church contexts that have an important influence on teacher career decisions. Studies that do not take into consideration the logical and emotional dimensions of leaving, the ways in which commitment changes and develops over the span of a career, and the multiple factors within the various contexts in which teachers live and work result in focusing on simple explanations that will not solve the problem of leaving teaching early. Research and policy has focused on finding ways to recruit teachers who are committed to teaching long-term, improve teacher satisfaction, and increase salary. While these are important components in improving retention, these single solutions alone will not result in increasing retention. The problem is complex, requiring equally complex research methods and solutions that take into account the multifaceted nature of leaving teaching early.

New generations of teachers have different assumptions and characteristics, as

Johnson's (2004) work illustrates. New generations of students bring different challenges and needs to the classroom. Educational change initiatives affect the greater school culture, which in turn influences teacher identities and commitments to classroom teaching. Society as a whole changes as well, including greater stability and economic wealth, or increasing unrest and economic recession. Schools, research, and policy need not only to accommodate and adapt to these changes, but embrace them as well. These changes present challenges, but also opportunities to learn and grow. As one participant in this study explained,

There is a dialectic in teaching; it is always there, but circumstances are always changing and people are always changing. The process of trying to [implement] that dialectic is inherently going to create tension, which is going to mean struggles. I came to realize this past year that it's alright. It's probably something I have to accept because without that tension, then things just stay where they are. (Aaron, Interview II)

Retaining new teachers who are both talented and committed is a problem many schools face; a problem that is complicated further by changing dynamics of schools and society. Studying the problem of teacher retention needs to accommodate the complexities of this problem by taking a multifaceted approach that includes investigating how the tensions and struggles early leavers experience can help change teaching and learning for the better.

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Appendix A

Literature Review: Empirical Studies Reviewed

Author/Study	Research Question	Participants/Method (Country)	Principle Findings
Bartlett (2004)	What is the relationship among teachers' work conceptions, organizational support for teachers' work and patterns of overwork?	26 public secondary teachers; ethnographic case-study (U.S.)	Teachers' work roles have been expanded by reform efforts seeking to improve student achievement. Adoption of these expanded roles and support structures for teachers have been adopted unevenly among schools, leading to overwork as teachers attempt to sustain the expanded role. This led to increased attrition among participants.
Boe, Barkanic, & Leow (1999)	What are the trends and predictors of attrition among public school volunteer and involuntary movers, and volunteer and involuntary leavers?	SASS and TFS surveys (1987-88, 1990-91, 1993-94); logistic regression analysis (U.S.)	There has been a high level of teacher attrition in public schools, 63% of which leave voluntarily and 37% of which leave involuntarily (i.e., staffing action, health reasons, retirement). Compared to stayers, voluntary movers were more likely to have lost full certification and to be younger; voluntary leavers were more likely to experience increase in dependents; involuntary movers were more likely to have less teaching experience; involuntary leavers were more likely to have decreased income and increase dependents.
Borman & Dowling (2008)	Why does teacher attrition occur and what factors moderate attrition outcomes?	34 quantitative studies including 63 attrition moderators; meta-analysis (U.S.)	Attrition in teaching is not necessarily healthy; attrition is influenced by personal and professional factors that are apt to change over time; teachers' working conditions are more salient for predicting attrition than reported in previous literature; and various factors, including salary, teacher collaboration, and administrative support that influence attrition could be changed by policy to increase retention.

<p>Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff (2005)</p>	<p>Why do teachers transfer to another school in the district, to a school in another district, or leave teaching altogether in the first 5 years of their careers?</p>	<p>All certified New York City elementary teachers with fewer than 6 years of experience; statistical modeling (U.S.)</p>	<p>Highly qualified teachers are more likely to move or leave when teaching in schools serving low-achieving students, even after factoring in student and teacher race. Teachers who live father away from the schools they teach are more likely to move or leave.</p>
<p>Bryk, Lee, & Holland (1993)</p>	<p>What is the internal organization of Catholic high schools that contributes to the “Catholic school effect”?</p>	<p>High School and Beyond survey and case studies of 7 Catholic schools; mixed methods (U.S.)</p>	<p>Catholic schools achieve relatively high levels of student learning; this learning is more equitably distributed with regard to race and socioeconomic status than in public schools. Catholic schools sustain high levels of teacher commitment and student engagement.</p>
<p>Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005</p>	<p>How does the quality of school facilities influence teacher attrition?</p>	<p>835 K-12 teachers in Washington, DC; survey (U.S.)</p>	<p>As the perceived quality of school facilities increases, the probability of retention also increases.</p>
<p>Day, Sammons, Stobard, Kington, & Gu (2007)</p>	<p>What are the characteristics of teachers’ lives, work, and variations in effectiveness across teachers’ careers?</p>	<p>100 schools and 300 teachers; Interviews, teacher and pupil questionnaires, and pupil assessment data (England)</p>	<p>Teacher commitment is influenced by situated, personal, and professional factors. Teachers working in schools serving disadvantaged communities experience more challenges to their commitment and resilience. Sustaining and even enhancing teacher commitment and resilience to challenges are key factors in teacher quality and teacher retention.</p>
<p>Dinham & Scott (1996)</p>	<p>What is the level of teacher satisfaction, motivation, and health and what factors lead to satisfaction?</p>	<p>892 teachers; survey (Australia)</p>	<p>Teacher satisfaction was negatively influenced by factors interfering with teacher effectiveness. Teachers were especially dissatisfied with increased workload, which they attributed to poorly implemented education reform.</p>

Grubb (2007)	How has Finland developed their school system to reduce inequalities in grades 1 through 9?	In-depth observation and case study in Finnish schools (Finland)	Finland's reform efforts work to build the capacity of schools, focusing on developing the competencies of teachers, increasing availability of support staff, and working to include teachers on decision-making. A number of social programs also support schools to reduce non-academic barriers to learning. This increases teacher self-efficacy and leads to increased retention.
Hansen, Lien, Cavalluzzo, & Wenger (2004)	What is the effect of current and future earnings on teacher retention?	6,429 urban, public secondary teachers; regression and statistical modeling (U.S.)	Teachers do respond to increased salary, but the effect is very small, except for math and science teachers. Pay increases should be targeted to teachers who are more likely to leave, including math and science teachers.
Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin (2001)	How do the factors of salary, alternative earning potential, working conditions, and personnel policies impact teacher decisions to move or leave public schools?	378,790 teachers in the Texas Education Agency databases (1993-1996); statistical modeling (U.S.)	Teaching in schools serving low-achieving students has a stronger impact on teachers' decisions to stay and leave than salary. Schools serving minority students also experience higher attrition rates. Salary does exert a modest impact on teachers' decisions to stay and leave. Therefore, salary increases should be targeted to those teachers working in schools serving low-achieving and minority students.
Harris & Adams (2007)	How does teacher retention compare to retention rates in nursing, social work, and accounting?	18,700 public and private teachers, nurses, social workers, and accountants in the Current Population Survey (1992-2001); survey analysis (U.S.)	Teacher retention rates are similar to other semi-professional occupations of nursing, social work, and accounting. Attrition due to retirement is higher among teachers, suggesting that teachers retire earlier than those in nursing, social work, or accounting.

<p>Henke, Zahn, and Carroll (2001)</p>	<p>Were college graduates who were teaching in 1994 more or less likely than those in other occupations to leave the work force or work in a different occupation in 1997?</p>	<p>9,300 college graduates in the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (1992-1993); survey analysis (U.S.)</p>	<p>Among college graduates, K-12 teachers were as likely as their peers who worked in professional occupations to remain in their same occupation. In other words, teacher attrition was not higher than in comparable occupations, including occupations in health, engineering, science, lab/research assistants, law, law enforcement or the military, or in business support and financial services.</p>
<p>Ingersoll (2001)</p>	<p>What are the possible organizational characteristics and conditions of schools that impact teacher turnover?</p>	<p>SASS and TFS surveys (1987-88, 1990-91, 1993-94); survey analysis (U.S.)</p>	<p>School staffing problems are due to teacher mobility, including those who move and leave their school placements. Job dissatisfaction and teachers pursuing other jobs account for more attrition than retirement. Small private schools experience the highest attrition rates.</p>
<p>Ingersoll (2003)</p>	<p>Is there really a teacher shortage?</p>	<p>SASS and TFS surveys (1987-1988, 1990-1991, 1993-1994, 1999-2000); survey analysis (U.S.)</p>	<p>There are more than enough teachers prepared to enter the profession. Teacher shortages are due to teachers moving and leaving their teaching positions. Teacher shortages are not due to increased retirements, as conventional wisdom suggests.</p>
<p>Johnson (2004)</p>	<p>What are the motivations, priorities, and experiences of the next generation of teachers?</p>	<p>50 teachers; qualitative interviews (U.S.)</p>	<p>Schools lack the organizational structures needed to hire and support new teachers, especially those serving low-income communities, which leads to decreased self-efficacy among teachers. The next generation of teachers is qualitatively different from those retiring from teaching, requiring changes in school structure to meet their needs and interests.</p>

Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff (2002)	How much variation exists in the average attributes of teachers across schools and how is the distribution of teachers impacted by mobility?	Every New York public school teacher in the Personnel Master File (1984-2000); statistical modeling, descriptive analysis (U.S.)	Urban schools have a concentration of lesser-qualified teachers and schools serving low-achieving, low-income, and minority students, particularly in urban areas, are more likely to have the least skilled teachers. Salary differences contribute to the disparities in the distribution of teachers.
Levin & Quinn (2003)	How do urban district hiring practices affect applicant attrition and teacher quality?	≈ 1,000 teacher applicants surveyed and analysis of all applicants in 4 urban districts in HR databases; qualitative survey and focus groups analysis, statistical analysis of database (U.S.)	All four urban districts had more than enough teacher applicants, even for positions in high needs areas like math, science, and bilingual education. All districts waited to make job offers until mid- to late-summer, after surrounding suburban districts had made their hiring decisions. This left applicants in “limbo” for months and many became frustrated with waiting. Between 31% to 60% of applicants withdrew from the hiring process. Those participants with greater qualifications were the most likely to withdraw their applications.
Liu & Meyer (2005)	How do teachers who stay, move, and leave perceive of their jobs?	TFS survey (1994-95); statistical modeling and survey analysis (U.S.)	Student behavior problems and salary were major sources of dissatisfaction among teachers. Private school teachers, however, experienced fewer discipline problems and expressed greater job satisfaction than public school teachers.
Markow & Martin (2005)	What are the general attitudes, expectations, and challenges associated with education as teachers transition into the profession and what are the profiles of teachers likely to leave their profession?	800 public school teachers (early career); survey analysis (U.S.)	New teachers strongly agree that they can make a difference in students’ lives and value personal connections with parents and students, engaging them in the education process; and from colleagues and the principal, relying on them for sources of support and continued learning. New teachers’ satisfaction with support and collaboration with colleagues and the principal was lacking, especially among new teachers who were likely to leave teaching in the next 5 years.

Martinic & Anaya (2007)	What are the affects of interactions and educational practices on the identity of Catholic school teachers serving low-SES communities?	46 Catholic school teachers; qualitative interview analysis (Chile)	Catholic school teachers serving in poverty stricken areas were generally satisfied and committed to working in these schools, because the morals espoused by the schools were similar to their own and because the society, children, and families served valued their services. Teachers also reported being overworked and experiencing emotional tension from trying to meet all the learning needs of their students.
Nieto (2003)	What keeps great teachers going and committed to serving in high-needs schools?	7 urban, public school teachers; qualitative interview analysis (U.S.)	Master teachers who continue serving in high needs schools maintain a sense of hope and deep commitment to having a positive impact on the injustices their students experience. Teachers maintain their commitment because they see teaching as more than a job.
O'Keefe et al. (2004)	What is the makeup of inner-city Catholic schools, including their students, staff, and structure?	300 inner-city Catholic schools; survey analysis (U.S.)	Those teachers who move or leave inner-city Catholic schools are more likely to teach in public and charter schools than to leave the profession altogether or move to another Catholic school.
Olson & Anderson (2007)	What is the relationship among the reasons for entering, preparation, and workplace conditions on future career paths of Center X graduates?	15 urban, public school teachers; qualitative interview analysis (U.S.)	While teachers may leave classroom teaching, many stay within urban education, taking other important roles that serve these schools. Findings suggest that teachers will remain in urban education if they have opportunities to take on education roles both within and outside the classroom and receive professional support throughout their careers.
OECD (2005)	What are the trends in attracting, developing, and retaining effective teachers across countries?	Review of 25 countries, including reports, external review teams and commissioned papers; mixed methods (25 countries)	Almost half of the participating countries reported serious concerns about their teacher supply, especially in high-demand subject areas. The status of teaching is undervalued in most countries and teacher salaries are declining in most countries. Many teachers lack appropriate content and pedagogical knowledge, and teachers expressed concerns about heavy workloads and poor working conditions.

Podgursky, Monroe, & Watson (2002)	How do labor market decisions affect the academic quality of the teaching workforce in public schools?	Missouri public school database from 1989-1990 to 1999-2000; statistical analysis (U.S.)	Teachers with high ACT scores are less likely to teach in public schools. Teachers with high ACT scores are more likely to leave teaching early.
Quartz et al. (2008)	What are the career pathways of Center X graduates?	1,100 surveys of graduates of the Center X Teacher Education Program; survey analysis (U.S.)	While many leave classroom teaching, many stay within the field of education, serving urban schools in other roles. These “role changers” illustrate the need for a career ladder in teaching that provides opportunities for teachers to engage in activities both within and outside the classroom to professionalize teaching.
Schaub (2000)	What are the characteristics of Catholic school teachers in the United States?	SASS and TFS surveys (1993-1994); survey analysis (U.S.)	On average, Catholic school teachers earn less than their public school counterparts, report higher levels of job satisfaction than public school teachers, and higher levels of satisfaction with job conditions than public school teachers.
Schools and Staffing Survey (2004)	What are the characteristics of principals, schools, teachers, school libraries, and school policies of schools in the U.S.?	13,990 schools, 63,140 teachers, 13,990 principals, 5,440 districts, 10,390 libraries; survey analysis (U.S.)	Various detailed reports on schools, teachers, principals, and school libraries across the United States, including information on school admission and programs, student and class organization, and staffing; teacher education, certification and experience, teaching assignments; library media center collections, technology, and staffing; district recruitment and hiring of staff, principal and teacher compensation, graduation requirements; and principal experience and training, goals, and decision making, and teacher and school performance.
Schuttlhoffel (2001)	Why do teachers choose to teach in Catholic schools?	200 Catholic school teachers; qualitative interview analysis (U.S.)	While some teachers are committed to teaching in Catholic schools to “share the faith,” many enter simply because they need a job and Catholic schools are willing to hire. Only 12% of participants cited a strong sense of community and collegiality as a major factor in their decision to stay in Catholic schools.

Smithers & Robinson (2003)	What is the rate of teacher loss in England and what are the motivations behind teachers leaving?	1,066 leavers; survey analysis; qualitative interviews with subsample of 306 leavers (London)	There were five main factors that influenced teachers' career decisions: workload, new challenge, the school situation, salary, and personal circumstances. Workload was the most important factor and salary was the least important factor. Leavers tended to be younger or were approaching retirement.
Stinebrickner (1998)	Why do teachers leave teaching?	341 public and private school teachers in the National Longitudinal Study; survey analysis (U.S.)	This study used the National Longitudinal Study survey to follow the careers of certified teachers regardless of whether they moved. Results suggest that policy to reduce attrition should focus on new teachers in the early years of their careers. Teachers who scored high on the SAT or those with degrees in math or science left teaching more quickly than others. Increasing wages, especially for science, math, and high-achieving teachers would improve retention.
Teacher Follow-Up Survey (2004 & 2007)	What is the rate of teacher attrition and mobility in the United States?	5,300 teachers; survey analysis (U.S.)	Reports on retention rates within the United States, including stayers, movers, and leavers. Surveys of former teachers and current teachers detail information on why teachers stayed and left, their education, teaching assignment, and future career plans.
Wang (2004)	What are the motivations for teaching of graduate science students in the newly established teacher education programs in Taiwan?	100 surveys, 33 interviews with graduate science students; survey analysis and qualitative interview analysis (Taiwan)	Students were attracted to teaching science from exposure to science teaching in informal settings early in their lives and by expectations of teaching as offering rewards, good working conditions, and relatively high social status for science teachers.

Weiss (1999)	How do workplace conditions affect morale, commitment to teaching, and career plans to stay in teaching?	5,088 public and private school teachers in SASS and TFS surveys (1987-88 and 1993-1994); regression analysis of surveys (U.S.)	Teachers' perceptions of school leadership, culture, and teacher autonomy affect their commitment to teaching and desire to stay in teaching. When teachers were dissatisfied with their workplace conditions, including school leadership, student behavior, and teacher autonomy, they were more likely to leave.
Wriqi (2008)	What factors contribute to job satisfaction and how do these affect teacher attrition and work enthusiasm?	230 secondary teachers; survey analysis (China)	Secondary teachers were dissatisfied with teaching as a whole and identified student quality, leadership and administration, work achievements, working conditions, salary, and work stress as leading to dissatisfaction. Teacher overall job satisfaction is related to retention.

Appendix B

Interview Protocols

Interview I Protocol

As you know, I am a doctoral student at Boston College and I'm interested in issues of why teachers leave, especially those that leave early in their career. Research shows that this is a real problem for schools, especially urban schools and even Catholic schools. A lot of studies have been conducted trying to determine what is causing so many teachers to leave the classroom. I'm interviewing a group of teachers who have left teaching and I'm hoping to gain a better understanding from your perspective on your teaching experiences, your career goals, and the decision making process that you went through in deciding to leave. In this first interview I would like to get a sense of your background, how you came into teaching, and what your teaching experiences were like. In the next interview we'll dive more into the details of your decision to leave, what factors led to that decision, and your future careers plans.

1. So, to start off, tell me about yourself.

- Where did you grow up?
- Tell me about your family.

(If taught in Catholic school)

- I know you taught in a Catholic school, was Catholicism a major part of your life?
- Did you go to Catholic school?

2. Where did you go to college?

NOTE: If participant went to college to become a teacher – skip to question 4

- What was your major/area of concentration?
- What were you planning to do with your degree?
- What influenced you to study that field?

(If taught in Catholic school)

- As you gained more freedom in college, moving away from your parent's house, how would you characterize your religious life?
- Did you attend church often?
- How important was Catholicism in your life?

3. What did you do after college?

- What made you decide to pursue that job/experience?
- How long were you in this position?

4. At what point did you consider going into teaching?

- What was it about teaching that had you so interested?
- What did you expect teaching was going to be like? What were you hoping?

- What other career options did you consider? Why did you decide against those?
 - Did you think of teaching as a career?
 - How long did you plan to stay in teaching?
- (If participant changed careers)
- Why did you decide to make the career change to go into teaching?
5. Once you decided to go into teaching, what type of training did you seek out?
- What attracted you to this program? Was there anything in specific that you were looking for in a preparation program?
6. Tell me about your preparation program.
- What were the courses like?
 - Do you think the faculty structured their courses around the realities of schools?
 - Did you have a good experience in your prep program? Why? Why not?
 - What were the strengths of the program?
 - What were the weaknesses of the program?
 - Thinking back on how you felt after completing your preparation, did your expectations of teaching change? In what ways?
- (If taught in Catholic school)
- Did your program prepare you at all for teaching in a Catholic school? In what ways? If not, was that something you were hoping for?
7. What did you do after completing the program?
- If did not go into teaching right away
- At what point did you enter teaching?
 - Why did you decide to go into teaching?
8. How did you go about finding a teaching position? Tell me about that process.
- What went well, what didn't?
- (If taught in Catholic school)
- Did you search for a position in a Catholic school first? Did you look into public?
 - What made you decide to teach in a Catholic school?
 - Was teaching in a Catholic school your first choice?
9. Tell about your first year of teaching.
- What did you teach?
 - What were some of the successes that you experienced?
 - What were some of the biggest challenges that you face?
 - Tell me about your students
 - What kind of diversity was there in the classes you taught in terms of ELLs, SPED, SES, Ethnicity?
 - How would you describe their experience in school? Did they enjoy it?

- Why or why not?
 - Was there a wide range of ability in your classroom?
 - How would you describe the classroom dynamics? Did you have difficulty with certain students or a particular class?
 - If in Catholic school: Were most of the students Catholic?
- Tell me about the school(s) in which you taught
 - What was the school environment and community like?
 - What kinds of resources did the school have? What did it lack?
 - What kind of students did the school serve?
 - Were the parents involved in the school?
 - What kind of goals did the school promote? Was there a mission statement? If so, was it an important aspect of the school?
 - What pressures and issues did the teachers face in the school?
 - What pressures and issues did the students face?
 - If in Catholic school: How important was the Catholic mission of the school?
 - Was religion a major focus for the school and its community?
 - How comfortable were you working in a Catholic school?
- Tell me about your work load
 - Walk me through a typical day that first year.
 - What role did you play in the school? (i.e. did you coach, run any clubs, take part in any committees?)
 - Were these roles expected of you or did you volunteer? How did these roles impact your ability to teach?
 - How would you describe your work load? Too little, too much, just right?
- Tell me about the lessons you taught
 - How did they go?
 - Can you describe a particular learning moment that stands out for you?
 - Was there a curriculum that you were expected to follow?
 - If yes: In your view, was it a good curriculum? Did you like?
 - Did anyone check that you were following the curriculum?
 - In no: How did you decide what to teach?
- Tell me about your working relationship with other adults in the school
 - Was there a lot of interaction among the faculty?
 - What group of teachers did you work with most? Novices? Veterans?
 - What was the makeup of the school in terms of beginning/veteran teachers?
 - How often would you talk with other teachers in the school? What kinds of interactions would you have? What did you talk about?
 - Did you have the opportunity to co-teach or observe other teachers?
 - Do you have an assigned mentor or participate in an induction program?

- If so, was this helpful? Why or why not.
 - Were there other people that you saw as informal mentors? – including friends and family outside of school
 - What role did your principal play in the school?
 - Were you evaluated? How did that experience go? What feedback did you get?
10. Thinking back to how you felt right after that first year did anything change?
- Did your expectations change?
 - What did you think about your preparation program?

Is there anything else about yourself and your teaching experiences that you think is important and I haven't asked about?

Interview II Protocol

Last time we met we talked a lot about how you came to teaching, the experiences you had leading up to it, your preparation program, how you found your position, and we also spent some time just talking about your teaching experiences. This time we're going to focus more on what influenced your decision to leave teaching, what you are currently doing, and your future plans.

1. What did you do after your first year of teaching?

If they continued teaching:

- Why did you decide to teach another year?
- What was that second year like?
 - How did it compare to your first year?
 - Did your expectations of teaching change after your second year of teaching?

If switched to new school

- Why did you decide to switch schools?
- What were you looking for in a new school?
- Tell me about what you experienced as you transitioned into your new school
- How did your new school compare to the previous one?

2. How satisfied were you with teaching?

- What aspects of teaching did you enjoy?
- What about teaching turned you off?

3. At what point did you consider leaving teaching?

- Tell me about that decision
- What were some of the things that influenced that decision?
 1. How did this impact your decision?

2. Why was this an important factor for you?
- Did you consider changing positions, schools or districts instead?
 - When did you know that teaching was not going to be a long term career for you?
4. A lot of research has been conducted trying to pinpoint reasons why teachers leave. As you can imagine salary is a big issue for teachers. Can you talk with me about salary?
- How important was salary for you?
 - Did salary play a major role in your decision to leave?
 - If not – why?
 - If yes – Tell me more about how this factor impacted your decision.
 - Why was salary an important factor for you?
 - Research findings show that salary is a major factor for teachers, but it plays a much more complicated role. Often times teachers report that salary was not the only reason for leaving. What is your perspective?
- If in Catholic schools
- Teachers in Catholic schools report significantly lower salaries than public school teachers. What impact did this have on you?
5. Another major factor reported by teachers is how well supported they feel by other teachers and the principal. Last time you described your interactions with other teachers as _____. What role did this play in your decision to leave?
- If not – why?
 - If yes – Tell me more about how this factor impacted your decision.
 - i. Why was collegiality an important factor for you?
 - What type of support and working environment were you hoping for when you went into teaching? How did these expectations compare to what you experienced?
- If taught in a Catholic school
- Did the nature of your school being a Catholic community have any impact on your working environment and relationships with your peers? If so how? Was it a positive impact or a negative impact?
 - Was this a consideration for you in your decision to leave?
 - How did it play a role? Tell me more about how this factor impacted your decision.
6. Last time you described your workload as _____. How would you describe the balance between your teaching responsibilities and your family and social life?
- What kind of impact did this have on your decision to leave teaching?
 - Did you have a lot of non-teaching related responsibilities? What impact did this have on your teaching? What impact did it have on maintaining that balance?
7. What was it like to leave teaching?
- Is there anything that you miss?

- What do you think the reaction was about you leaving?
 - What was the reaction of the students?
 - Other teachers?
 - Parents?
 - Principal?
 - Your family?

- 8. Tell me about your life after teaching.
 - What are you doing now?
 - How do you like what you're doing now? How does it compare with teaching?
 - What were you looking for in a new career? Did you find it?


- 9. What are your plans for the future?
 - What do you see yourself doing in the next 5 years?
 - What do you see yourself doing in the next 10 years?
 - Do you think you will return to teaching at some point?
 - Is there anything in particular that would bring you back to teaching?
 - Is there anything about teaching that you miss?

- 10. Is there anything else from your perspective about teacher retention that I haven't asked about?

Appendix C

Institutional Review Board Application

(For OHRPP use only) BC IRB Protocol#: _____

	Boston College Institutional Review Board Office for Human Research Participant Protections 140 Commonwealth Ave., 116 Carney Hall Chestnut Hill, MA 02467 (617) 552-4778 Fax: (617) 552-0948 E mail: irb@bc.edu		
IRB Application Form For Initial IRB Review Only			
I. Study Title: Reconcilable differences: Understanding issues of teacher retention in public and Catholic schools (If funded must match the sponsored title)			
II. Principal Investigator Information			
A. Name of Principal Investigator	Aubrey J. Scheopner	B. Are You? (Please check)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Faculty	
C. Mailing Address:		<input type="checkbox"/> Staff	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate Student	
D. Department:	Lynch School of Education, Curriculum and Instruction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graduate Student	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Postdoctoral fellow	
E. E-mail address:	aubrey.scheopner.1@bc.edu	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
F. Primary Phone Number:		G. Alternate Phone:	
H. Faculty Advisor's Name:	Marilyn Cochran-Smith	I. Faculty Advisor's Phone:	
J. Faculty Advisor's E-mail:			
III. Funding			
A. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None (Go on to Section IV) Do you plan to apply for funding in the future? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes* <input type="checkbox"/> No * Please explain: I would like to seek funds for this research, but I have yet to do so.			
B. <input type="checkbox"/> University Funded: List source:			
C. <input type="checkbox"/> External*: List source and grant number:			
D. <input type="checkbox"/> Federal*: List agency, department and grant number:			
*Wait until you have been notified that your project will be funded before seeking IRB approval unless otherwise instructed by funding source. Submit documentation of funding status with application and <u>a complete copy of the grant with your IRB application</u>			
E. Is BC the primary awardee for the grant? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No* If No Please list Primary Awardee:			
F. Are there subcontracts <input type="checkbox"/> Yes* <input type="checkbox"/> No If Please list sub-contractors:			
IV. General Study Information			
A. <u>Participant Recruitment Numbers</u> Females: 15 Males: 10		D. <u>Estimated Project Duration</u> Start Date: 11/1/2007 End Date: 6/30/09	
B. <u>Participant Ages (please check)</u> <input type="checkbox"/> 0-7 (parental consent and oral child assent) <input type="checkbox"/> 7-11 (parental consent and child written consent) <input type="checkbox"/> 12-18 (parental consent and written consent) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18-65 <input type="checkbox"/> 65+		E. <u>Why is this Project being conducted? (please check)</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty/Staff Research <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate Coursework <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Thesis <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Dissertation <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
C. <u>Special Study Populations (check if applicable)</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Minors (under 18 years) If including minors, also complete Studies Including Minors <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant Women/Fetuses or products of labor & delivery <input type="checkbox"/> Prisoners <input type="checkbox"/> Physically or mentally challenged <input type="checkbox"/> Diminished capacity for consent Other:			

V. Research Risk

*Research must present no more than minimal risk to human participants in order to qualify for expedited review. Minimal risk means that the "probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests." (45 CFR 46.102)

A. Does the research propose greater than minimal risk to participants? Yes* No

*If yes skip to part C of this section

B. Does the research include prisoners? Yes* No

*If research includes prisoners, the application must be reviewed by the full board

C. Check all procedures that apply to the research:

(1) Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices

(2) Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture.

(3) Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by noninvasive means. Examples: hair and nail clippings; saliva, deciduous teeth at time of exfoliation or extracted during routine care.; excreta and external secretions (including sweat); un-cannulated mucosal and skin cells collected by buccal scraping or swab, skin swab, or mouth washings; sputum collected after saline mist nebulization.

(4) Collection of data through noninvasive procedures routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves. Examples: physical sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance and do not involve input of significant amounts of energy into the participant or an invasion of the participants privacy; weighing or testing sensory acuity; magnetic resonance imaging; electrocardiography, electroencephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, electroretinography, ultrasound, diagnostic infrared imaging, doppler blood flow, and echocardiography; moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition assessment, and flexibility testing where appropriate given the age, weight, and health of the individual.

(5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

(8) Continuing review of research previously approved by the convened IRB as follows:(a) where (i) the research is permanently closed to the enrollment of new participants; (ii) all participants have completed all research-related interventions; and (iii) the research remains active only for long-term follow-up of participants; or(b) where no participants have been enrolled and no additional risks have been identified; or(c) where the remaining research activities are limited to data analysis.

None of the above categories apply.

For a comprehensive list of Expedited Categories see <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/expedited98.htm>

D. Does this study involve any of the following? (Check all that apply)

Deception or Punishment

Use of drugs

Covert observation

Induction of mental and/or physical stress

Procedures which may risk physical/mental harm to the participant

Materials/issues commonly regarded as socially unacceptable

Information relating to sexual attitudes, preferences, or practices

Information relating to the use of alcohol, drugs or other addictive products

Procedures that might be regarded as an invasion of privacy

Information pertaining to illegal conduct.

Genetic information that may be linked to a participant's health status, such as genetic markers for cancer, heart disease, etc.

Information normally recorded in a patient's medical record, and the disclosure of which could reasonably lead to social stigmatization or discrimination.

Information pertaining to an individual's psychological well being or mental health.

Information that if released could reasonably damage an individual's financial standing, employability, or reputation within the community.

Please provide details on all procedures checked above: How are they integral to the study?

I will be audio recording the interviews to ensure accuracy of the data collection.

VI. Research Summary:

Please attach a brief research summary (2-3 pages maximum) using the topic headers **A-I** below. Please use simple language and avoid technical jargon. For additional guidance on the research proposal summary the Boston College IRB Research Summary Guidelines at http://www.bc.edu/research/rcip/human/meta-elements/doc/BC_Guidelines_for_Res_Sum.doc.

Note: Grant, thesis, dissertation or course work proposals may not be submitted in lieu of the Research Summary because traditional proposals do not include specific information on risks, benefits and detailed informed consent procedures. Grant, thesis or Dissertation proposal should be attached as an addendum to the IRB application. Some of the information in a traditional proposal may be cut and pasted into the Research Summary such as the introduction, methods, materials and analysis.

A. Introduction and Background:

1. State the problem and hypothesis
2. Provide the scientific or scholarly reason for this study and background on the topic

B. Specific Aims/Study Objectives:

1. List the purpose(s) of the study (what are you hoping to learn as a result of the study)

C. Materials, Methods and Analysis (quantitative and qualitative):

1. Describe data collection methods (Procedures)-be specific
2. Describe the specific materials or tools that will be used to collect the data- be specific
3. Describe timeline of the procedures and how long each procedure will last
4. Describe how you will analyze your data; describe the analysis type and procedures including statistics and scientific or scholarly justification for the use of these analyses- be specific

D. Research Population & Recruitment Methods:

Describe:

1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria (what participant traits are needed to be included, what traits exclude participants?)
2. What is the scientific or scholarly justification for the number, gender, age, or race of the population you intend to recruit?
3. How did you choose the source of participants or data? (census records, BC students, Mass General Hospital records, etc.)
4. Recruitment procedure (if applicable) including who will recruit participants
5. Tools that will be used to recruit (payment, advertisements and flyers attach copies to this application)

(**Note:** participant payment beyond \$600 must be reported to the IRS, and this requirement must be added to the consent form)

E. Informed Consent Procedure

Describe:

1. Who will perform the informed consent procedure?
2. How will that person be trained? (previous related coursework, previous experience, one-on one training with PI or faculty, etc.)
3. How will the prospective participant's competence or understanding of the procedures be assessed ;will participants be asked questions about the procedures, or encouraged to ask questions?

F. Confidentiality:

Describe the Provisions for participant and data confidentiality:

1. Where the data will be stored, and who will have access to the data and the area?
2. How will the data be stored, and in what format (hard or electronic copy, identifiable or de-identified)
3. Will the participant's identity be coded? Will the codes to identify participants be stored with the data? (**Note:** If you are working with a Hospital or Clinic, please see information on HIPAA and Research at <http://www.bc.edu/research/rcip/human/hipaa/>)

G. Potential research risks or discomforts to participants

1. Indicate the type of risk that may result from participation. Consider psychological or emotional risks, social stigma, change in status or employment, physical risks or harms, information risks-breach of confidentiality and any effect loss of confidentiality may have on status, employment, or insurability. If the protocol involves treatment, what are the risks compared to other treatments in terms of "standard of care"?
2. Consider the likelihood and magnitude of the risks or discomforts occurring?. Are they unlikely, or likely to occur and what effect would the discomforts or risks have on the individual should they occur?
3. How will you minimize risks? Some examples include informed consent, adequate staff training and experience, debriefing, and monitoring adverse effects on participants.

H. Potential research benefits to participants

1. Indicate the type of benefit that may result from participation. Consider psychological or emotional benefits, learning benefits, physical benefits and discuss if participant will benefit directly or if the benefit is largely to gather generalizable knowledge or provide scientific or social information on a topic that may benefit society. DO NOT OVERSTATE the benefit.
2. Consider the likelihood of the benefits. Will all participant benefit, some or none?
(Note: Monetary compensation is not a benefit of participation, it is a recruitment tool)

I. Investigator experience. Please Attach a current copy of your C.V., unless a current copy is on file.

VII. Informed Consent and Waiver of Elements of Informed Consent or Documentation

A. The informed consent document should include all required elements of consent (See BC Consent Guide for informed consent samples). **Confirm that each element is included in your consent form** (unless you are requesting a waiver or partial waiver of consent skip question VII. B):

A statement that the study involves research
 The purpose of the research in lay terms (in language understandable to the participant)

A statement that they are being asked to participate in research, and how they were selected to participate
 The purpose of the research in lay terms
 The expected duration of the participant's participation "You will be asked to complete a survey every month for 1 year"
 The total time commitment of participation in the procedures "the survey will take 20 minutes to complete"
 A brief but complete description of all procedures to be followed (if research includes treatment describe which procedures are experimental and alternatives to those procedures)
 The risks or discomforts that are reasonably expected from the research, and a statement that "There may be unknown risks"
 The benefits to the participant or others that are reasonably expected from the research
 A statement of confidentiality that provides the participant a contact at the institution who may be reached if injury occurs or confidentiality is breached (this should be someone other than the researcher)
 A statement that participation is entirely voluntary and may be discontinued at any time
 A statement that withdrawal from participation will not result in denial of entitled benefits
 Invasive biological, clinical or behavioral interventions require specific descriptions of the procedure
 The consent form must be signed and dated, or oral consent must be witnessed and signed and dated by the witness
 A statement and check box that indicates the participants have a copy of the informed consent document

Note: Individuals with added protections require both permission of a legal representative and assent of the individual.

B. In some instances the IRB may consider altering the informed consent requirements. To be considered for an alteration or waiver of the required elements of informed consent, one of the following must apply in accordance with (45 CFR 46.116 (d)) or 45 CFR 46.117 (c)

Are you requesting an alteration or waiver? Yes* No
 * If you are requesting a waiver you must complete the BC [Request for Waiver/Alteration of Consent](#)

VIII. Research Staff (e.g., PI, Co-PI, Research Assistant, etc.). Please list and submit educational certificates for all personnel who will interact with the data. The online educational site ([hyperlink](#))

Name and credentials	Date of IRB Training Certificate	Research Role	University/Department
Aubrey J Scheopner	1/14/2005	PI	Boston College/Lynch School of Education

IX. Performance Sites:
 (e.g., Boston College, Massachusetts General Hospital, Newton Public Schools, etc.). If the institution has an IRB, IRB approval must be received from that institution as well as Boston College. If the Institution does not have an IRB, the Institution must authorize or provide permission for the research activities (please attach a letter of permission from an Institutional Official, or send as an email to irb@bc.edu). If you are collecting data at a Hospital with an IRB, seek Hospital approval prior to submitting the BC IRB Review application.

Name of Institution	Date of IRB Approval

X. Acknowledgement

SUBMISSION OF A PROPOSAL TO THE BC IRB REQUIRES THAT THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (AND MENTOR IF THE PI IS A STUDENT OR FELLOW) SIGN THIS PAGE AND READ COMPLETELY THE DEFINITION OF "SCIENTIFIC MISCONDUCT" AND ANSWER ALL "CONFLICT OF INTEREST" QUESTION GIVEN BELOW.

A. Scientific Misconduct
 "Scientific Misconduct" shall be considered to include:

1. Fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or other unaccepted practices in proposing, carrying out or reporting results from research;
2. Material failure to comply with Federal requirements for the protection of human participants, researchers and/or the Public;
3. Failure to meet other material legal requirements governing research;
4. Failure to comply with established standards regarding author names on publications;
5. Failure to adhere to issues of confidentiality as provided in the participant consent form, the study protocol, and as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46).

B. Conflict of Interest

1. Are you or any member of your immediate family (spouse or domestic partner and/or dependent children) an officer, director, partner, trustee, employee, advisory board member, or agent of any of the following (check all that apply):

- An external organization funding this project
 Any external organization from which goods and services will be obtained under this project (including those to which you may be subcontracting a portion of the project work)
 Any external organization whose financial condition could benefit from the results of this project
 Any external organization having business dealings in an area related to the work under this project

2. Are you or any immediate family member the actual or beneficial owner of more than five percent (5%) of the voting stock or controlling interest of (a) the external organization funding this project or (b) any external organization from which goods and services will be obtained under this project (including those to which you may be subcontracting a portion of the project work), (c) any external organization whose financial condition could benefit from the results of this project, or (d) any external organization having business dealings in an area related to the work under this project? ? Yes* No

3. Have you or any member of your immediate family derived income within the past year, or do you or any member of your immediate family anticipate deriving income, exceeding \$10,000 per year from (check all that apply):

- An external organization funding this project
 Any external organization from which goods and services will be obtained under this project (including those to which you may be subcontracting a portion of the Project work),
 Any external organization whose financial condition could benefit from the results of this project
 Any external organization having business dealings in an area related to the work under this project

Do not include funds that would pay your university salary under a sponsored project budget

***If you checked any of the above, please specify the extent of involvement:**

4. For those projects funded by any external entities, do you have a current, up-to-date Conflict of Interest Disclosure on file with the Office for Sponsored Programs that describes this financial relationship? Yes* No (if no you must submit an undated COI disclosure before IRB approval)

SIGNATURES**SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

The undersigned accept(s) responsibility for the study, including adherence to the ethical guidelines set forth in the Belmont Report, Declaration of Helsinki, the Nuremberg Code, the ethical principles of your discipline, the Common Rule and Boston College policies regarding protections of the rights and welfare of human participants participating in this study. In the case of student protocols, the faculty supervisor and the student share responsibility for adherence to policies.

Aubrey J. Scheopner		10/31/2007
Print Name of Principal Investigator	Signature of Principal Investigator	Date

SIGNATURE OF FACULTY RESEARCH SUPERVISOR- REQUIRED FOR STUDENT RESEARCH

By signing this form, the faculty research supervisor attests that (s) he has read the attached protocol submitted for IRB review, and agrees to provide appropriate education and supervision of the student investigator, above and share the above Principal Investigator responsibilities.

Marilyn Cochran-Smith		10/31/2007
Print Name of Faculty Research Supervisor	Signature of Faculty Research Supervisor	Date

SIGNATURE OF DEPARTMENT CHAIR OR DEAN-REQUIRED FOR FACULTY RESEARCH

Your signature below affirms that you have been informed about the research project

Print Name of Chair or Dean	Signature of Chair or Dean	Date



BOSTON COLLEGE
Institutional Review Board

Office for Human Research Participant Protection
Waul House, 2nd Floor
Phone: (617) 552-4778, fax: (617) 552-0948

IRB Protocol Number: 08.173.01

DATE: December 12, 2007
TO: Aubrey Scheopner
CC: Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Ph.D.
FROM: Institutional Review Board – Office for Human Research Participant Protection
RE: Reconcilable Differences: Understanding Issues Of Teacher Retention In Public And Catholic Schools

Notice of IRB Review and Approval
Expedited Review as per Title 45 CFR Part 46.110, FR 60366, FR, # 6 + 7

The project identified above has been reviewed by the Boston College Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research using an expedited review procedure. This is a minimal risk study. This approval is based on the assumption that the materials, including changes/clarifications that you submitted to the IRB contain a complete and accurate description of all the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research.

This approval is given with the following standard conditions:

1. You are approved to conduct this research only during the period of approval cited below;
2. You will conduct the research according to the plans and protocol submitted (approved copy enclosed);
3. You will immediately inform the Office for Human Research Participant Protection (OHRPP) of any injuries or adverse research events involving subjects;
4. You will immediately request approval from the IRB of any proposed changes in your research, and you will not initiate any changes until they have been reviewed and approved by the IRB;
5. You will only use the informed consent documents that have the IRB approval dates stamped on them (approved copies enclosed);
6. You will give each research subject a copy of the informed consent document;

7. **You may enroll up to 25 participants.**
8. **If your research is anticipated to continue beyond the IRB approval dates, you must submit a Continuing Review Request to the IRB approximately 60 days prior to the IRB approval expiration date. Without continuing approval the Protocol will automatically expire on December 10, 2008.**

Additional Conditions: *Any research personnel that have not completed NIH certificates should be removed from the project until they have completed the training. When they have completed the training, you must submit a Protocol Revision and Amendment Form to add their names to the protocol, along with a copy of their NIH certificates.*

Approval Period: **December 10, 2007- December 9, 2008**

Boston College and the Office for Human Research Participant Protection appreciate your efforts to conduct research in compliance with Boston College Policy and the federal regulations that have been established to ensure the protection of human subjects in research. Thank you for your cooperation and patience with the IRB process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Christina Booth Steele".

Christina Booth Steele, MS, CIPP
IRB Designee
Administrative Director

mg

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form



Informed Consent Form

You are being invited to take part in a research project on teacher retention in public and Catholic schools conducted by Aubrey J. Scheopner, doctoral candidate at Boston College. This project is part of a dissertation project, supervised by Professor Marilyn Cochran-Smith. The study seeks to combine research on teacher retention with the experiences and insights of individuals who have left teaching early in their careers. This is why I am asking for your participation in this study because you left teaching within the first five years of teaching and you taught in the last ten years.

The purpose of this research project is to combine insights from public and Catholic school teachers' experiences with current research on teacher retention to better understand why teachers leave early in their careers and the interrelationships between factors related to attrition.

You will be asked to participate in two 60-90 minute interviews. In the interview I will ask you questions about your first year teaching experiences, your career goals, the schools you taught in, and your reasons for leaving your teaching placement. With your permission, I will be taking notes during the interview on what you are saying and audio recording the interview to ensure accuracy. With your permission, I would like to keep these audio recordings and interview notes indefinitely in case I revisit this topic in future research projects. I would keep them in a secured, locked cabinet where I would be the only one with access. In addition, I would like to contact you as I begin to interpret the findings to make sure the report is a true representation of your perspectives.

There are some potential risks and benefits that could occur through your participation in this study. Participating in these interviews will take up your time and could bring up emotions related to your experiences. For those teaching in Catholic schools, there are several questions related to religious identity that may be sensitive. In addition, there may be unknown risks. There are ways in which you could benefit from this research project including time to reflect on your teaching experiences and gaining insight into the latest research on teacher retention.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. This means that at any time you have the right to withdraw from the study, to not answer questions, or to discontinue participation at any point in time during the project. I appreciate your willingness to participate and if you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

In order to protect your privacy, you will be assigned a code name so that no one, other than me, will be able to link information you provide to you. This list of code names will remain with me and kept in a locked file at my home. The list of identifiers will be stored separately from the interview data in a second locked file at my home. When writing the report I will not use names, but pseudonyms and short descriptions of the position (a first grade teacher, a high school math teacher, etc.). Schools will also be assigned pseudonyms with short descriptions to identify and describe the setting (an urban elementary classroom in New England, enrollment information, etc). These descriptions will be used to describe, rather than to try and identify participants and schools. Thus your name and the names of the places you worked or are currently working will not appear in the final report.

If you would like a copy of the final report that I will be submitting for my dissertation please let me know during the interview and I will get your address information to send a copy of the final report.

If you have any questions about the research project you can contact me through e-mail at aubrey.scheopner.1@bc.edu. You can also reach my research advisor, Professor Cochran-Smith at XXXXX. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research study or if any injury or breach of confidentiality should occur during the course of the research, you can call the Boston College Office for Human Research Participant Protection at (617) 552-4778.

I understand the above information and voluntarily consent to participate in this research.

Signature of Participant _____ Date: _____

Printed Name of Participant _____

I have a copy of the Informed Consent document

I give my permission to be audio taped during the interview.

Signature of Participant _____ Date: _____

Appendix E

Recruitment E-Mail and Correspondence

Initial Recruitment E-mail

Have you left teaching for another career or know someone who has?

A Boston College researcher is planning a study on teacher retention. I am looking for people who would be willing to be interviewed about their teaching experiences and why they left teaching within the last 5 years. This will provide insight on how schools can better retain quality teachers. Those who have left teaching for family reasons, like childrearing, or have retired will not qualify for the study.

If you are interested, or know of someone who might be, please contact Aubrey Scheopner at aubrey.scheopner.1@bc.edu

Follow-up E-mail

To give you a better idea of what participating in this project would entail, here are a few details on the study:

- I will be interviewing 25 participants two times each.

- Each interview will be 60-90 minutes in length.

- I will schedule interview times and places that are convenient to you.

- Both interviews will be schedule within 3-7 days of each other.

This research project is part of my dissertation and will explore issues of teacher retention in both public and Catholic schools. Since this study seeks to better understand why teachers are leaving, it is important to include diverse perspectives. If you think you are still interested in participating in the study I have a few questions on your teaching background and experiences to try to identify those individuals who would best present a wide range of perspectives for the study.

How old are you?

How old were you when you left classroom teaching?

What type of school did you teach? (Public, Catholic, Other Private)

What, if any, type of teacher preparation did you have?

What grade level(s) and which subject(s) did you teach?

How many years did you teach before leaving?

Where did you teach? (State)

What are you doing now that you are not teaching?

Again, thank you for your time and consideration. If you feel that the obligations for the study are too much please let me know.

Appendix F

Code Dictionary

Career Plans: These codes pertain to participants' career plans including after they graduated, decided to teach, and activities/plans after they left teaching.	
Code	Definition/ Description/ Examples from Participant Interviews
After College	Descriptions of what participants wanted to do after college
Hiring	Descriptions of the hiring process, how participants sought out schools
Teaching	Descriptions of how long participants planned to stay
Activities After Left	Descriptions of working and/or other activities in which participants engaged after leaving teaching
Moving Schools	Descriptions of whether participants considered moving schools, reasons why they moved to another school, reasons why they did not move to another school
Plan After Left	Participants' career goals/plans after leaving teaching, both short- and long-term plans
Teaching Catholic	Descriptions of why participants decided to teach in Catholic schools; descriptions of why participants did not chose to teach in Catholic schools
Why Continue Teach	<p>Descriptions of why participants continued to teach</p> <p>Example: I wanted to go to a school that would never have good teachers, and I saw [long pause] 50% turnover every year at that school. I knew when I came there 50% of us were new and when I left half the teachers were leaving. The typical pattern was new teachers or teachers doing like a Teach for America kind of thing that had some financial incentive to go there and they would stay there until the financial incentive was gone or until their resume was good enough that they could get into a better school and then they would leave. And the kids knew that. That's why I stayed. (Julien, Interview I) [also coded Reasons why Others Leave]</p>
Why Teach	Descriptions of why participants wanted to teach and/or descriptions of teaching as a career change

Expectations: These codes pertain to expectations and assumptions teachers had about teaching, students, and the role of teachers.	
Students	<p>Descriptions of expectations about students, notions about student behaviors</p> <p>Example: I tried to give homework in that class and learned that you could never do that with them and I didn't send their books home because they would never bring them back, so I would give them assignments that were due at the end of class, because otherwise they wouldn't do anything. (Kaylie, Interview I) [also coded Teaching Experiences – Content; Teaching Experiences – Grading; Teaching Experiences – Pedagogy]</p>
Teacher Role	<p>Participant understanding of the role of the teacher and the responsibilities of the teacher</p> <p>Example: If nothing else, you gave them the ability to believe they could do it, even if they were going to do it or they weren't, but someone told them that they could and so they did. (Lindsey, Interview II)</p>
Teaching	<p>Descriptions of expectations participants had of teaching, changing expectations, expectations about the second year of teaching</p> <p>Example: I thought teaching was going to be exactly like when I played school with my little sister. I thought that if the kids knew that I cared, that they would respect that and work for me. [I thought] that teaching was very much about direct instruction and having a quiet classroom, and taking attendance and grading tests. And it's not like that at all. [Laughs] So, that's what I thought teaching was going to be like, but that was before I even started [TFA] institute. (Addy, Interview I)</p>
Teaching Plans	<p>Descriptions of goals participants had; what they hoped to accomplish as teachers</p>
Participant Characteristics: These codes pertain to the characteristics and background information on participants.	
Prior Experience with Youth	<p>Descriptions of previous experiences working with youth (e.g., camp counselor, babysitting, volunteer, paraeducator)</p>
Academic Success	<p>Descriptions of participants' own academic success in school, how well they did as a student themselves</p> <p>Example: I am really, really good at school. I graduated summa cum laude. I had a 4.0 in my major, which was math. I am good at school. (Clara, Interview I) [also coded Participant Characteristics – Undergraduate]</p>
Catholic Identity	<p>Descriptions of participants' own Catholic identity, how important Catholicism was/is in their lives</p>
Family Background	<p>Descriptions of participant family background, including whether family members were teachers</p>
Graduate School	<p>Descriptions of participants' graduate school experiences</p>

Identity	Participant self perceptions, how participants describe themselves
Prior Job Experiences	Descriptions of prior job experiences
School Background	Descriptions of participants' K-12 school background
Support to Teach	Descriptions of support or lack of support from friends and family about the decision to become a teacher
Teacher Preparation	Descriptions of participants' teacher preparation; if no formal training, this code used to document this
Undergraduate	Descriptions of participants' undergraduate experiences
Reasons for Leaving: These codes pertain to different reasons participants cited for leaving teaching.	
Acknowledgement	<p>Descriptions of dissatisfaction in terms of lack of acknowledgement of the efforts and sacrifices</p> <p>Note: This does not include general descriptions of acknowledgement that were not related to reasons for leaving (see code Teaching Experiences – Acknowledgement)</p> <p>Example: I think it came around the time where I actually took on that 5th class and I just felt like I had no life outside of teaching and if just felt like the, usually when you sacrifice—not that you're totally after it—but there's a reward at the end of it and there was hardly any acknowledgement or recognition of anything that I was doing....I don't think of myself as an egotistical person, but just to get that kind of recognition of the quote on quote sacrifice of what you're doing is gratifying, because when you're working yourself so hard and you're the only one who seems to be noticing it, it's painful. (Asher, Interview II) [also coded Teaching Experiences – Workload; Teaching Experiences – Job Requirements; Teaching Experiences – Personal Life]</p>
Administration	Descriptions of issues with administration of the school(s)
Alone	<p>Descriptions of isolation/ no mentor as a reason for leaving</p> <p>Note: This is not collegiality and support from other teachers (see code Reasons for Leaving – Colleagues).</p> <p>Example: Having no mentor, to be totally frank, was very hard for me, especially after leaving college where I had mentors who were very—I knew who my mentors were, and some were academic, and some were not. So I had mentors built into that program who I relied on a <i>lot</i> just for, your parents aren't in college, and even though I was 22 when I graduated, I still would want a connection with an adult who was older than me who was seasoned in the world, who had a different perspective, and who was willing to listen to whatever it was I needed to talk through. So I didn't have any of that, really. (Brenna, Interview II) [also coded Participant Characteristics – Undergraduate]</p>

Career Plan	<p>Descriptions of career plans as reasons for leaving, i.e., teachers had other career aspirations</p> <p>Note: This is not leaving to take a new job/position (see code Reasons for Leaving – New Position).</p> <p>Example: I think there are simple, very simple reasons and also complex reasons [why I left teaching]. I mean, from a broad standpoint I did not have the intention of staying in teaching forever. So I think just from that, the basic foundational level, it wasn't a plan of mine. (Peter, Interview II) [also coded Reasons for Leaving – Relationship between Factors]</p>
Colleagues	<p>Descriptions of the role of collegiality in the decision to leave</p> <p>Note: This is not mentor or guidance (see code Reasons for Leaving – Alone).</p> <p>Example: So it was very isolating because people were not really so interested in listening to what I had to say...in terms of other teachers because it didn't fit in with what they perceived the job to be so after a point I decided to just focus on my students and on my parents. (Aaron, Interview I)</p>
Constrained	<p>Descriptions of leaving because participants could not be themselves, they felt limited in what and how they taught, had to hide their own interests</p> <p>Example: I got a little fed up with feeling that my gifts couldn't be used fully because of ultra-conservative perspectives and feeling I was being watched after a certain type of events happening, you know. Then you really feel like you can't be yourself...When you're feeling like you're being watched it's never fun. And that was definitely a factor; that like took away my energy sometimes. I felt like I couldn't be as open with the students and as gregarious because people are wondering why I'm so close to the students. (Connor, Interview II) [also coded School Context – Culture]</p>
Dissatisfaction	<p>Aspects of teaching with which participants were unhappy</p> <p>Example: In life you have to be able to deal with the stuff that comes up and I was not in a profession that allowed me to deal with personal stuff. For me, that's untenable. You have to be able to live your life in whatever your job is. (Clara, Interview II) [also coded Reasons for Leaving – Personal Factors]</p>
Expectations versus Reality	<p>Descriptions of the clash between expectations and reality participants experienced as a reason for leaving</p>
Staffing Action	<p>Descriptions of the role of being laid-off or never hired in the decision to leave</p>
Having to Start Over	<p>Descriptions of not wanting to “start from scratch,” not want to go through certification again, not wanting to start at new school</p> <p>Example: I'd have to start completely over, I'd have to redesign everything. I mean the good thing about the second year was at least I had a bank of tests and units that I could work from. I could remember, “Oh this worked really well,” “I did very different games or activities or simulations,” “I did a lot of simulations that I remember,” “Oh this one was so great they loved it and we did it for</p>

Having to Start Over (cont.)	three days.” I mean that gave me a lot of relief the second year, I was like, “Oh my God I’ve got three days next week with a simulation that they love.” And to think, okay I’m going to have to go to now an 8th grade and I just said, there’s no way I’d start completely over again if I can help it. (Colin, Interview II)
Impact	<p>Descriptions of disappointment with the impact of teaching, descriptions of what participants were able to accomplish with their students versus what they wanted to accomplish</p> <p>Note: This does not include general descriptions of the impact participants had not related to reasons for leaving (see code Teaching Experiences – Impact)</p> <p>Example: Yeah exactly. I guess for me that’s the biggest thing [was] the lack of sort of sense of accomplishment. In teaching it’s so much, there is a lot of intrinsic sort of self motivation going on and when you get absolutely no sort of adrenaline rush, or no endorphin kick from having given a decent lesson and having the kids really following what you’re doing, which is why you’re in the classroom anyway because that endorphin kick is pretty cool, when you don’t get that you’re just like, wow this is a waste of time. (Daniel, Interview II) [also coded Teaching Experiences – Successes and Accomplishments]</p> <p>I could have done that: stayed in the classroom and just done what I could to affect kids that happen to come through my classroom, but I, I don’t know, I had an opportunity to do something else that was a bigger goal and is going to take much longer to achieve, but if I’m able to do it would be a lot more rewarding because I’ll be able to have the freedom to go back and make an impact. (Julien, Interview II)</p>
Intellectual Challenge	<p>Descriptions of lack of intellectual engagement and challenge as a reason for leaving</p> <p>Example: I think it was the desire to do something academic again and I didn’t feel particularly, I always feel challenged by teaching but I no longer felt challenged in an intellectual way. Like I felt challenged to improve X, Y, Z of my teaching but I just—I felt myself going a little bit brain dead. (Izel, Interview II)</p>
Job Requirements	<p>Descriptions of the role of pressures and responsibilities involved in teaching on decision to leave</p> <p>Example: So then the day that I walked through the door, it’s not a K-2 learning center anymore, it’s a K-3 learning center. Another grade, 4 more teachers, 15 more students...I’m like, this isn’t the job I applied for. I’m like, this isn’t the job that I interviewed for, this isn’t the job that I accepted...I professionally could not get a hold of a teacher’s manual because it’s like, to make a long story short, it’s like, you gave me third grade, give me the materials now so I can teach the third grade. Don’t give me third grade if you’re not going to give me the third grade books. “Oh, well the 3-4-5 learning center has those books.” Right, because I’m not supposed to have those third graders! (Amanda, Interview I) [also coded Reasons for Leaving – Workload; Teaching Experiences – Resources; Teaching Experiences – Interactions with Principal]</p>

New Position	<p>Descriptions of getting a new job or position as a reason for leaving</p> <p>Note: This is not long-term career plans (see code Reasons for Leaving – Career Plans).</p> <p>Example: The personnel director for the [city he works for] passed away and I was on the planning board and the mayor at the time was interested in looking at a person who did a great job on the planning board, who had a law background, who teaches now, who can work with the teachers here when it comes to benefits. Just everything came together for—in his mind, and I’m like, yeah that’s me. Two and a half times the salary in just one stroke and with benefits and I said, it’s a no brainer. (Trevor, Interview II) [also coded Teaching Experiences – Salary]</p>
Personal Factors	<p>Descriptions of the role of personal factors in the decision to leave, e.g., having children, getting married</p>
Philosophical Differences	<p>Descriptions of philosophical or moral differences teachers had with school or school system as reason for leaving</p>
Politics of Schools	<p>Descriptions of dissatisfaction with the politics of schools, hierarchy of schools</p> <p>Example: But one of the things that really struck me in the school was that there was very little latitude for intellectual questions, sort of really questioning in a logical way how decisions were made or what was working or what wasn’t. And it was fairly hierarchical—my opinion was certainly valued less, not just because I was a new teacher, but because I was a teacher and not in administration. In the environments I’m in [healthcare], people have a general level of confidence that they’re not intimidated by someone asking questions and in fact it’s sort of rewarded if you are a junior person who asks intelligent questions. It sort of percolates up as opposed to pushing down. It’s not career limiting; it’s career enhancing. So, I mean I guess that’s one place where a measure of intellect or success comes in. (Olivia, Interview I) [also coded Teaching Experiences – Interactions with Principal]</p>
Prestige	<p>Descriptions of the role of prestige in decision to leave</p>
Relationship between Factors	<p>Descriptions of how factors related to each other, how factors interacted in the decision to leave</p> <p>Example: For me, you know, again the whole systems thing—it’s not any single thing. It’s the combination. Higher salary would have made it more likely that I would have stayed. Would I have stayed, I don’t know. There were personal factors involved in that too that even if I was paid enough, yeah I would have stayed, but what that level was, I don’t know. (Julien, Interview II) [also coded Teaching Experiences – Salary]</p>

Salary	<p>Descriptions of the role of salary in decision to leave</p> <p>Note: This does not include descriptions of salary in general, not related to decision to leave (see Teaching Experiences – Salary)</p> <p>Example: No like I said I think [salary] is the main factor. For me it was the main factor—that there was no payout for the hard work. Like I knew from day one where my max would be. In the private sector, the sky is the limit. For your efforts, for your excellence, for your expertise—sky’s the limit is a little bit excessive, but there isn’t a ceiling. Like no matter how successful I am as a teacher, there’s only so much money I’m going to make and I know that sounds crass but the reward is not there. (Brett, Interview II)</p>
Self-Efficacy	<p>Descriptions of the role of self efficacy in the decision to leave, i.e., participants who thought they were not good teachers and decided to leave</p> <p>Note: This does not include general descriptions of self efficacy that did not lead to leaving (see code Teaching Experiences – Self-Efficacy).</p> <p>Example: I also think genuinely I do not think I was as good at that at that point as I should have been, given how many years I had been doing it....I felt I sucked [at teaching] (Victor, Interview II)</p>
Student Behavior	<p>Descriptions of role of student behavior in decision to leave</p>
Workload	<p>Descriptions of the role of workload in the decision to leave</p> <p>Note: This does not include descriptions of workload in general, not related to the decision to leave (see Teaching Experiences – Workload)</p> <p>Example: The norm is that you are lucky that you are doing three people’s jobs because I am doing five people’s jobs. That kind of thing. So it still is not an attractive option to me that I think there is a part of it where the powers that be take advantage of the good will of these people and I do not know that I think that that’s a fair trade anymore that you use people’s interest in trying to good for the public against them. (Thomas, Interview II)</p>
<p>School Context: These codes pertain to descriptions of the school contexts in which participants taught, including colleagues, students, and the greater community surrounding the school.</p>	
Colleagues	<p>Descriptions of how many teachers worked in the school, how many veteran teachers, how many new teachers</p> <p>Note: This does not include interactions with colleagues (see code Teaching Experiences – Interactions with Colleagues).</p> <p>Example: There was a mix but, again it was like there were some new teachers, like 1 to 5 years, and there was like 20+. You know, there wasn’t a huge in-between group. (Brett, Interview I)</p>

Culture	<p>Descriptions of school climate, shared values, etc. Example: It was just a whole different atmosphere, a whole different, and I knew that going in that it's a much different environment. It's much more, I don't know what it is; it's just there's more of a community feel to it is really what it comes down to. I think everybody feels part of that and are invested in it and that's important... School is part of their [the students] lives and the whole school community is part of their life and that's a big part of Catholic education and I think it's harder for public schools to do especially when kids are coming from all over the place and there is no common frame. (Brett, Interview I) [also coded Expectations – Students]</p> <p>I actually gave a talk to the faculty about feeling like—my experience in becoming a member of the community and always having that self doubt as to whether or not you are—I called it the Forest of [School], like am I tree in it or am I tree in the middle looking at it? And regardless either way it depends on your perspective. If you choose to be a part of it you can be and definitely there were people who—if I looked at myself being in the community I could look at individuals and go, not fitting, square peg, you know. (Nick, Interview I)</p>
Mission	Descriptions of school mission
Neighborhood Community	Descriptions of neighborhood community surrounding the school, the impact the community had on the school
Parents	Descriptions of parents within the school context, parental involvement
Principal or Administration	<p>Descriptions of principal and/or administration of the school(s), including general leadership style Note: This does not include interactions with the principal or administration (see code Teaching Experiences – Interactions with Administration). Example: At [Charles] High, the headmaster had a student who brought a gun to school. Was the gun loaded? We never found out. Why? Because the headmaster chose not to address the fact that the gun was brought because if she had to deal with it the kid would have probably been kicked out of school. She made a decision to save the kid. I think it's good to have advocates for kids and even kids like that. I'm not sure that that was a wise decision [laughs]. Those were the kinds of things that the teachers learned about the headmaster that made them a little nervous about the young lady. (Trevor, Interview I)</p>
Professionalism	<p>Descriptions of the level of professionalism in the school, the tone of the school and expectations of teachers Example: Some people really, really low level of professionalism; you know, chronically late, they were further away from the principal than me, they did less work. (Victor, Interview I)</p>
Student Demographics	Descriptions of students, including students with special needs, diversity, socioeconomic status

Support	<p>Descriptions of the level of support participants experienced</p> <p>Example: And so the three of us sat down and planned like the first day, the first two weeks of—we all taught one section—I taught one section of honors and they taught the rest of the honors. And so I could sit down and plan my honors, curriculum, exact tests, homework, demos, everything. (Nick, Interview I) [also coded Teaching Experiences – Content; Teaching Experiences – Interactions with Colleagues; Teaching Experiences – Planning]</p>
<p>Teaching Experiences: These codes pertain to the general teaching experiences of participants. Several codes are similar to Reasons for Leaving codes, but these codes do not pertain to reasons for leaving. Rather, they were used to code participants’ descriptions of their teaching experiences.</p>	
Acknowledgement	<p>Descriptions of acknowledgement or lack thereof for teachers’ efforts</p> <p>Note: This does not include descriptions of acknowledgement as a reason for leaving (see code Reasons for Leaving – Acknowledgment)</p> <p>Example: I’ve always thought that one of the great frustrations of teaching is there’s no immediate tangible sign of progress and that you have to wait sometimes 10 years to bump into a former student and have them say, “I’m doing this now and this little part of your course or teaching helped me get to that point.” (Izel, Interview I)</p>
Class Size	<p>Descriptions of class size, descriptions of how class size influenced the teaching experiences</p>
Content	<p>Descriptions of subject matter, materials used to teach</p>
Constrained	<p>Descriptions of how teachers’ autonomy was limited</p>
Emotions	<p>Descriptions of emotions involved in teaching</p> <p>Note: This does not include emotions of leaving teaching (see code Emotions of Leaving).</p> <p>Example: It was just really a nightmare. Like I would have times that I would leave that class crying, literally, because I just didn’t know what to do with them [the students] and I couldn’t do labs with them because they would like throw stuff and break stuff, so I would be like, “Okay, let’s try this lab that involves plastic cups and water and pennies.” (Kaylie, Interview I)</p>
Expectations versus Reality	<p>Descriptions of participants’ clashes with the reality of teaching, compromises teachers made between their idealistic notions of teaching and realities of the classroom</p>
Frustrations	<p>Descriptions of things that frustrated teachers and/or impeded their success with students</p>
Grading	<p>Descriptions of grading and assessment practices</p>

<p>Impact</p>	<p>Descriptions of the impact participants had on their students Note: This does not include descriptions of impact related to reasons for leaving (see code Reasons for Leaving – Impact) Example: My motivation was not to meet a standard, it was not to impress my principal, it was not to make the parents happy, it was so those students did well. I was so amazed of what came out of myself when I got to know the students and felt that I was responsible for their learning for that year. I went to incredible lengths. I usually work very hard, but I was so motivated to do what it took to help those students and I felt that was a very, very powerful experience.... I had this one girl, who had family trouble earlier with the mom leaving. I think they were immigrants from Mexico and she was trilingual and she was so smart, but she was not very confident and she wasn't doing so well in reading. I spent a lot of time with her and I was so motivated to help her do well and she ended up getting some reading room help, which was a big part of her success. I just, I praised her and I celebrated with her. Motivation was really a huge factor in terms of what I was getting out of teaching or what I wanted to get out of teaching – that was above and beyond what I expected with the kind of satisfaction that I had. It was sort of like I had found my thing that I could do right. (Emily, Interview II) [also coded Expectations – Teaching Plans; School Culture – Parents; Teaching Experiences – Interactions with Students]</p>
<p>Interactions with Colleagues</p>	<p>Descriptions of interactions with colleagues, including working with colleagues for lesson plans, lack of collegiality among colleagues, social interactions with colleagues. Note: This does not include interactions with mentors (see code Teaching Experiences – Mentor). Example: I mean, it's kind of hard to say from, for me, but I think a lot of my kind of feeling of community came from my department. It was a really solid, strong department—all women and we all kind of had the same perspective on what we were teaching, really kind of were bound together and helped each other, especially me, the youngest teacher. They were really responsive to pulling me up and helping me out. That really made me feel tied to it. That was actually one of the hardest things for me to leave was just walking away from something that was so supportive. (Reid, Interview I) [also coded School Context – Culture]</p>
<p>Interactions with Principal</p>	<p>Descriptions of interactions between participants and the principal, including evaluations Note: This does not include general descriptions of the principal and administration (see code School Context – Principal or Administration). Example: The principal was also very supportive. The problem was I was not prepared to deal with the boss. I thought she was my mentor. I was telling her all the things that were hard for me, whereas no, that is definitely not what I would do now. (Emily, Interview I)</p>

Interactions with Students	<p>Descriptions of participant interactions with students Note: This does not include general descriptions of students or student demographics (see code School Context – Student Demographics).</p> <p>Example: The worst part I think was my kids who were really dedicated to learning, I remember standing there—it used to take me 10 minutes just to get the class quiet—10 to 15 minutes of a 40 minute class—and I would have this girl, [names the student’s first and last name], who I loved and she was just the sweetest, nicest girl, best student ever, had a great attitude too. She would just be like, all the people who would mess around she would be like, “What are you doing? Shut up.” But I just remember her sitting in the front of the class one day just starring at me and I could tell that she was just furious, like, “Could you just like, could you teach me already? Could you get control of the class?” And I couldn’t and that was the hardest because I just was not able to give them the education that I wanted to and it was just like everything was working against them. (Erika, Interview I) [also coded Reasons for Leaving – Self Efficacy; Reasons for Leaving - Impact]</p>
Job Requirements	Descriptions of expectations of teachers, including responsibilities teachers had outside classroom teaching
Mentor	<p>Descriptions of mentor teachers and role mentor teachers played in participants teaching experiences; descriptions of interactions between mentor teachers and participants Note: This is not interactions with colleagues (see Teaching Experiences – Interactions with colleagues).</p> <p>Example: She was right there and we would talk about curriculum, we were both teaching the Algebra II, the Honors Algebra II. So I think I was paired up with a teacher for each of the classes I was teaching, but she was my main mentor. I think I had two sections of that class, I can’t remember. I always had a teaching team that I was working with to keep the curriculum consistent also. Shared ideas and I think the finals had to be the same, so we worked together on that. (Clara, Interview I) [also coded Teaching Experiences – Content]</p>
Moral	Descriptions of differences in philosophy between participants and schools, administrators, or colleagues.
Pedagogy	Descriptions of teaching strategies used in the classroom, approaches participants had to lesson planning and delivering lessons
Personal Life	Descriptions of personal life of teachers while they were teaching
Planning	Descriptions of lesson planning
Professional Development	Descriptions of professional development activities in which participants took part

Rejuvenate	Descriptions of the ability or lack of ability for participants to rejuvenate or de-stress
Resources	Descriptions of resources or lack of resources available to teachers (e.g., books, technology)
Salary	<p>Descriptions of participants' opinions on salary</p> <p>Note: This does not include descriptions of salary as a factor for leaving teaching (see Reasons for Leaving – Salary).</p> <p>Example: For me [salary] wasn't really an issue. I think it would have been an issue if I stayed long-term, but when I was there the [city] starting salary was \$39,000 and when I went to be a legal assistant I got paid \$35,000 – I got overtime there but I had to work insane hours for it. For me, coming right out of college, \$39,000 is actually a pretty good salary. (Erika, Interview II) [also coded Career Plan – Activities after Left]</p>
Satisfaction	Descriptions of participants' level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with teaching
Self Efficacy	<p>Descriptions of participants' confidence in their teaching ability and effectiveness as a teacher</p> <p>Note: This does not include inefficiency as a reason for leaving (see Reasons for Leaving – Self Efficacy).</p> <p>Example: I felt I was always really good at classroom management, so it was never an issue. So, there was no need to mentor me in that way and as far as how to set up a test, I don't know, I guess I kind of felt like I was able to do it. I hate, this is going to sound egotistical, but I really felt like I could do it on my own. And so, like, when I would go into my mentors, they would ask me some questions and I would be like, there's really, I don't have a problem there. (Connor, Interview I) [also coded Teaching Experiences – Mentor; Teaching Experiences – Planning]</p>
Struggles	Descriptions of challenges participants faced
Student Behaviors	<p>Descriptions of student engagement during lessons</p> <p>Note: This does not include descriptions of student demographics (see code School Context – Student Demographics) or descriptions of interactions with students (see code Teacher Experiences – Interactions with Students).</p> <p>Example: Now he was my biggest bully and I took something that my son's teacher was doing, because they were having a bullying thing. They were in second grade and this kid's in fourth grade. They did a red light, green light, yellow light thing. I did it for my whole class even though it was really him because I did not want him to think I was [picking on him]. Some of my girls were like petrified to even say anything because he would come out with "That is a stupid answer" or something like that. (Nicole, Interview II)</p>
Successes and Accomplishments	Descriptions of successes and accomplishments or lack thereof participants had while teaching

Testing	Descriptions and/or discussion of testing in schools, including NCLB and standards
Workload	<p>Descriptions of teachers' workloads</p> <p>Note: This does not include descriptions of workload as a reason for leaving (see code Reasons for Leaving – Workload)</p> <p>Example: Yeah, it was a lot, a lot of work. I think, I don't think I could have maintained five preps over a long-term period of time. Even though they say you establish your curriculum and then you can reuse it the next year, you always have to change things, especially if you want to stay sane and intellectually stimulated as a teacher and also if you want to meet the needs, every class is different. So, that would have been really challenging to stay long-term with that many different preps. (Colleen, Interview II) [also coded Reasons for Leaving – Intellectual Challenge; Teaching Experiences – Planning; Teaching Experiences – Pedagogy]</p>
Other Themes: The following codes represent other themes identified within the interview data.	
Catholic Schools	Descriptions of Catholic schools in general, not the specific Catholic schools in which participants taught
Emotions of Leaving	Descriptions of emotions participants had when leaving teaching, the emotions of leaving teaching
Learn to Teach	Descriptions of how participants learned to teach, including not only teacher preparation program, but learning while on the job and learning from colleagues
Note	Special or discrepant cases; notes
Reasons why Others Leave	Descriptions of why other teachers leave; participants' explanations for why teachers leave teaching
Reflection	Participants describe or comment on the experience of being interviewed about leaving teaching
Why Stay in Education	Descriptions of why participants left classroom teaching, but stayed in education

Appendix G
Schools and Staffing (SASS) and Teacher Follow-Up (TFS)
Questions Analyzed¹

**Schools and Staffing Public School Teacher Questionnaire/
Private School Teacher Questionnaire, 2003-2004**

63/64. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Strongly disagree (4)
a. The principal lets staff members know what is expected of them.				
b. The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.				
c. I am satisfied with my teaching salary.				
d. The level of student misbehavior in this school (such as noise, horseplay or fighting in the halls, cafeteria or student lounge) interferes with my teaching.				
e. I receive a great deal of support from parents for the work I do.				
f. Necessary materials such as textbooks, supplies, and copy machines are available as needed by the staff.				
g. Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job of teaching.				
h. My principal enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.				
i. Rules for student behavior are consistently enforced by teachers in this school, even the students who are not in their classes.				
j. Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.				
k. The principal knows what kind of school he/she wants and has communicated it to the staff.				
l. There is a great deal of cooperative effort among the staff members.				
m. In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done.				

¹ Note: All questions reproduced here were taken from the actual SASS and TFS. See the National Center for Education Statistics website for complete copies of the surveys <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/questionnaire.asp>.

p. I am satisfied with my class size.				
q. I am given the support I need to teach students with special needs.				
u. I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school.				

66/67. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly disagree (4)
a. The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it.				
b. The teachers at this school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group.				
c. I like the way things are run at this school.				
d. If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible.				
e. I think about transferring to another school.				
f. I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching.				

67B/68B. How long to you plan to remain in teaching?

1. As long as I am able
2. Until I am eligible for retirement
3. Will probably continue unless something better comes along
4. Definitely plan to leave teaching as soon as I can
5. Undecided at this time

Teacher Follow-Up Former Teacher Questionnaire, 2004-2005

13. Indicate the level of importance EACH of the following played in your decision to leave the position of a K-12 teacher.

	Not at all important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Somewhat important (3)	Very important (4)	Extremely important (5)
a. Change in residence					
b. Pregnancy/child rearing					
c. Health					
d. To retire					
e. School staffing action (e.g., reduction-in-force, lay-off, school closing, school reorganization, reassignment)					
f. For better salary or benefits					
g. To pursue a position other than that of a K-12 teacher					
h. To take courses to improve career opportunities WITHIN the field of education					
i. To take courses to improve career opportunities OUTSIDE					
j. Dissatisfied with teaching as a career					
k. Dissatisfied with previous school or teaching assignment					
l. Other family or personal reasons					

14. From the items above (question 13), which do you consider the most important reason in your decision to leave the position of a K-12 teacher?

Enter the letter from item 13:

15. Indicate how effectively your principal or school head performed each of the following at LAST YEAR'S SCHOOL

	Not at all effectively (1)	Slightly effectively (2)	Somewhat effectively (3)	Very effectively (4)	Extremely effectively (5)
a. Communicated respect for and value of teachers					
b. Encouraged teachers to change teaching methods if students were not doing well					
c. Worked with staff to meet curriculum standards					
d. Encouraged professional collaboration among teachers					
e. Worked with teaching staff to solve school or department problems					
g. Worked to develop broad agreement among the teaching staff about the school's mission					

20. How would you rate your current position relative to teaching in terms of each of the following aspects?

	Better in teaching (1)	Not better or worse (2)	Better in current position (3)
a. Salary			
b. Benefits (e.g., health insurance, retirement plan)			
c. Opportunities for professional ADVANCEMENT or PROMOTION			
d. Opportunities for professional DEVELOPMENT			
e. Opportunities for learning from colleagues			
f. Social relationships with colleagues			
g. Recognition and support from administrators/managers			
h. Safety of environment			
i. Influence over workplace policies and practices			
j. Autonomy or control over your own work			
k. Professional prestige			
l. Procedures for performance evaluation			